

EMIL CONSTANTINESCU



TIME OF TEARING DOWN,
TIME OF BUILDING

UNIVERSALIA

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Time of Tearing Down, Time of Building

**SINTHESES
COLLECTION**

Cover by Paul Alexandru Drogeanu.

Cover illustration: Detail *Saint George killing the Dragon*
by CAMILIAN DEMETRESCU.

The illustrations in this volume reproduce works from Camilian Demetrescu's album,
Thirty years of art in Italia 1969-2000,
produced by the Ministry of Culture of Romania, the National Office for Documentation
and Art Exhibitions, with the support of the Department for Relations with Romanians
Abroad, of Romania's Government:

Translation of the romanian version:

Irina Pana, Monica Botcz, Ileana Baciuc, Alexandra Cornilescu, Dana Ionescu, Anca Peiu,
Lidia Vianu, Radu Surdulescu.

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' 2002 UNIVERSALIA (Romanian version)

' 2003 UNIVERSALIA (Romanian version)

' 2005 UNIVERSALIA (English version)

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' Illustrations Camilian Demetrescu.

ISBN 973-7722-06-2

EMIL CONSTANTINESCU

Time of Tearing Down, Time of Building

UNIVERSALIA
Bucharest
2005

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

*Then I applied myself to the understanding of
wisdom, and also of madness and folly,
but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.
For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;
the more knowledge, the more grief.*

Ecclesiastes 2,7

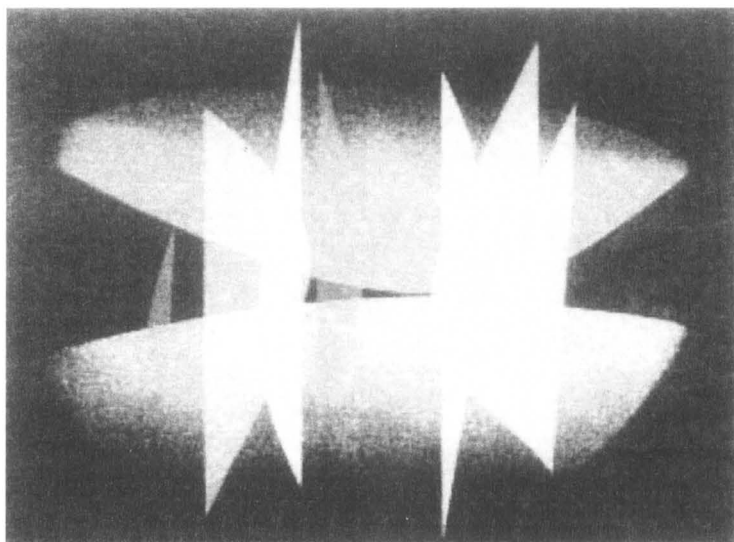
THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, 1988, Hodder and
Stoughton, London, pp 678-681.

Note to the reader

The events, persons, places and dates mentioned in this book are real, and, under the limitation of possible slips of memory, they are also utterly exact.

It was not my intention to offer a personal diary of past times, but a polemic book, written with the mind and feelings of today, for those who want to find out the truth that I know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Emil Constantinescu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.



SPRING ON AN ICE FLOE

A FLAG PIERCED TWICE

THE CITY OF ANGELS

October 1994, Los Angeles

Here I was, after a long trip, landing on the airport of the well-known megalopolis on the West Coast. In the waiting room there was a small, but enthusiastic group of Romanians eager to welcome me. Their being there had not been triggered by my political performance or my being a relatively known figure for the American academic community, but because the next day I was to meet Ronald Reagan, a real idol for the Romanian exile in the States. The former President, worn out with a disease that he had not openly acknowledged yet, lived a secluded life, so his accepting to receive me was probably connected to my letter in which I had stated my desire to offer him a symbolic token of the Romanian Revolution, as a sign of gratitude for his firm stand against communism. I myself had been carrying that token along, across two continents and an ocean, lest it should get lost with my luggage during my numerous stops. It was a Romanian flag that I had received a year before from a crippled young woman in Timisoara, who, on December 1989 had been holding the flag against her chest. The flag carried a hole in the middle – the position of the former communist coat of arms- and next to it there was a smaller hole with a dry blood spot on the edge – the mark of the bullet that had shot the young woman who had taken to the streets to fight for freedom and truth. And I carried something else to the City of Angels; it was an image of the children gathered on the steps of the Timisoara Cathedral under a shower of gunshots, as well as the sound of the rattling machineguns that two radio stations – Voice of America and Free Europe – had broadcast all over the world.

The next morning, accompanied by professor Dan Moldovan, from South West University of California, I took the elevator to an office on floor 27 of a Down Town skyscraper. Ronald Reagan gave me a warm and simple welcome. After the regular protocol pictures were taken, ravaged by the merciless disease, but impressed by my gift, the

former American President told me he was going to have it displayed at his Simi Valley residence, which he had turned into a museum and a library and where he invited me for a visit.

What impressed me most at the ranch of the ex-American President was a few cubic meter block originating in the former Berlin Wall, located next to the Memorial Center, on a lawn. It was covered in multi-colored graffiti and, there, under the bright Californian sun, it seemed an inspired work of modern art.

Loud Colors and Dull Gray

May 1995, Berlin

While together with other democratic leaders, I was offered by the Mayor of Berlin a small piece of what used to be the Berlin Wall, accompanied by an official certificate of authenticity. For a few years, the fragment has been lying on my desk as a memento and I often look at its sides – a vividly colored one and a gray one, a dull shade of gray, like broken cement.

That evening, my German friends took me to the location of the former wall. I stayed there for a long time and I tried to imagine the world of the Cold War the way it looked on the two sides of the Wall: on one side, Western Berlin, shops filled with merchandise, colored advertising boards along the streets, luxurious cars, ATM's, relaxed people; on the other, East Berlin, identical blocks of flats, gloomy people, barbed wire. On one side of the Wall, young people who used colored sprays to paint the Wall, who sang and danced during the exciting live rock concerts, while, on the other side, there were guards, armed patrols and an empty field inhabited only by rabbits – such a sinister metaphor! From time to time you could hear a machinegun rattling and then a deadly silence.

8 November 1999, Cotroceni

A difficult year, troubled by discontent, frustration and violence is coming to an end. It has not been easy for Europe either, as divided and scared by the Kosovo crisis as it was. My eyes go to the small piece of wall carrying the inscription "9 November 1989". We will be celebrating a decade since then tomorrow. There will be speeches and a show in Berlin; across the wide world, an item of news during the Evening News. How many people can still remember those events?

And if they do, what do they remember? In a recent book, Pascal Bruckner gives an ironic account of the sound and light shows organized in the former Western Berlin in the 80s and also of more recent, similar ones. "Only because of the lack of seriousness of our era may we still believe it is possible to defeat the monsters clapping one's hands, stamping one's feet, playing a saxophone so that everything could be solved while singing, during a battle that resembles a celebration. "He concludes that" to mistake the action proper for its celebration is a fake. The political fight is disagreeable, painful, sometimes deadly, there is nothing relaxing about it."

Yet, things are not exactly what they seem to be. I can still remember the overwhelming emotion we experienced, when seeing the magnificent film of the Pink Floyd concert after the collapse of the Wall, we, who had been listening to *Another Brick in the Wall* broadcast by a jammed radio. The sincere and spontaneous audience was vibrating with warm solidarity. What is also true is that, in the meantime, on the other side of the Wall, in East Berlin and Democrat Germany, the young generations were urged to move not by the joyous artistic experience but by a deep feeling of freedom. The religious or national songs they sang in the public squares came from their overwhelming faith. They were the scriptwriters, the producers and also the actors of that revolution, not only the enthusiastic witnesses of the fall of a dictatorship.

Undoubtedly, 1989 will remain in history as one of those strange, charming and rare years when people were ready to fight and die for an ideal. But the struggle in the years to come was "disagreeable, painful, and sometimes deadly."

Now, if we were to look at the gray side of the imaginary Berlin Wall, we might notice a fresh muddy spot, next to the dry blood spot.

WHEN THE CURTAIN RISES

A Sensational Turn of Events

December 1989. Bucharest

A whole week spent in the street, with my children, my students, my colleagues, and strangers whom I do not know whether I will ever see again.

Tanks and flowers, bullets and hot tea, tears of joy and sadness, death and life – never before have they been so close. How many people have ever been granted the opportunity to experience, within such a short span of time, the chills of fear and a reckless manifestation of courage, terror and freedom, suspicion and trust, the newly discovered generosity, faith and tolerance, and, above all, the feeling of living history *live*?

The huge crowds that unexpectedly occupied the public squares in Berlin, Prague, Warsaw, Bucharest, Sofia or Moscow did not ask for land, jobs, salaries or revenge; but they acted with surprising solidarity for truth, freedom, faith, love for thy neighbor, and the numberless repressive communist forces proved to be weak and powerless.

Contrary to what had been expected, the almost simultaneous collapse of the communist regimes covering Central Europe and reaching as far as Central Asia and the Pacific and North Oceans was not caused by any wars or blood-shedding rebellions similar to the movements that brought them to power. Leaving aside Romania that was a tragic exception, the process above took place peacefully. For a few months, mankind's ever-lasting ideals shed light on the 20th century, so stained with blood, while awakening huge hope.

December 2000, Bucharest

What happened to these ideals during the decade that went by? What about the confrontation between these ideals and the eternal human flaws: hate, lie, greed, vanity or dishonesty? How were the atavistic criminal instincts kept under control? How did this confrontation change the destinies of millions of people and which is the heritage that we are carrying to the 3rd millennium?

The few answers that I will attempt to provide to these questions do not originate in philosophical, political or sociological speculations. They are the testimony of a personal experience I went through as a direct participant in the events that took place in my country and also in some of the more complicated processes that left their mark on the rapid changes that occurred in Europe and in the world at large.

The Pen

May 1998, Berlin

I was a special guest at the International Forum *Politics as a fundamental constituent of human society*. The editor-in-chief of the most read and most influential German daily, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, told me that my speech, for which I was allocated half an hour, would be published in his newspaper in full form. I realized that he was not expecting a dull, conventional, “president-like” speech.

I worked till late at night on my speech, trying to capture in the most convincing form possible the extant to which the nations of today’s Europe are influenced by “the past that does not pass away”, as they are still carrying the very dramatic mentality changes in their collective memory. I was not very content with the result, but, at least, it seemed to look like a conference to be delivered to the academic community.

Unlike my usual routine, I woke up early in the morning, I left the luxurious hotel where my hosts had invited me and, in the fresh, cold, morning air, I covered quite a large part of the location of the former Wall. My profession has instilled in me the temptation to check on site what I have read about. I felt tempted *to hit the rock with the hammer*. I stopped and I pressed my hand against a ruin, left there as a memento, until I felt the rough cement scratch my skin.

The Berlin Wall existed in reality. And those who dared to defy it and got shot existed as well. But the reverse trip also existed, the one going from reality to imagination; and for decades, the battles engaging the leaders of the communist regimes against the inner and outer rebels were waged in that imaginary space. A multitude of symbolic and archetypal values were transferred to the cement and iron Wall. Therefore, in turn or simultaneously, it was perceived as: (i) a Wall of hostilities, which proclaimed the gap, the tight, but divided spaces, the self-seclusion, the rejection of the other, the victors’ guilt, half of the European identity that got sacrificed, all that to construct a dictatorship, but also to provide the democrats with a buffer of calm; (ii) a

Wall of autism and a Wall of narcissism, both being two devastating forms of solitude; (iii) a Wall of guilt and frustration, the suspicion of two worlds keeping a watch on each other.

Moreover, for all of us in the East, it is the *pen* that an animal tethered for too long will turn into an empty space, an area of resignation, trampled intentions, dry, burnt-out projects, where hope can be changed into a reflection of non-involvement: hope without pragmatism and spineless pragmatism.

The real, cement and iron Berlin Wall collapsed, but it still exists in the European collective imagination, in our minds and souls, while, for a long time, it will go on affecting the conscience of the people in the West and in the East, either on the surface or deep down inside.

Anna Karenina and the European Family

October 1992, Munich

A month after the second round of the presidential elections I was invited as key note speaker to attend the international conference organized by the Institute for Political Studies of the Bavarian Foundation Hans Seidel. The conference was attended by presidents and heads of government, ministers, newspaper managers, NATO generals. As a panelist, I was placed between Sali Berisha, the Albanian President, and George Vassiliou, the President of Cyprus. I could see that I was the only special guest who had lost the elections. The speaker before me was Sali Berisha, professor at the Tirana University, well-known cardiologist with a splendid research career in France. He spoke in a thundering voice that made the microphone useless. I was able to identify the fiery passion of all anticommunist speeches, which I myself had been unable to totally abandon. The audience, quite typical for Western conferences, seemed impressed, but also visibly annoyed. I started my speech by lowering the key, and I stated that, two years after the collapse of communism we were still advancing towards the future having our backs on it, while facing the past as we were attempting to understand what had been happening to us over the last half-century. It might seem to be a slower path, but it can make us become the real partners of the West, able to avoid repeating their mistakes as well.

What I did not know then and I was about to acknowledge in the years to come was that the more we were progressing along the post-communist transition path, the better I understood that the differences among the various European countries originated in very ancient real-

ities valid for the history of each people. During the first years of political evolution we paid the price for Ceausescu's hard dictatorship, as compared to the milder communist regimes in Hungary or the Czech Republic. Later on, what came to matter was also the quality of the democratic regimes between the two World Wars. The gap as to the Central European countries or the head start as to our more Eastern neighbors, in terms of the economic performance, measure the scope of the bourgeois industrial revolution and the extent to which the respective countries have been able to take over or not the discipline of the older guild-based communities. The fight against corruption casts light on the differences that are generated by the fact that the law used to exist and to be followed not only in the modern society, but also in the distant Middle Ages. This past echo, which accompanies all our leaps forward, allows us to travel not only in space but also back in time whenever we go East or West.

Lev Tolstoy began his novel *Anna Karenina* with a memorable sentence: "All happy families resemble each other. Still, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". One can say the same thing about the ex-communist countries in Eastern Europe. Even if they were alike in their moments of happiness when they got free of the dictatorship in the 90s, later on, they each took a different path amid the misfortunes of the post-communist transition.

The Painted Mausoleum

September 1995, Sofia

The Chancellor of the Mining and Geology University invited me for a series of conferences at the Economic Geology Department. In 1982 I had attended the International Mineralogy Congress in Varna and I had driven across our neighboring country in my old Romanian car. I remember that, at that time, the roads used to be better than in our country and the political atmosphere more relaxed. This time, too, I drove from Bucharest to Sofia. The atmosphere seemed confused. Politically speaking, Bulgaria was going through a difficult time triggered by a rough cohabitation between a democrat, right-of-center President and a Prime Minister from the Socialist Party (the former Communist Party). As a rule, politicians and intellectuals kept a close eye on what was happening north of the Danube. Even if I had come there as geologist and chancellor of the Bucharest University, my colleagues knew I also was the leader of the Democrat Convention, so,

despite all the discretion of the academic event, my being there did not go unnoticed. President Zhelyu Zhelev, who was on a state visit abroad, asked the Romanian ambassador to send me his regrets for being unable to meet me, while the ex-prime minister of Bulgaria's first democratic government, Philip Dimitrov (a mere name coincidence with the former dictator) invited me to talk, showing a real interest in the means to keep together all the political parties members of the Romanian Democrat Convention for such a long time (four years!). After talking to Philip Dimitrov I went for a walk in down town Sofia with Costin Georgescu, who was my companion, when, suddenly, I stopped stupefied in front of Gheorghii Dimitrov's mausoleum. The remains of the former dictator had been removed from the mausoleum, which was now covered in tens of colored inscriptions. One of them was Zhelev's name, the first president democratically elected after forty-five years. The former University researcher, well-known as a courageous dissident during the communist regime, and later on, as President, known for his modesty and respect for the law, had his name surrounded by drawings of both the hammer and sickle and the swastika. "Is this the meaning of being a post-communist president?", I told Costin, without really suspecting how often I was going to remember that image in the years to come.

October, 2000, Bucharest

Four years after Zhelyu Zhelev's term in office was over, he came to visit Romania and to deliver a conference. I took that opportunity and I offered him a high Romanian decoration for his contribution, as an open opponent to the fight against communism prior to 1990 and also for his contribution to Bulgaria's democratic construction between 1990-1996. It always seems that one can better see what happens inside a country while looking from the outside.

One cannot really see how empty or how full the glass is if you look from the inside.

A Living Fossil

July, 1999, Washington

Vladimir Tismăneanu, the editor of the outstanding volume *The 1989 Revolutions between the Past and the Future*, made me discover a short essay published by Zheliu Zhelev in an American newspaper, in which the author, shortly before ending his term in office, ap-

proached an important issue – namely the fact that the former communists were coming back to power in the Central and East European countries. His approach was based on his own, unmediated experience in his own country.

As Zhelev saw it, the matter of the transition can be seen as follows: how to turn the 1990 anticommunism into anti-post-communism. He says “What threatens Eastern Europe is not the return of communism, but the fact that communism may get frozen as such. It is unlikely that classical communism may come back. It is no longer possible to re-establish forced labor camps. One cannot deny any more the existence of multiple parties, of the political opposition, or the freedom of expression and of the press; the country can no longer be tight-closed and isolated. The Warsaw Treaty or COMECON cannot be reinstated. The threat that we are being confronted with is that democracy may be gradually replaced by authoritarianism, while the free, correct market may be replaced by a hybrid, quasi-capitalist economy, flourishing with crime, racketeering, corruption, political manipulation and the Mafia”.

In fact, what is returning? – here is Zhelev’s rhetorical question, while his answer correctly identifies the five constituents of a velvet restoration, as I myself was able to see:

– The arrogant state reappears, and the main feature of the government is its attempt to take control again over the economic and public life. In the rivalry between the state property, which is good, and the private property, which is bad, the private property has got both its arms twisted, one by the government trying to impose a centralized bureaucratic administration, and the other one by a criminal, organized underworld which has its own business rules.

– A kind of malign corporatism reappears, as an attempt to replace the real competition involving ideas and various stakes. Factions of the party in power conclude different agreements, thus the partisan space pushes the public space out. Such corporate and party interests are featured as nationalist appeals.

– The communist regime rhetoric is back, as well as the specific empty discourse, which smells like rot and state-sponsored optimism, reminding the corridors of the communist power.

– The old guard is back, and, so absurdly, they are in charge with the radical economic and political reforms, which they do in a treacherous manner, as they are after political revenge.

- A deep mistrust as to the West has reappeared. Cultural tolerance is threatened by the official support for xenophobia and the classical topic of espionage.”

Therefore, post-communism could be defined as a paradox: a society where communism cannot go back, but which it is in no hurry to leave.

The Corpse on the Side of the Grave

September 2000, Bucharest

While talking to Gabriel Liiceanu, he drew my attention to the illusion of the too rapid break from communism. He reminded me of a metaphor used by Tenghiz Abdulaze, Georgian film director, in his movie called *The Repentance*, which he filmed before 1989, in the former Soviet Union. The film went as follows: the communist leader of the town died and had a grandiose funeral, against a natural feeling of relief. But, surprisingly, the next day the corpse was found by the edge of the grave. He was buried again, but the strange situation got repeated as a real obsession. I distinctly remember the film as I saw a video which circulated around during Ceausescu's last years. I now realize that what, at that time, I was tempted to see as a metaphor, was in fact a staging, *avant la lettre*, of the very things Zhelev wants to tell us. Communism is dead, but we should be careful enough and not allow its corpse, which nobody is in a hurry to bury, to drag this emerging democracy along into its grave.

November, 2001

The landscape of the former Europe seems to be turning red again, and not only on the margins. We do not know yet whether the twilight will not slip into the dawns of a new morning. Serbia needed a decade to get rid of Milošević, Belarus has a hard regime where democracy looks like a joke, the Republic of Moldova recently elected a communist as president, who intends to turn the country into the Cuba of the East, Turkmenistan has a leader who could have made Ceausescu die with envy. In Berlin, the former communist leader originating in the German Democrat Republic and the present leader of a neo-communist party (obviously, a Western-like party), Gregor Gysi is running for mayor of that big city, which is now the symbolic German capital. The man is also planning a coalition with the social-democrats in order to be able to rule Berlin. It is dreadfully ironic, forty years after the Wall was built and twelve years after it collapsed.

26-27 May 2001, Sofia

I met many of the former presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, as well many of those in office, whom I managed to know quite well over the last five years, since the Balkan Political Club was established. Before it got dark, I took another stroll in downtown Sofia. After a lot of hard work and misadventures, Dimitrov's former mausoleum was finally demolished. The square, just like the rest of the town, is covered by the parliamentary election posters, which would promote as head of the Government, the former Bulgarian king, chased away by the communists in 1946, when he was still a child and occupied the throne. I told the former Bulgarian president that, based on my own experience, I considered very true what he had said at the end of his term of office in 1996. What I did not tell him is the following: if we compare the political development in Bulgaria and Romania, if we look into the past, I can see it very clearly that there is at least a four-year gap between the two countries which favors Bulgaria; if we look into the future, the gap may turn out to be even bigger.

Nude with Glasses

February 1991, Paris

This is one of my first trips to the West after the fall of communist dictatorship. I get off the underground train, one stop ahead, so that I could walk along the Rue des Deux Portes, the street where Richelieu erected the immense rectangular building of the Sorbonne, where one can find the sumptuous desk of Madame Michele Gendreau-Massaloux, the President of the Parisian universities where classical Sorbonne fell apart after the political crisis of May 1968. It is wet, cold and I am feeling awkward.

On the Otopeni airport, when getting on the plane, the stewardess of the Air France Company gave us an armful of recent newspapers from Paris. In one of them, on the cultural issues page I was struck by a drawing where the famous nude of Rodin's *Thinker* had been changed so that the original Apollinian figure should acquire, while preserving the same pondering attitude, the typical traits of the modern intellectual: baldness, a belly, and glasses. Something also new had appeared in that drawing: on the thinker's leg a cannon ball was hanging, tied on a long chain. A word written in capital letters was sticking out: liberty. This drawing reminded me of Simone Weil's remark: "The things that keep us tied on the earth are unreal, but the chains tying us up to them are obviously very real".

Like many intellectuals coming from the East, I am bewildered by the invigorating air of the freedom gained in '89. Soon we would realize the hardships of our new relationship with freedom.

Mihai ora had warned us ever since the '70's, when we were still living through the communist dictatorship, that "when we speak about liberty, we ought to know exactly what we are speaking about, thus making the due distinction between *libertas contrarietatis*, as the Mediaeval thinkers used to call one's elusive liberty to evade the real conditioning and *libertas contradictionis*, the liberty of saying yes or no to one's own meaning, thus committing to it and making it vocal". How many were brave enough to make it vocal then? How many are wise enough to have it uttered loud now?

A Morning at the Zoo

Baia Mare, June, 1970

One of my students offers me, with a smile, an English version of Solzhenitsyn's novel *Cancer Ward*, that his brother, an editor with the TV, had brought from London. My poor command of English merely helps me with the translation of mineralogy works, but the two volumes edited by Bodley Head Publishing House, only one year after the author had finished his book, lure me by the high quality of paper, the color of the cover, and the subtle, refined page format. This is the fate of books, I am telling myself, thinking of the enormous distance separating the elegant volumes from the rudimentary, rough booklets of the Samizdat by the intermediary of which Solzhenitsyn's works were circulated in Russia at the time. With a dictionary and the help of an old friend, I find my way through into the first chapters. This is enough for me to perceive the force with which arrested fiction may rewrite destinies and history for ever.

At the end of the novel, on an early spring day, Oleg Kostoglov, being deported on the camp and then taken to a hospital cancer ward, expected to live just a few more weeks, finds out from his physicians that he is healthy and may leave the hospital, and the military komendant tells him that the deportations will shortly cease. So, beyond any gleam of hope, he regains both his freedom and his life. "In fact", he says, "from the camp we go out to live not an entire life, but an extra portion, like the piece of bread they used to pin on to the main ration with a pine-twig, to make up the weight; it was part of the ration, but a separate bit".

As he embarks on this little additional piece of life, freshly offered to him as a present, Oleg goes to the Zoo. Dragging his greasy, scorched, and bullet-riddled kitbag, burdened by his own belongings, but above all, feeling heavy with the recollection of the days of detention and illness, Oleg becomes aware of the animals' life – themselves detained and exposed there, for the visitors' entertainment – as in a bitter fable. What strikes him at the Zoo entrance is the different behavior of two captive animals. On the right side, a ram with curved horns stood on a towering rock, on the edge of a precipice. Those watching him to see how he would slip down, had lost all hope of witnessing the fall of the dignified animal, who was standing straight and motionless on the smooth rock as if the goat had been a continuation of the rock itself; on the opposite side of the path, a squirrel was struggling in a cage surrounded by people. Inside the cage, there was a tree trunk with branches spreading out at the top, and there was a wheel and along the inside rim were fixed crosspieces, so that the whole rim was in fact an endless ladder. Oblivious of the tree and the slender branches up above, the squirrel had chosen the wheel, being probably attracted by the illusion of sham activity and movement. It had probably begun by running up the rungs out of curiosity. Now, the squirrel's russet body and smoky-red tail unfurled in an arc of mad galloping, failing to climb at least one rung. There was no external force in the cage to stop that wheel; there was no power of reason to make the squirrel understand: "Stop, it's all in vain!" On his way out, Oleg, stopped for a long while in front of an empty cage on the label of which they had written: *Macacus Rhesus*. A notice nailed to the plywood read: "The little monkey that used to live here was blinded because of the senseless cruelty of one of the visitors. An evil man threw tobacco the *Macacus-Rhessus's* eyes".

We will find these simple words in the last sentence of the novel too: "An evil man threw tobacco in the macaque-rhesus's eyes. Just like that..."*

During the thirty years of communism that followed, in a country like Romania where the Samizdat did not work, I often reread, in moments of despair, the ever-growing yellow pages of my notebook that hid inside the rough translation of a book that seems to have deeply

* The English version of the quotations from Solzhenitsyn's novel is based on the English translation *Cancer Ward*, Penguin Book, 1968-1969.

clarified, more than any other book, the roots of the totalitarian system and the secret of human behaviour in crucial situations. Maybe for this reason, in December, 1989, I was startled for a moment by the coal-scribbled words on the cement pedestal in Romana Square: "On Christmas we just have our portion of liberty". How can we then cope with this additional portion that is provided to us now?

Scattering Shadows

October 1997, Bucharest

Attracted by the symbolic illustrations of the cover, so familiar to those who know and admire Ștefan Căltia, I discover on a stand a copy of *Cancer Ward*, in the exceptional translated version of Maria Dinescu and Eugen Uricaru. I devoured it in one night, going maybe through the same thrill that Oleg experienced when listening to the anxiety-inspiring opening of Tchaikovsky's IVth Symphony. The music made him feel that he recovered his eyesight after years of blindness, but that made him fear that what his eyes saw might really exist.

I thought that in the mesh of individual destinies which through their mixture – give rise to people's flows, one can often find the images that Oleg himself might have seen at the Zoo, images that cannot pass unnoticed to those who, during their own lives, had experienced the same lesson of pain and sorrow.

Maybe these images of the vanishing shadows went on obsessing Solzhenitsyn when he got his additional portion of free life and tried to live it *differently*, in his American journey, then later, on his return to Russia, after the fall of communism. And maybe, if Kostoglotov, whom he had left in the luggage compartment while the train took him through the endless lands of Russia, squatted, his face plunged into the scorched kitbag, full of the already dry loaves of bread for the journey, will raise his head for one minute, we shall recognize Solzhenitsyn's anxiety-driven face. And into the depth of his eyes we shall see, just for one sole moment, the destiny of those who in '89 caught the last car of a train heading for a different life.

Purgatory

May, 26, 1999

I was on my way to Paris again, on a state visit to a friendly France. My gift for the City Hall in Paris was a work made by a contemporary Romanian artist, Anton Ratiu. The work of art is called *Purgatory*. My trip took me from Eastern Europe to Western Europe and,

in the meantime, I asked my aide to place the small piece of sculpture on the working table in the presidential plane. I had time enough to take a long, attentive look at it.

The sculpture features a human being caught between two blocks, desperately trying to work his way out using the very narrow slip in-between. Just above the fragile human being, there is a big, heavy cube, in a precarious equilibrium. Nobody can ever know what any artist really thought when he created a work of art. Nevertheless, I viewed the bronze statue as a telling symbol of the strain dominating us while climbing the transition Golgotha, and desperately trying to spare our efforts lest we should get crashed under those blocks pressing us from around or the weights hanging above our heads.

It was a beautiful day. From up there, at an altitude of 10,000 m everything seemed calm and bright.

THE HOUSE AND THE ROAD***The House of the People****December 1989, Bucharest*

In bookshop windows one can see, arranged in compact rows as for a march, issues of Nicolae Ceausescu: Romania on the Socialist Road. In the new “civic” center of the country’s capital, a large boulevard named “The Victory of Socialism”, is bordered on both sides by massive, identical, obsessively repeated blocks of flats. At the end of the boulevard a huge building is perched: The House of the People. The greatest administrative edifice of the world – as they proudly call it – is ready to become the residence of the *leader of genius*. At the end of the year, within but a few days, a great wave of change sweeps away the symbols which seemed to last forever. The new effigies, *the Socialist Road* and *the House of the People*, disappear. What is left of them are only the metaphors from time out of mind: *the road* and *the house*.

January 1990, The House of the People

Ceausescu’s regime is about to become history. Or at least this is what they say. It is being announced that The House of the People is open for the public. Together with an ex fellow student, who now lives in Paris but has come to Romania, I visit this place that I haven’t even dreamt of ever entering. People are queuing because the number of visitors coming from all over the country is immense. On the way out we see a book of impressions where we can write down our opinion. I finger with much interest the first real opinion poll in decades. The views expressed here show a clear-cut distinction between a minority who consider this palace an architectural eyesore, an expression of the totalitarian spirit, and an overwhelming majority of 90% who proudly acknowledge it as a symbol of national creativity.

This is the first fissure in the wall of an edifice which really appeared in December ’89: Our House – Romania.

Screens and Masks

July 1990

The first democratic parliamentary and presidential elections in almost half a century of communist dictatorship end with the crushing victory of FSN (The Front of National Salvation) by 67% of the votes, and of its candidate, by 85% of the votes. The defeat of the two historical center-right parties PNT (The National Peasant Party) and PNL (The National Liberal Party), and of their candidates Ion Ratiu and Radu Campeanu, is equally severe: 2.56% PNT, 6.41% PNL, 4.29% Ion Ratiu and 10.64% Radu Campeanu. FSN is a party led by the members of the ex-nomenclature, by the ex-activists of the Communist Party and by the people of Ceausescu's former political power. The elected President is an ex-Secretary of the Central Committee of PCR (The Romanian Communist Party), an ex-minister in Ceausescu's government, an ex-Prime Secretary in the local government he has been an activist and a member of the PCR nomenclature all his life. We are the only country in Central and South-Eastern Europe where the ex-communists keep their power through elections. The people has elected in free elections, being well aware of the situation. Professor Radu Florescu from the University of Boston who has been invited as monitor from the USA, visits me at the Rector's Office and tells me how much order and discipline he has seen in the constituencies. I ask him where he went. In the centre of the Capital and in Prahova Valley he tells me. I think that, if need be, the democrats could have even won there. Of course, no one was hurt, threatened or killed. The Westerners are happy. I have no doubt about it that, whatever the choice of the people, the Government and the Police, made up of the old members from the time of Ceausescu's regime, would have made Ion Iliescu and FSN win. But they did not need to work too much on it since it was the people who elected them.

How can one find out what millions of people know, think, want or can do, or, on the contrary, what they do not know, are not interested in, do not want or cannot do? The claim to speak in the name of the people, of the nation, is justified to a certain extent in the representative democracies, which offer at least once every four years, a real possibility of sanctioning by vote and allow permanent expression of disagreement with the official opinions through political opposition and an active civil society.

The Communists did not bother too much about individual opinions, not even about the collective ones. Ceausescu's decision to eliminate the departments of sociology and psychology within the universities, to do away with the psychologists' jobs within the companies, and generally speaking, with the sociologic research, has clearly shown how far the paranoia of the totalitarian system has gone. There were no alternatives for an immovable public opinion. But no one can deny the fact that, immediately after the Revolution, both on the personal but mainly on the group level, almost everybody fell a prey to the illusion of considering themselves representatives of a smaller or larger category of people.

In the University Square we all shouted desperately "We are the people!". But the people were elsewhere. They were watching on TV images which were well processed by the old manipulation experts and the answer they were to give through the elections was a painful one for the supporters of democracy.

While other intellectuals grew disappointed and stepped back in abeyance or pessimistic considerations under the cold shower of reality, with the respect of the academic towards the scientific profession and qualification, I addressed the sociology and psychology experts, in an attempt to understand what was going on. Alin Teodorescu, Ioan Mihailescu, Lazar Vlasceanu and Dumitru Sandu, ex-fellow students, were my first teachers of sociological research techniques and mainly of interpreting the first opinion polls and sociologic analyses which were then put together little by little. They helped me understand that investigating the opinions of the members of society is crucial for any political discourse or program. It is true, they did not warn me that consequently, the growing interest of the population in these opinion polls will lead to their manipulation for political purposes.

The Riot of Bricks

July – September 1992

I have been elected to run for the presidential elections as candidate of the Democratic Convention. I have neither money nor logistics, nor experience. I have one solution: to build my vision and my electoral program on the basis of a direct contact with the people.

All of a sudden I find myself in the position to address directly the tens of thousands of people who fill to the brim the squares in the cities, or indirectly, through television, the millions of viewers. I am

aware that a strategy of change, tailored for the people cannot avoid symbols: people do not read the political programs of the parties and are not impressed by speeches about the theoretical aspects of the ideologies. For five months I travel through big and small cities, towns and villages. I speak and I speak... But I also listen, which will prove much more important later. Re-reading my speeches from that time in many of them I find the so common metaphors of the house and the road, as a somewhat naïve obsession. However by using those symbols I tried to draw a line between the bookish views, based exclusively on the seduction of the metaphor and a pragmatic view based on a new reality: the diversity and divergence of interests of these people who discovered that they were thinking different thoughts, dreaming different dreams, that they had different capacities and possibilities. The differences made even by the communist roller for forty-five years are now surfacing.

The two months and a half in the summer of 1992 in which I traveled through big and small Romanian cities, towns and villages, have been another school of life to me. A school of the life of others.

I have realized that, during the transition period, one does not build the *new house* on waste land, nor can the *old house* be pulled down to be built up again from the foundation. We must accept the fact that this common house cannot be evacuated while it is being rebuilt. It is being restored with the people living in it and to the extent to which they grant access in their own apartments, agree to the transformations of the common space and the common equipment, or not. My long personal experience of living in a block of flats has taught me how difficult contributing to the common maintenance expenses is, especially those for capital repairs. It is easy to see that in this situation an agreement on investment and contribution is difficult to reach.

I am still very happy with the metaphor in my mind when my eyes rest on an ironically polemic opinion about the metaphor of the house. Alexandr Zinoviev is the one drawing the line: "Building a society and building a house are two different things. When one builds a house, one lays the brick in its proper place with the certainty that it will stay there long enough. But imagine some bricks endowed with conscience and will, able to move, change their shape and dimensions, destroy each other and form new bricks, driven by the will to rise to the upper floors and push the other bricks aside. What would such a house look like?"

I bear in mind this eloquent irony at using some engineering patterns which the builder in me is sometimes tempted to use, but I feel that the meaning is deeper than that. Bold projects which involve people's life take different shapes with different persons.

How much must one try to understand and where does one stop understanding anything at all?

Foot Wraps Made of Silk

April 2002, Craiova

On the way to Banat, where I am invited to participate in the anniversary of the *Timisoara Society*, I spend a few hours in the capital of Oltenia. A few quiet moments in the atmosphere of the paintings, sculptures but most of all in the atmosphere of the Art Museum of Craiova, of which I have many old memories. I have not announced anyone of my coming, it is just another day of the week, around noon and the museum seems deserted. After a few minutes, Doctor Paul Rezeanu suddenly comes in. He is the director of the museum, an old acquaintance of mine. During our student years – he studied History, I studied Geology – we used to work as tourist guides for ONT. Unlike the experts in food, accommodation and drivers-relationship we were mainly interested with making and presenting the materials for the cultural-historical itineraries.

This building brings many memories back to me. It is also known as *The Jean Mihail Palace*. I do not know whether it is true that walls can talk, but anyway, Paul Rezeanu knew how to listen to them and now he knows almost everything about the building. The Romanians have always had a special inclination towards erecting sumptuous buildings whenever they could afford it. The story of this extraordinary house begins in the first years of the last century, when it was built according to the plans of the French architect Jean Gottreau, for one of the richest people of Romania at that time, Constantin Mihail, who wanted to have an occidental residence. For the building of the house the best materials were used and highly qualified builders from abroad worked at it. The plaster work, most of which is gilded, the Venice mirrors, the painted ceilings, the columns and staircases of Carrara marble, the Murano chandeliers, the walls covered in Lyon silk, the woodwork, the ironwork, the furniture brought from France used to create, and they still do, an atmosphere of elegance and refinement. Its history is a strange one. When it was almost finished, Constantin

Mihail died leaving the house and his enormous fortune to his two sons Nicolae and Jean. His elder son, Nicolae, wasted his share of inheritance in France and then he retired as a monk in a Franciscan convent where he spent the last years of his life. The younger son, Jean, who constantly increased his fortune and became one of the richest men in the country, if not from this region of the continent, used to live in only one room of the palace which in winter time was often not heated. When he died in 1936, unmarried and without heirs, he left behind an immense fortune: real estate, land, money, securities, jewelry. He donated everything to the Romanian state on the condition of setting up a foundation to wind up his fortune by selling small pieces of land to the peasants for low prices and with the money thus raised to build schools, cultural institutions in villages, a model maternity hospital, an agricultural superior school in Craiova, and to give dowry to the poor girls. Before the will was carried out troublesome times came over – the war, the soviet occupation, and the communists came to power. In 1948 the communists abusively dissolved all the foundations giving their funds over to the state ownership.

The house received important guests: King Carol I, King Ferdinand and King Michael. In 1939, Ignacy Moszcicki, the President of Poland Stayed there together with his family and Marshall Edouard Szmigly, the chief commander of the Polish army Headquarters. They all found refuge in Romania after Poland's invasion by the Nazi troops till the refuge in London.

Not all the guests of the house were received here out of hospitality: during the First World War this was the headquarters of the German High Command for Oltenia, and during the Second World War, the headquarters of the Command of the 53rd Soviet Army.

I stop a while in the conference room where I had met the university professors and intellectuals in Craiova several times when I was the chairman of the Romanian Council of Rectors. It is a splendid hall which can seat more than 100 people, known by a rather highly-flown name: the Hall of Mirrors. But if we are to think about the historic events which took place in this room in 1940 – the Romanian-Bulgarian negotiations which caused Romania to cede the South Dobrudja; or in 1944 – the agreement between the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia and the Country's Front of Bulgaria, which ended the war between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and allowed the Bulgarian troops to fight against the Nazi troops on

the Yugoslav territory, then the comparison with the famous Hall in Versailles no longer seems so far fetched. Joseph Broz Tito, who lived here for five weeks, led the operations of liberation of Belgrade using the logistics of the Soviet troops. At the end of the war, the house became the center of the Oltenia Regional Organization of the Romanian Communist Party. "Maybe it was better this way for thus the Palace was not destroyed as it happened with hundreds and thousands of other splendid buildings all over Romania" – I say to Paul Rezeanu. "It is true but maybe not entirely" – admits the director who remembers two friends in Craiova, a writer and an artist, who were in their revolutionary youth, brigade members on the Youth Building Site in Bumbesti-Livezeni. They told him how they had been gathered in the room on the first floor to be arranged in columns and take over the equipment. After they gave them the overalls, helmets and boots they realized they had forgotten the foot wraps. Then the party representative looked around and ordered the Lyon silk to be ripped off the walls, torn into strips and made into foot wraps. The order was carried out. With little effect, however, because before the glorious marching column reached the outskirts of Craiova, the fine silk had slipped off their feet and it took them several days to heal the wounds caused by the boots.

The story of this house, nevertheless, has a happy-ending. As I told before, it did not share the fate of hundreds of other palaces and their art treasures, which were destroyed during the communist time. Perhaps no other communist regime in the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe, including Russia, had handled its national heritage in such a criminal way, blindly plundering and destroying it or illegally carrying it to different places of the world. Vaster than robbery was the stupidity of the new governors and their hatred towards everything they could not understand. The boyars' mansions in Transylvania, Oltenia, Banat and the other Romanian provinces – after the expropriation of their owners' fortunes, who had only been allowed to take some luggage in a wagon -- were turned into centres of the soviet-like Sovhozs. Some of them were used as stables for cattle. Baroque style palaces in Transylvania were turned into collecting centres for agricultural products. Wagons entered the palace halls directly. After they kindled the fire with pages torn from collections of valuable books, the new inhabitants fostered it with furniture from the 17th – 18th centuries of Occidental Europe. A fellow student in Brasov told me how he recovered a rare edition of the

work of Erich Jekelius from a gypsy woman who used the pages to make cornet bags for selling sunflower seeds.

The Good Guys and the Bad Guys

May 2002, ASPEC, Magheru Blvd.

On OTV, Dan Diaconescu's guest is a talented torturer, as the title in the right upper corner of the TV screen tells us. The characterization belongs to the guest himself, who gave this title to the book which shifted him in the center of attention: *The Memories of a Talented Torturer*. As a quarter master in the Securitate between 1950 – 1980, he was a guardian responsible with the education in the forced labor camps in Poarta Alba and Periprava. Despite his age, he is lively, high-spirited; he has an excellent memory and is very well informed. He talks easily about the prisoners he had to deal with, many of whom are great personalities of the inter-war and post-war intellectual elite. When asked if he has any regrets he serenely says he has no regrets whatsoever and that, should he have to, he would do it all over again.

20 June 2002, "Noi" Bookshop

The book of Marius Oprea *The Banality of Evil. A History of the Securitate in Documents 1949 – 1989*.

The people of my age remember that the first symbols of communism were the *National building sites*. Volunteering brigade members dressed in overalls were splitting the mountains in Salva-Viseu, Bumbesti-Livezeni, Bicaz. They were building new huts and districts. The alternative was a simple one. The good guys were building the future singing *Up with it!*; for the bad guys a different kind of houses were built: the prison-houses of silent death, and a different kind of building sites: the Danube-Black Sea Channel, Periprava, the forced labor camps, they too, national ones, unfortunately.

As we can see, the then good guys and bad guys too participate in the building of the new house of post communist transition: the ex-PCR activists and ex-Securitate agents live on the upper floors; most of those called "enemies of the people" – in the basement, where they lie buried.

It is the Christian tradition to lay a fragment of the earthly remains of martyrs at the foundation of a new building. I am afraid that for the house of the post-communist transition most of the people do not even think of it.

The Toll Highway

January 1997, Davos

A face-to-face talk with Gyula Horn, the Hungarian Prime Minister. He does not have a very nice face. Nor is the C.V. that I have received very encouraging as far as his past is concerned. But I cannot forget (and in 1996, in Lisbon, I could see that the Occident did not forget) that, as opposed to Ion Iliescu whose "dissidence" surfaced "after" Ceausescu's removal, Horn played an important part in the fall of the Berlin Wall, accepting to open on the Hungarian territory a "road of freedom" for those who were massively emigrating from the Eastern Germany to the Federal Germany in '89. Besides, Helmut Kohl told me in his downright way that Germany will support Hungary any time, both economically and politically, for this gesture. This is a first lesson to learn. On the way of post communist transition, just as on the initiatory way of Prince Charming to free the kingdom from the tyranny of the Bad Dragon, the "good deeds" are later on repaid by help in time of need.

Gyula Horn warns me of the difficulties of the reform. The Socialists, who came to power after four years of right-wing governing, only expect to be successful in the last year of their term. In the third year, the protesters reached as far as the stairs of the Government building. Approaching a key issue of our relationships, a highway to continue on the Romanian territory the Vienna – Budapest highway, which in 1997 was extended beyond Budapest and comes close to the Romanian border, Gyula Horn surprisingly friendly warns me not to make the same mistake as the Hungarian Government, who patented the building of the highway to an transnational company without negotiating the conditions of use. When the highway was ready the company introduced a very high toll, which makes it less used because many transporters prefer using Hungary's regular roads, which are in fact well preserved.

So, I say to myself, using the metaphor of the road is not less complicated. When talking about choosing the direction of the development of a society, everybody thinks of a highway or a fast railway. When talking about the European and North Atlantic integration, people think of a transcontinental superhighway, sometimes even a mega airport from where giant planes take off. My vast experience as a geologist prospector has shown me that in Romania things are totally different. I had seen narrow paths linking isolated villages, dusty country roads, eroded coun-

ty roads, worn-out railways and God forsaken stations. The question is how to connect a highway to this complicated net of roads and paths? On the other hand, even if the highway will be built in the short term, will be modern and operating, it will undoubtedly be a toll highway. How many people will be willing to pay the toll and how many will prefer to use the by-roads, which are of a poorer quality but can offer cheaper access, and where the old agreements between local authorities and population work according to ancient customs?

The City of Change

April 1998, Victoria Avenue

I decided that at least twice a week I should walk to work, allowing myself time to talk with the passers-by that might stop me on the route between Square Victoria and the Cotroceni Palace. My duties as President have radically reduced my direct contact with people. Mostly, it is limited to reading and writing correspondence sent to the President, which, bulky though it may be, represents mostly a certain category of people – the *petitioners*. For the others – I have to rely on other people's opinions. And one can tell this. On one of these occasions, I notice on a counter a book, whose title is, at least to me, very appealing, *The Faces of Change*. Leafing through it, I am impressed with the manner in which Romanians cope with the challenges of transition.

The authors, nine enthusiastic PhD students in sociology, turn a specialized study, based on specific methods of analysis and interpretation, into an interesting and tempting book. That is why their names are worth remembering: Ionica Berevoescu, Dan Chiribuca, Mircea Comsa, Narcisa Grigorescu, Andra and Sebastian Lazaroiu, Marilena Pana, Lucian Pop and Sofia Stanculescu. They have found a way to learn how each of us deals with everyday issues, or, in other words, what Romania looks like at the bottom, viewed from the windows of each family's house. Giving up on the classical method of imposing on the subjects the choice from among several variants, the authors allow them the freedom to choose themselves the most appropriate words to describe today's Romania, while they simply try to read behind these words, some of them newly-created during the transition period.

I find in their book my lifetime obsessions: the house, the road, the role of words, of the imaginary, the mentalities and the motivations, and especially the attempt to learn what lies behind the statistics or the election percentages.

Blocks of Flats and Lodgers*1998, Pajura District*

Visiting the Iugas' 'from the fifth floor', our A3 block neighbors for decades and good friends in dire times. Our children grew up together, we lent money, oil and petrol to each other when in need, we shared the meat, the wine and the plum brandy we brought from the countryside, we exchanged books and tapes and we shared the same ideas and needs. Garofita and Mihai don't appear to have changed, and neither does their flat. I let myself sink in the old comfortable armchair below the shelf full of books. It is the right time for an unexpected 'good evening' to other neighbors in the B block: Balcu and Andries 'from the ninth', Matei 'from the sixth'...

On going there, I had left the escort cars and the SPP behind, on the first main street, in order to walk down the alley between the blocks. I soon had the first shock. I had asked Lis, the City Mayor, and George Pădure, the 1st District Mayor, to stop the holes in the alley. They had promised to do it. The holes are still there. They lied to me. How many other promises did they not fulfill? In the parking lot among the blocks, the same 'evening gathering'. Former neighbors, once Central Committee chauffeurs, who used to help me when my Dacia broke down, are now retired or working in the SPP for the Government. We shake hands and talk for a while; the holes are not mentioned.

While going up in the elevator with scribbled walls, I recall the nights of 21-24 December 1989, when we could hear shooting coming from everywhere and the men in the B block – neighbors for fifteen years, who now spoke for the first time – went down to guard the 'entrance hall': engineers running back home from the works or the site, Securitate officers, who had been guarding the residences of officials of the Central Committee of the former Communist Party and were now out of work, *Scanteia* and *Romania Libera* journalists, workers in the district's printing house, teachers, students, pupils... We had gathered together to guard the block from 'terrorists'. It was just like in party and union meetings: Who is for? Who is against? Who abstains? Unanimously... A few months later, in May '90, things had already changed a bit. Cristian 'from the first', second lieutenant and the chauffeur of a Securitate colonel is still a chauffeur, but works for the SRI, and in his spare time is a partner in his ex-boss's firm IMPEX

SRL. Perfectly adapted to the new reality, while helping me to start my Dacia, he informs me that we work in the same place. He tells me with cunning joviality: "In the morning, I pick up my new bosses from home and take them to Intercontinental. Some go up to the 21st floor, to 'filming', others put on jeans and T-shirts and go down in the Square, mingle with the protesters and shout heartily: "Down with the Communists!", while others indicate whom they should film. I saw you in the film, too. You were in the Balcony. You looked good".

Unseen, though impossible to cross, boundaries separate the flats in our block and even members of the same family. That's why nowadays *Romania Libera* and *Adevarul* journalists write about the same event in a different way, engineers have different opinions about the 'people's property', workers and teachers alike see life differently, parents and children join opposed parties. Old and buried family secrets regarding the life, freedom, sufferings or death of grandParents and great-grandParents come to life, motivating unexpected behaviors.

Eight years have passed since then, one year and a half since I moved out of the A3 block, without any bad or embarrassing memory. The visit to the Iugas' made me feel good. The same open hearts. They didn't make me feel bad for not calling on them for such a long time or for not being able to see them too often from now on either. Fate has given me friends that are better than me. It's already dark outside when I leave. In the A1, A2 and A3 blocks, the blue light of TV sets is glowing in the windows and you can hear the voice of the News' anchor. I hear my name in a sentence fired away with machine-gun speed. This morning I presented a message about the reform. I tried to say some commonsensical things. In one hour's time talk shows begin and my poor speech will be torn to pieces.

It is said that if we interpret the opinions of Romanians in 1998, in the *City of Change* we can find: a *Shadows district*, a *Hope district* and a *Silence district*. Like all districts, they have blocks, and the blocks, flats.

The *Shadows district* apparently has the most blocks: the *Insecurity block* with the following flats: uncertainty, instability; the *Disorder block*, with the flats: confusion, chaos, disarray; the *Flaw block* with the flats: selfishness, meanness, dallying, dawdling, inefficiency, laziness, indifference; the *Poverty block* with the flats: squalor, privation, hard life; the *Catastrophe block*, with the flats: disaster, crisis; the *Corruption block* with the flats: lying, theft.

In a nicer area, there is the Hope district, in which the Prosperity block includes the flats: rewarding, satisfying, democracy, prosperity, change, and temporary hardships.

In the *Silence* district we find the Clueless block full of 'I don't know' flats. It is only one huge block with apparently identical flats, with drawn curtains.

The *Inhabitants*, once very much alike, begin to differentiate themselves from the others in choosing a specific way to maintain or, perhaps, improve their social standing. The alternative of getting much money introduces new characters with different attitudes and life styles: the *purchaser*, interested in purchasing commodities, the *depositor* – interested in keeping his money safe, the *speculator* – interested in changing money to obtain additional profit, the *entrepreneur* – interested in setting up a business, and the donor – interested in helping people or institutions. As for the last of them, experience makes me doubt his existence. I am certain that these social types seldom appear as such, but they tell us a lot about the life style the social category they represent could adopt when in dire need.

So, the *masses* of people facing reform are neither amorphous, nor uniform, and, in different life strategies, the best-developed attitude is that favorable or reserved towards property.

The *Travelers*, who can be active and efficient on their road to privatization, are people who share some of the characteristics of entrepreneurs or speculators, while those travelers sharing features with the purchaser, the depositor or the donor would rather have survival solutions. Apart from them, you can't ignore the large category of hesitating people, who, for the time being, are neither for, nor against the market economy. However, if they hesitate, that doesn't mean they don't think about it.

Contentment, satisfaction is to a large extent influenced by each person's assets, income and fortune. Yet, I can still feel that all are also influenced by that subjectivity we know and describe so well in the phrase '*to keep up with the Joneses*', which continues to influence all social categories. You have a modest income; you are not satisfied with what you possess if you don't have a colored TV, and your neighbor does. You have a large income, but you don't consider yourself rich even if you own a summer cottage and a car, because you saw on TV that most Americans have these things. In 1990, when the first cable TV offers appeared in our block, nobody hesitated. Neither those

behind with their rate payments, nor those who borrowed money to buy bread. TV sets were turned to face the Western world. The news is mainly about the United States, and seldom and only to a small extent about The United Kingdom, France or Germany. Nothing on the neighboring countries. Comparisons are drawn, somehow naturally, unilaterally. Romanians know very well what life is like in the United States, but they know almost nothing about life in Ukraine, our neighbor country.

Of course, there is also a conclusion to this: if the market economy has made people live a better life, that life we see on TV that people live in the United States or Germany, many think that they should be able to rapidly acquire the same houses, cars, salaries, even if few of them are willing to work as much as the Americans or the Germans.

The Heirs are Knocking at The Door

June 1999, Cotroceni

I received in the Ambassadors' Room a delegation of a newly founded Students' Association, which had just called a strike. Their leader, a well-off young man, with many personal cars and many years of failed exams, declared that the University staff has refused to 'allow us to use our balcony'. I let him finish his speech, and then I asked some of the young men present there: 'How old were you and where were you on December 21st and in May-June 1990?' They gave me prompt answers: 'We were in Vaslui, Zalau, Oltenita... we were 12, 13, 14 years old'. I smiled. Spontaneous and intelligent, my interlocutors smiled too. We tacitly let the issue of *our balcony* go.

It is not hard to see why investigating the young generation's problems is difficult, but necessary. When we build or restore a house, we can't omit to think of those who will live in this house in the future, those who will inherit it. When we design and build a road, we do it thinking of those who will use it someday.

Oh Train, My Own Car

October 1991, North Station

Mother called from Brădet to tell me about the final preparations for father's nine-month commemoration. The engine of my Dacia has broken down again, so I will have to travel by train. I can still recall countless journeys by train between Pitesti and Bucharest, beginning with October '56, when I first came to university to Bucharest. The

old railway, built right after the First World War, has always had its special place in Romanian folklore. In my youth, the songs most requested on the radio were those of Maria Lataretu: In the *Leordeni Station and Oh Train, My Own Car*. At weddings, baptisms and parties we sang: Oh train, my own car, / Where are you taking Ionica / From Craiova to Pitesti / And then southwards to Bucuresti / – accompanied by the curse of those left behind at home – Oh, train, may all your screws / presently become all loose...

Father, who came from a family with nine children, living close to Craiova, and whom everybody called 'Ionica' back home, at Motoci, was a telling image of these sociological displacements in the period between the two wars. He was chronologically the third and the second male child in the family, whom the teacher appreciated in class for his perspicacity and desire to learn, and therefore, was sent to the Buzesti Brothers High School in Craiova: afterwards, he came to Bucharest to build a career. For a while, he worked as a clerk and at the same time attended Law School. He was granted a scholarship for peasants' children at the Agronomic Institute in Bucharest, founded by Ionescu-Sisesti, from which he graduated in 1934; he was then sent to work as an engineer in Transylvania and then in Bessarabia. According to the Oltenian custom, the first male-born child became the head of the family. When their father died, Costica, the eldest, who had stayed at Motoci, rapidly took his place. In order not to waste the land they had received as a result of the agrarian reform after the 1916 war, the boys would leave the village and go to work in the city, leaving the land to their sisters as dowry. Father supported the second brother, Ilie, helping him finish his studies at the School of Arts and Crafts, and then the third, Marin, helping him graduate from the Academy of Economic Studies. In time, two of the sisters, Ana and Constanta, got married and moved to Bucharest, in the Ferentari district, where those coming from Oltenia had built their houses with gardens and "American" wells, according to the customs of their villages of origin. Their husbands, Virgiliu and Gheorghe, worked for the ITB (Tramway Company). They, together with aunt Marioara, who had stayed behind at Motoci had been forced to give up her land to the community, seriously improved in the communist period the autobiography more or less compromised on my mother's side. My father's parents, Grigore and Smaranda had not been poor. My grandfather was a miller and one of my uncles, the liberal mayor of Mischii. Grandma

Smaranda, née Cumpăna^ou, came from a well-off family in Craiova. The principle that governed birth rate in Banat, “each family with one child” and which kept the land in the family, was contradicted by the high birth rate in Oltenia which constantly undermined it, driving the young generation to the cities or to less populated areas, such as Dobrudja. Their path in life, marked by the energy and ambition of youth, played an important role in the homogenization of United Romania after World War I. The power of traditions also influenced the expression of national identity. When I came to Bucharest in '56, the Oltenians still met to dance the *sârba* in Pui^o or Square on Sundays, and they strictly preserved their customs until they moved to blocks in great numbers.

Trains came to Bucharest not only from Oltenia but also from Transylvania. One of those trains brought my mother's father, Emil Colceag, who came from a family of shepherds in Satu Lung, with numerous sheep. He had decided to come to Bucharest to answer the Transylvanians' need for knowledge. The eldest brother, Neculai Colceag, former teacher at the Sincai High School, has his name engraved in the marble panel of the high school founders. He left in his will the house and land in Satu Lung for the high school to use it as students' summer camp. The other five brothers also built careers that were very impressive for those times.

This huge migration of the population in the inter-war period between created an intellectual elite, marked the beginnings of the small bourgeoisie, merchants and craftsmen, also introducing the first industrial workers. This working class rapidly and dramatically embraced the rigors of the industrial discipline while craftsmen patiently advanced from apprentice to journeyman to master to owner.

The communist period was characterized by ample urbanization, the development of the working class and the new intellectual class. But, unfortunately for the fate of Romania, all this took place in a context different from the western one, based on private property and capitalist principles, which, though often harshly, nevertheless introduced a type of value selection. Quite often this important process in any nation's life – urbanization and the change in the atmosphere of the village built on millenary rules of life together – occurred as a counter-selection in communism. We cannot deny the building of blocks and factories or mass education, but we see the deficiencies induced by the communist mentality.

The North Station, dirty as always, is now, unlike the period before 1990, colored by the dozens of boutiques chaotically crowded and the peddlars, the new businessmen. Waiting on the platform for the train to Pitesti, I realized that something is nevertheless missing. Although it is afternoon, the platform is no longer crowded. I no longer see the sacks full of bread which the commuters carried from town to the countryside. Suddenly I ask myself "What happened to these commuters and what happened to commuting in general, one of the most characteristic and also most dramatic phenomena in the communist period?" The category or class of commuters, if we may call it like that on account of its numbers in the communist society, mixed together teachers, doctors, site engineers and workers in town factories. Every week or every day a huge number of people rushed into trains and buses to cover the long distances from village to town or from town to village. Commuting created and destroyed families, ruined people's health, turned them into traveling objects. I recall the so-called Bucharest-Pitesti "evening journey", and the Pitesti-Bucharest journey at dawn. I recall the rush when the train reached the platform, more often than not already occupied at the end of the line in the depot by those who had got up earlier to reach the compartments. The others were left with the corridors, the stairs and the roofs of the cars, during summer. Once in the train, complex activities began to unfold: people ate, drank, played poker, some read in impossible positions others told jokes and life stories. The four-hour journey during which the Pitesti train covered the 116 kilometers, with endless stops at stations and small stations, took part of the life of some people who, besides being peasants, workers, intellectuals, were, more importantly, commuters.

Right after 1990, commuting suddenly lost importance. Partly because obligatory distribution came to an end and interviews were initiated to occupy doctor and teacher positions. Many preferred to set up a small SRL. Factories in Bucharest cut down drastically on their activity and the first victims were the very commuters. At the same time, the even minor recovery of land from the CAPs gave people the possibility of drawing out some profit. What has happened to the former commuters? They are still among us but under different disguises. Yet, there is no doubt that the long commuting years radically marked their mentality. And, without understanding it we'll find it hard to understand many of the answers people give to transition.

A Railway Station for Two

February 2002, Magheru Bvd.

Cornel Miculescu brings me a copy of his book *Cotroceni. Railway Station for Two*, with a nice autograph in which he mentions that I was his Geology teacher. Unfortunately, I won't be able to participate in the book launching as I will be out of the country. The book, which takes over the title of a successful 1980 Russian movie and whose cover has the photos of the two presidents of the last decade, is a study of the presidential elections in 1992 and 1996. It is an excellent objective analysis, which tries to explain the political developments until 2000.

The antithesis on which the book is based (because it is an antithesis) does not start from the succession in the Cotroceni railway station (meanwhile literally turned into the entrance to the Presidential Palace), but from the identification of the distinct speech for a distinct electorate.

From 1992 to 1999, almost all polls registered an opposition between what sociologists called Ion Iliescu's potential electorate and Emil Constantinescu's potential electorate and, as the political powers behind the people confronting in the 1992 presidential campaign, a similar separation between the PDSR electorate and the CDR electorate.

Sociologists and political analysts agree that for seven years Ion Iliescu's electorate embraced and maintained a similar structure: old, conservative, wishing for state support, having low or medium level of education. Emil Constantinescu's spontaneous and then remanent electorate remained just as constant: mainly young, having medium and high level of education and opting for reform.

Like any other statistic conclusion, I find this true and false. From the very first moment of the Revolution, when the young people spontaneously made for Piața Universității, they expressed their option for change without any hesitation. I remember that both my children were from the very beginning in Piața Romană and Piața Universității on December 21, together with the students I knew from the university, whom, later on, I met again, almost all of them, in Piața Universității. At that time, the Students' League and the other student organizations were definitely in favor of democracy.

A decade passed. Any decade that passes biologically affects social realities. The subjects interviewed about their voting intentions represent in 2002 a new important group, 18-30 years old, which was not active in the 1990 elections. The events unfolding today are be-

coming more complex. The youngsters back then are now grown-ups, the children of the revolution have become adolescents, motivations are more complex and I think that the young people's current options could be the field of an exciting investigation. Even if disappointing for some of us. I am most likely among these "some of us".

May 2000, Scrovi"tea

Sunday talk on the lake shore with two colleagues, professor Ioan Mihăilescu, University of Bucharest rector, and professor Cătălin Zamfir, head of the Institute for the Quality of Life. Cătălin Zamfir used to be Secretary of State in Petre Roman's cabinet and now he seems to share some common ground with Adrian Năstase. Ioan Mihăilescu, who has been thoroughly eluding any kind of political side-taking, nevertheless provided me with tremendous support when I was a rector by taking over the administrative issues of the University, for which I am deeply grateful. My interlocutors are drawing my attention to a poll, ordered by the State Universities rector's offices, concerning the students' financial status. The data show that a surprisingly large percentage of students are city lodgers, drive their own cars, have cell-phones and personal computers.

I recalled the harsh winters back in '92-'93, '93-'94, when, University rector as I then was, I decided to spend the night in a room of the 6 Martie student hostel, to express my solidarity with the students who were prevented from studying by the severe cold, as there was no money to repair the steam-generating station, and our desperate efforts to enlarge the students' living space.

It's true, Romanian youngsters cannot be assimilated to the students, who represent the elite but at the same time a restricted segment of the young people. Against the background of the market economy and democracy, the age of asserting oneself and of making one's way in life has been lowered to a great extent. The increase of the weight of the employed has prompted the young, at a very early age, to join the competitive turmoil, to earn sums of money that many people belonging to the older generations cannot even dream of, to be able to afford things formerly out of reach and to lead an independent life.

On the other hand, the market economy has done away with the forceful repartitions of jobs which used to govern the beginnings of every career, and sometimes, the whole life, and has invalidated the determination of social progress by the reaching of a certain age. This

has lent personality to a lot of youngsters who realized that youth has turned into an advantage when being hired or promoted.

Political options themselves have even more complex determinations. Political parties in office in 2002, having been built on strong financial structures, which can ensure quick material advantages, are attracting an ever-growing number of young people. The age of pure idealism, if not over, seems to have restricted its influence.

May 2001, at the University

A young analyst is telling me about the results of his research concerning the motivation which prompted some youngsters to vote for the extremist leader C. V. Tudor in the presidential elections in 2000. I find two such incentives shocking; one of them being volunteered by some accomplished young students who said: 'We voted for him so that he could become president and so that we could get political asylum. We've heard that after the 1990 miners' crusade all students who asked for political asylum got it'. The other, coming from the area of the 'street boys' sounds even more bizarre: 'We voted for him because he's a weirdo!'

Even though these two categories of votes might have had but a scarce contribution to C. V. Tudor's incredible rise on the electoral register, which I directly faced in the 1996 presidential elections, when he got 4,72%, they should alter the perception on the 2000 elections. Quite a few of those belonging to the 'democratic segment' of the civil society pointed accusing fingers at the parties no longer in office, pretending not to notice the moral degradation around. What can be said about those who take so much pleasure in the mud being thrown in "România Mare" except that they are indulging in it? What can be said about those who would be embarrassed to let this kind of people in their own house but keep sending them to Parliament and would be ready, out of irresponsibility, to let the country fall into their hands? In 2001, when it has become clear that PRM members of Parliament are but a mob of ex-convicts, Securitate refuse, swindlers wanted by the police, losers or opportunists, the population is still giving them credit, as shown in the surveys. That is why, now, when I can no longer say I did not know about it, I am not so much concerned with the elected but with the electors. The corny phrase 'the people are always right' is a gross fabrication.

History is living proof that deluded and incited masses are capable of the worst injustice, crimes and atrocities. Communism is only part of the evidence. History is full of examples of irresponsible peoples who were expunged from history because of their mistakes. The true politicians are the ones who have the courage and dignity to tell the truth when their people are wrong.

We Are Lurking in the Ghettos

July 2000, Prahova Valley

We are listening to an afternoon broadcast on the car radio. The results of a survey carried through by the Capital Police on the criminal latency of the so-called ‘ghetto gangs’. The reporter is asking for the opinion of the listeners whose reactions are very quick. Everybody starts from a striking presence: street boys. A creation of the post-communist period, in the sense that they have now built their own individuality, which is being ostentatiously displayed. The way they most visibly express themselves is rap music and the success of the bands that compose and sing this kind of music and whose themes like: ‘it’s us who in the ghettos are lurking; it’s you whom we are submitting’ are undoubtedly indicative of their fans’ frustration. The best-known bands are called (is it by chance?) *Paraziții / Parasites* and *BUG Mafia*. The way BUG is written, in capital letters, very few of us realize that, borrowed from English, bug also means germ and in cybernetics it also means software failure. As for what Mafia means, there is nothing more to say.

What will become of the numerous youngsters belonging to these gangs? This is a problem worth a serious analysis. And it was not their presence, *in exchange for money*, on the PDSR electoral bus, during the 2000 campaign, to have solved or to ever solve anything.

The Bus and the Bicycle

October 1999, Cotroceni

At my daughter’s suggestion, I receive a group of four young people. Cosmin Alexandru is handing me an A4 sheet of paper, half-written with some proposals and tells me: ‘This is our project. We don’t want to waste your time nor do we ask anything of you because we have well-paid jobs in the private segment, we have a good social position, we know what to do, we are acknowledged professionals, we can work anywhere in the world (the majority were working for for-

eign companies). We want to work and live here, in our country, but not just under any circumstances’.

In support of his ideas, his partner, Alfred Dumitrescu, is telling me about a 1990 incident: “I was in London, I was waiting for the bus at the bus stop. The bus stopped and I, newcomer from Romania, dashed at front door, elbowing my way through in order to make sure I was going to find a seat. The people stepped aside, without saying anything, looking at me as if I were a strange animal. I came back to Romania. I’m working for a foreign company, I bought a nice car. With some extra effort, I am going to buy a car for my daughter. If I work even more I’ll be able to hire a chauffeur for her. But I’ll never be able to buy her a bus with civilized people.”

The Needle of the Compass

11 December 1999, Helsinki

On leaving the airport we are heading straight to Helsinki Fair Center. It’s an unexpected spell of warm weather in the Scandinavian Peninsula for this season, but the official cars are slowly driving through the traffic, observing the 40-km/h speed limit. Surrounded by the flashes of the cameras, Martti Ahtisaari, the president of Finland, who is also president of the European Union, is embracing and complimenting me in the entrance hall. Not very far, in the waiting room, the presidents or prime ministers who have already arrived are gathering in ad-hoc groups around the coffee tables. Jacques Chirac stands up and says: “*Cher Emile, nous avons gagné*”. Romania is tremendously indebted to him for having determined the European Council to include Romania on the list of the six states to start negotiating to become members in 2000. In Luxembourg, 1997 and Vienna, 1998, he used all his influence to avoid Romania being discriminated.

While the participants keep coming in, I am somewhat amazed at everybody’s open and friendly attitude. Maybe they are happy for the decision that has been made. Maybe the problem was precisely “the problem”. Maybe because I am the only representative of the candidate countries to have participated and delivered speeches since December 1996 at every assembly of the heads of states and prime ministers of the members and candidates of the European Union. We have all come a long way since then and some sort of teamwork atmosphere has evolved, despite the difficulties everyone has encountered in their countries. Some of those of three years ago have changed but the work for the con-

struction of the new house has carried on with an unquestionable efficacy and well-off ones have been paying the bills of those in need.

In the conference room the tables are set in a rectangle. There isn't too much room and the chairs behind the badges with the names of the countries are very close to one another, which creates a friendly atmosphere. On my left, as usual, Portugal's Prime Minister, Antonio Gutierrez. With a Latin congeniality he grabs my hand: "We are the ones who truly understand you. We will help you. Take advantage of the Portuguese term of office".

After president Athisaari's welcome speech and the comment of the president of the European Committee, Romano Prodi, who is announcing the European Council's decision to start fusion negotiations with six more states, the debates are taking place. I am one of the first to be given the floor. This is not a time for yet another speech. I have used them to the full in symposiums. This is a time for action. I limit myself to a few simple but explicit sentences and I conclude by expressing my conviction that Romania will do her duty in exchange for the vote of confidence. "We will not forget about our duty to Romania either" – comes the prompt reply of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, relating, of course, to Romania's attitude during the Kosovo conflict. "You will have all our support". Tony Blair kept his promise of support for the European integration of our country, which he made in April, in Washington, at the NATO Session and which he restated, a few days later, while in Bucharest at the Parliament.

On the wall I am facing, the motto of the conference: Europe in the New Millennium is written in block letters against the background of a star-spangled sky on which the North Star stands out, the two-millennia guide of European travelers across seas and continents. There is just one year to go to the new millennium. The western European community has been building its new home for half a century. How long will it take us?

In 1989, the course of the socialism, which seemed accurately delineated for eternity, was oscillating like the needle of a demagnetized compass which was swaying in all directions. Since 2000 we have been holding a compass which is clearly pointing to the direction we are assuming. But, beside the direction, it is important that we should choose a specific path. Our Roman ancestors used to call Via Regia the royal way, the straight road which avoided detours, meanders and twists. Will we be able to choose the straight way?

Which Side of the Road Should We Drive on?

7 December 2000, Nice

The isolated and well-guarded district allotted to the Conference of the European Council under French presidency is quiet and peaceful. During the breaks I can see a different Nice on TV, full of broken windows and cars set on fire, where the street boys of the global commune have broken loose against globalization, as usual, with an incredible violence.

France, which along with Germany is the source of the project of the new Europe, which used to be considered by many as a mere utopia, has taken great pains to turn its presidency, by means of the Nice Treaty, into a landmark.

As for us the result of the last year is not exactly poor. In 2000 we took advantage of the chance we were given in Helsinki. Despite there being an electoral year, Romania started nine lines of negotiations and completed six dealing with important domains. Prime Minister Gutierrez kept his promise: from February to June we succeeded in finalizing five lines. It is also now that the European Union decided to erase Romania (and Bulgaria) off the blacklist of the countries whose citizens need visas to travel within the Union; even though the decision is to come into force only after some technical conditions are fulfilled, the end of the year 2000 is the turning point as far as Romanian citizens' free travel in Europe is concerned. There are a few technical conditions to be met and in 2001 our citizens will be able to forget about the loathsome queues at the consulates in Bucharest. The agreement at the Nice reunion made our final destination more visible. After the fusion, Romania will have 27 members in the European Parliament. More than Belgium does. But we still have a long way to go. The preparations for the adhesion is a complex operation involving many barriers still to be transcended. For now, in Romania, people are concerned with the results of the elections in the first round and with the second round of the presidential elections, which is to take place in three days' time. PDSR won the parliamentary elections and will organize the new government. Adrian Năstase, the future Prime Minister, asked me to include in the delegation Hildegard Puwak, who will be the minister for the European Integration in the new Cabinet, which I did. Anyway, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Petre Roman, still in shock because of the disastrous defeat suffered in the presidential elections, remained in Bucharest.

Although there were only a few days left for me to spend as president, those who will soon become, so to speak, 'my ex-colleagues' received me in the same sympathetic manner. Nobody asked me about the results of the elections although everybody knew about them and were obviously perplexed at Vadim Tudor's presence in the second round in particular. At the official dinner party offered by the Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the latter suggested that I should be seated on his right, while his left was occupied by Tony Blair. Was it a subtle French way of saying goodbye? The other table companions: José Maria Aznar, Jean Claude Juncker, Wim Kok, Guy Verhofstadt, Göran Persson, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen are the ministers of the constitutional monarchies belonging to the European Union. This seems a strange choice for a French socialist, follower of the Jacobins and the Paris Commune. A subtle political symbol now that, after the Nice Treaty, a president of Europe is getting ready to lead republics and kingdoms? Or could it be that my mind, having been confronted with the dualist nature of the dictatorship, is still used to searching for hidden meanings underneath the visible? The Prime Minister Wim Kok is being teased about his long weekly reunions with Queen Beatrix. Wim Kok – a 'centre socialist' as he told me he sees himself – is smiling but is assuring us in a very serious tone that it is really a beneficial dialogue.

Someone remembers Queen Elizabeth's comment regarding the common politics of the European Union: "Although we are not driving on the same side of the road, we are heading in the same direction". I recall that back in 1997, in Luxembourg, the European Council certified, for all candidate countries, a road map, a map of the course to be taken during the following years. If the construction of the European Union by the occidental countries was a tough lesson to learn, they did their homework and class-work precisely because they headed in the same direction. The difficulties encountered by the states in Central and Southeast Europe, in their efforts of integration, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, mainly followed from the fact that until 1989 they had not headed in the same direction as Western Europe; on the contrary, facing Moscow, they had drifted away from the Occident, towards which they would turn only to confront it. In less than a decade most of them have rediscovered the direction and the desire to 'drive' together.

I'm leaving Nice to head for home with a pretty tonic feeling. In all debates what impressed me the most was the confidence with which

the establishment of the euro zone was being discussed. The evidence of relinquishing currencies like the mark, the franc, or the gulden, which are much more than mere currencies but time-honored national symbols shows an unswerving will to build a new Europe. Turbulence and crisis are bound to appear. But the European commune of the first decade of the coming century, with a population of 500 million inhabitants, will apparently be well systematized and administered.

Where will our home be in this gigantic commune? From a geographic point of view, it will still be peripheral but within the new communal structures, this fact is no longer relevant. What it will look like and how comfortably we will live in it – this is what we should be concerned with.

As we have seen, the metaphor of the house encapsulates at random blocks of flats and villas, palaces and huts, churches and prisons, libraries and brothels, hospitals and shops, theatres and kindergartens. In fact, this is what the city is, the ancient polis. And being involved in politics means caring about what happens in the city.

My own experience, like that of other presidents of the states undergoing the post-communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe, won't let me forget that, in a democratic society, statesmen can only show the way and open the door of a new house. The people cannot be forcefully pushed over the threshold; they are the ones who decide if they will live there or not.

CHANGE

The Drama of Misunderstanding

August 1999

“If you want to understand something, then try to change it”, urges Kurt Lewis. But, speaking from my ten-year experience, I can say that the greatest enemy of change is precisely the inability to understand this phenomenon. The fact that millions of people do not understand what is happening round them or to them scare them even more than the deprivations of life they have to cope with. The Poles, who were the first to launch themselves in changing the communist system, had warned us ever since 1992 that in Eastern Europe the market-oriented reforms were a mere plunge into the unknown, a risky historical experiment, born from despair and incited by hope, not by benefits.

The Tool Box

If we are to compare the meaning of problem solving in communism to that in the post-communist transition, we can notice that, despite the fact that these problems are different, most of us using the same methods, which prove inefficient in the new context, hence, our increased difficulty of being successful in the new world. When we speak about the change of mentality, what we mean is change of the manner in which we respond to issues arising from the new context. Transition should lead us to a different type of culture, adjusted to the new requirements of the system.

What is the right answer? One possible solution is offered by Anne Swidler, an American sociologist who, quite surprisingly for the European traditions, defines culture as a tool box: a box of tools that people make use of so that they might be able to cope with the different situations of life. Therefore, these tools help us not only to dream of change, they actually help us accomplish it.

Constantin Noica found an original definition, according to which

“Philosophy breaks down vanities, the empty prestige, the imposing posture; it turns us into tools”. Andrei Pleșu quotes and follows him. How many more?

Who Sets the Time?

November 1999

I've been president for three years, time in which the political, economic and social situation of Romania seems to have become more and more intricate instead of clearing up. I recall one of the maxims included by Montesquieu in his *Notebooks* three hundred years ago, which caught my attention at first reading: “Almost any victory is a matter of knowing how much time you need to come out victorious”.

In November 1996 I spent a long time trying to figure out what I could do in the four years that were to come, because problems that had been cropping up for another four, fifty or even one hundred years eagerly awaited solutions.

Early this year, when dark clouds were hovering over Romania and strong winds were blowing on me from all directions, some old friends told me about a site on the Internet where there was this joke under the title *Bill and Emil*: They say God wanted to know what was going on down on Earth; so he sends for the president of a rich and powerful country and the president of a poor, needy country. When asked how things were going, the president of the United States started complaining. ‘Oh God, I’m in trouble in Kosovo, I’m under pressure with the budget in Congress and, on top of it all, there’s this story with Monica.’ God said: ‘Bill, all these problems will be solved. But’, He added, ‘not before the end of your mandate’. When, in his turn, the president of Romania started complaining about the foreign debt, the war in Yugoslavia, strikes and uprisings looming large, the low living standard... The Holy Father interrupted him: ‘Don’t worry! All these problems will be solved. But, unfortunately, not before the end of my mandate.’

This wry joke on the everlasting problems of Romania along with the imperatives of the present forced me, from the very start, to look for an answer to the fundamental questions that call for decisions and action: what’s the time at the starting line and by what time we should be there, who sets the watch, what’s the time zone, what’s the danger of taking refuge in the utopian *illo tempore*, the golden age, or in an indefinitely postponed future, a mirage in the desert...

*Soft Watches*30 November 1992, *Batistei*

The watch of political action must be wound up daily. It's equally dangerous to forget to wind it up, to think that it is slow, to give up looking at it, or to think that time has no longer patience, which is a charming metaphor to a writer, but an overture to panic for a statesman. It's even more dangerous if time is set by others and you adjust your own watch to it. You have been chosen to be the guardian of the clocktower in the Townhall Square, and every hour sharp, when people look up to the clock, the bell must toll, the soldiers must move their spears and the craftsmen their little hammers. People want their sleep to be disturbed only by the call 'Sleep in peace!'

But we also need an alarm clock in a world in which action is often uncrystallised, like a paste melting past you, all over you, like Dali's watches, a time like a misshapen dough, people's lives going loose, completely unhinged, an 'un-bedded' river flowing astray. These are the watches without memory, their memory has been effaced, and with it the idea of action as self-duty, and duty to the other. It is the hope devoid of memory, which becomes a trap when people do nothing but hope and despair, the slaves of ebbs and flows. They become subscribers to some external tides when the perfidious vice of the do-nothing paves the way to indifference, parasitic inertia, and lifts the cup of sorrow. There's a clear-cut threshold where fully invested hope turns into ersatz building. What can a statesman do with a people who has hanged up the tools of action?

But what if not everybody has hanged up the tools of action? What if there are still enough people willing to do something. I must find them; they must join me. But how, and what for? In 1992 I succeeded in gathering millions of people around an idea. "To rebuild HOPE together." I failed. But those who were with me became members of parliament, of local, village, city, and county councils. They became mayors in cities across Romania, Bucharest included. It was more than hope. Four years later, in 1996, there was the need for sweeping changes in Romania's home and foreign policy, in the government and in local administrations.

*Beyond the Mountains There Is Soto*July 1997, *Kyoto*

I have been in Japan for two days and I have not seen anything about which I can say it is Japanese, besides the high officials I met. The meetings are succeeding each other with Japanese punctuality

from morning till night. On the way between them, in the huge limousine with smoked windows I reread the documents prepared for the discussions. I am told: you will see the true Japan in Kyoto. I look at the program. There are established: a working lunch with the local officials –one hour and a half; tea ceremony – one-hour and a half. One hour and a half for... years of history. From the plane the scenery resembles the old Japanese engravings that I love so much. A quiet greatness. The city lies at the bottom of a mountain drowned in vegetation.

‘What is the name of this mountain?’ – I ask

‘Soto’

Walter Hollerer tells in a *Fable from Real World* about two frogs, a grass frog and a tree frog, which were tired of living in Kyoto. They had been bored to death in Kyoto. Kyoto could not offer anything new and surprising either to the grass frog or the tree frog. They both started for Soto hand in hand. But between Kyoto and Soto there was a big mountain. Stubbornly, they decided to climb it: “ We will draw a new constitution for the newly discovered country” – said the grass frog. “We will go down to Soto floating, as if we were weaving a net for dreams” – said the tree frog. Thus they reached the top of the hill. It was dawn when they reached up the barren, narrow top. They stood curious on the long back legs and they rose on their tiptoes. They both were looking intensely, but they could not see anything but a countryside that had been well known to them for quite a long time. They could not see anything else but what they had left behind. Any way a scenery that looked very much the same the one they knew. Grey with disappointment, they drew their heads closer and said: “ Soto is exactly like Kyoto. Nothing different or made differently.” And they set out again that very morning, in the dawn, back to Kyoto. They had forgotten, nevertheless, risen, as they were on their back legs, that the eyes of the frogs are placed backwards. They never came to see Soto, the city across the peak called the Great Mountain of Soto.

I think that, if I could not see Japan, Europe could be seen better from here. I realize that even if the Berlin Wall was one for all of us, it depends how each of us perceived it. As the Berlin Wall is seen in one way from the *flight of the bird* and differently from the *frog’s leg*; it is one thing to look at the top of the Wall, and a different one to look at the moor at its bottom. It is one thing to look ahead and a different one to look backwards.

Plant the Tree Now

When I chose the slogan 'Now for Romania' in the 1996 presidential elections, I had in mind an anecdote told by president Kennedy in a meeting with his electorate. It's about a French army general who asked his gardener to plant a tree. 'This sort of tree grows very slowly', the gardener said, 'It won't grow up in a hundred years.'

'That means there's no time to lose', replied the general, 'plant it this very afternoon.'

END OF ILLUSIONS, END OF HYPOCRISY

The Front Garden

16 November 1998, Ljubljana

A short walk with president Milan Kucan down the paths of the garden in front of the president's residence. I wanted a private talk with the president because before my state visit to Slovenia there was a small incident which could affect our visit. Complying with the measures required by the European Community, Slovenia, in the process of joining it, has introduced a visa for Romania citizens who stay in or just cross Slovenia. Consequently, although my departure for Ljubljana was approaching, we have also started requiring a visa for Slovenia's citizens when they enter Romania. There was no comparison between the two measures, though; many Romanian citizens are eager to visit or especially cross Slovenia, while the reverse is not valid.

I begin talking on this subject. President Kucan is familiar with it. It so happens that a day only after we had replied by requiring visas ourselves a group of businessmen were in need of a visa on the airport and could not get one. I explain again that this subject is very painful to us: nine years after the fall of communism, we still need a visa for the countries of the European Community; we are actually heading for a worse position than we had in communist times, when Romanians did not need a visa for Yugoslavia or other communist countries.

After 1989, freedom to travel has become central and the lines for food became lines in front of embassies. It was natural, in a way. The sudden fall of communism in so many different countries was not so much influenced by the technological or military advantage of the West as by the use of the freedom to travel as a major element of anticommunist propaganda. It was not difficult. After 45 or 70 years of isolation, the citizens perceived their own countries as prisons. Those who demonstrated for freedom mainly had in mind the freedom to travel.

The Westerners were obviously shocked to see that, after they had popularized in papers and on TV images of emigrants on a hunger strike or demonstrating in front of communist embassies for reuniting

their families, they were assaulted by millions, dozens of millions of persons who wanted to emigrate to Western Europe, by a true migratory wave. Western ministers and politicians who were against the harsh communist policy concerning the freedom to travel were now in a position to protect their countries from emigrants, in panic. Those who closed the gates were the western countries this time.

Milan Kucan nods his head, agrees that 1989 was the end of illusions for those from communist countries and the end of hypocrisy for Western Europe.

It is a resourceful formula for mass psychology and I ask his permission to use it as a title for an essay, which he grants smiling.

Milan Kucan, a short white-haired man, reserved and smiling, is liked by the European chiefs of state and governments. He is not new to politics at all. He was Yugoslavia's last president by rotation, according to their constitution – voted after Tito's death – , when none of the political leaders was considered important enough to rule after the legendary Tito. Under Milan Kucan Yugoslavia started dismembering. Faced with the aggressivity of Serbia's president Milošević, Kucan, followed by Croatia's president, left the plenary meeting. It was the moment when Slovenia marched towards independence and it reached it without sacrifices and wars, protected by Croatia, which separated it from Serbia.

Those who are astonished at Slovenia's shock when it was not included in NATO's first wave at Madrid forget or are not familiar with several facts. Bordering on the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, Slovenia is a Catholic country, part of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Peopled by only 2,000,000 inhabitants, with a good infrastructure, it was Yugoslavia's most advanced republic and very advanced in comparison with the other communist states. Slovenia sees herself as a central-European country, even a Mediterranean one, not Balkanic, which she was called after World War I and II, which included her in the Yugoslavian Federation.

Eleven years after the Wall of Berlin fell, we can talk about the first post-communist decade, but not about post-communist countries. Just like Havel, I think that post-communist, which is an adjective I use out of inertia, is an insulting label, as if we were talking about post-fascism or post-colonialism. The same as communism, fascism, colonialism were problems generated by Europe and dramatically experienced by a whole world, post-communism, post-fascism and post-

colonialism are common to the west and the east of Europe.

The passage from equal distribution of poverty to unequal distribution of richness generated a psychological shock.

The Big Birds Nest

April 1994, Milan

The President of Italian Industrialists offers me a distinction and a small badge of inclusion. I am somewhat amazed. I have never been a businessman although I have a certain responsibility as a rector, efficiently helped by the vice-rector Ioan Mihailescu, concerning the finances of the university, which made me understand a businessman's psychology better.

With spontaneous, disarming sincerity, the president of the Association makes a speech which shocks me, accustomed as I have been ever since 1991 to American political correctness. Businessmen may have a different language and this directness pleases me. As far as Romania is concerned, he says, Italians assaulted it in four waves: the cheaters, the adventurers, the small economic agents and only now, when there is enough information, can we expect important agents. As a matter of fact, he continues – as disarmingly and brutally honest as before – you can expect large investments only as long as labor force is cheap – as it is in the East – while the price of products is that of the West. In order to receive capital, you must accept to raise buying prices and keep the labor force cheap.

I understand now why an ex-expert in eastern Germany transition explained to me in Brussels a few months ago that the German model must not be considered by Romania or any other ex-communist country, because it is a *de luxe* transition, supported by Germany's financial strength. He warned me that multinational important investors were like big birds, crossing unstable areas at times but nesting only on solid ground. It is not the leading party that matters, but its ability to ensure stability and profit.

The Surgery

February 1997, Brussels

This is a meeting with members of the European Parliament. A deputy asks me about the chances of carrying out a rapid and radical reform in Romania. I give him an allegoric answer: "Romania is like a severely sick person, in whom the vital organs, atrophied by gigan-

tism, function with difficulty. The body must urgently be submitted to some surgical operation meant to do away with the excrescences and recover circulation. Unfortunately, there is no time left for vitamins and energizers to prepare the patient for the operation, so we would be indebted to you if you could provide at least the blood for the transfusion during surgery”.

April 2001, Evian

Four years later. A friend in the West, reading the extemporized parable in the present book manuscript, wants to know: “Did you get the blood for the transfusion?” No, we only received some money for anesthetic drugs so that the patient should not struggle too much on the operation table and an intensive therapy monitor”. “How was the operation?” “The emergency operation was most useful”. “What about the patient?” “He’s alive, he is living due to his inborn gifts”. “What is the surgeon doing?” “He retired and now he is writing a paper on the patients’ exceptional physical endurance in his country”.

Hard Balls

September 1991, Kiseleff Avenue 21

Meeting Warren Christopher at the residence of the American ambassador in Bucharest. On the way there, the representative of the American Republican Institute has warned me that the subsecretary is a tough guy who *plays hard ball*. ‘What is he playing?’ I asked. ‘Tennis’ – he had replied, with typically American spontaneity. ‘Never mind. We have not played much tennis, but have played our own game, with balls full of sand, so we can take it.’ The Ambassador, Alan Green Jr., a nice old man who shuffles his feet, welcomes us politely, accompanied by a stray dog who dirties the polished terrace with its paws. Soft drinks are served and the terrace fills with representatives of civic associations and parties. I represent the Civic Alliance and University Solidarity. The ambassador tries to start a conversation, but he is not familiar with Romanian, European or even American policy. He cultivated peanuts all his life, funded the president’s campaign and was repaid with this position in a far away country, odd to Americans. The state subsecretary arrives too, coming straight from a Cotroceni meeting with president Iliescu. Kind and bored, he listens patiently and makes a political speech that is probably the same for all democrats in ex-communist countries. The only thing he is interested in is stability,

peace, just what president Iliescu's electoral slogan claims to offer – 'A man for our peace of mind.' It is obvious he has no idea about the complex problems that followed the fall of communism and is not much interested. It all happened too fast, they were not ready, they must give an answer they do not have and the Department of State merely stalls for time. They throw the ball as far as it can go, so that in the meantime they can come up with a strategy they do not have yet. One feeling is visible: the fear that in some countries, especially in Romania, where a fierce revolution took place, violent acts may take place against ex-nomenclaturists or members of the Securitate under communism. This peace hides a necessary but real protection. They cannot understand at all the feelings of ex-political prisoners, whose long imprisonment and torture in communist prisons did not inspire them with revenge, creating instead a wisdom that rejects violence.

The Easily Flooded Field

August 10, 2002, Budapest

A conversation with Arpad Göncz about the image of Europe as a projection of one's own history. Göncz claims that all along its history, since the Middle Ages to the present, Europe stopped or began at the gates of Vienna. At the border between the Alps and the Carpathians, where the Great Plain ends, all migrations stopped (except the Huns – he always remembers them) and also Turkish and Russian armies. He refuses to believe that this opinion, which made him say in the USA in 1991 that Hungary would not be considered Germany's backyard, has changed in any way. Even though economically the political map has changed, an easily flooded field is too much of a risk for insurance companies. He thinks western Europeans sell and buy in this area, but do not build defenses to protect it from the floods.

Deed and Retribution

October 1, 2001, University

Those who worked for the Presidential administration and the government between 1996 and 2000 come back to the university. Relying on their solid careers, they return to their profession with dignity. The good news is that they have a place to go back to. The bad news is all the rest. Blinded by official propaganda for decades, eastern intellectuals idealized capitalism, on the one hand sincerely believing in it, on the other hand hoping pragmatically to use what used to be their only

weapon against believers in communism. After 1989 they were to receive a serious blow from someone whom they expected least to do that, the West itself. The first years after the fall of communism are a strange picture: former dissidents and anti-communist intellectuals struggle to formulate political concepts for transition, constitutional principles, laws to help market economy, spend their time in meetings to show public opinion the advantages of private property, free initiative and the capitalist system. In the meanwhile, great western companies employ as representatives in eastern European countries ex-Securitate officers recruited from foreign trade and support ex-nomenclaturists and communists in starting their own businesses, as if they were the only competent persons. As a consequence, the law of privatization between 1996 and 2000 brought about property for those financially well off as a result of the first seven transition years. In 2000, the old defenders of democracy and capitalism have to surrender power to the system controlled by former Securitate persons and communists; they return to the university to salaries of \$200 a month and find themselves in the position of enduring the arrogance of the obvious richness resulted as a profit of those who took advantage of both democracy and market economy.

Eternal Truths?

19 May 2000, Windsor Castle

I take part in the annual Windsor Conference on the theme Eternal Truths for the New Millennium, invited by Lord Griffith, ex-prime-counselor of prime minister Margaret Thatcher – a personality of value and competence, surprisingly warm as a person. Businessmen from the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, present and former administration officials, reputed intellectuals and church personalities are present.

When I have finished the speech I was asked to make, I wait for questions, and these questions take more than an hour and go well into the next day. One of them is aimed at corruption in Romania. Encouraged by the sincerity of the discussion, I ask if they desire the whole truth. Like a Moromete (well known shrewd literary hero) on the Thames, I admit to an explosion of corruption in the East, to the existence of bribes for minor clerks. Major corruption does not have inner resources in the East. I studied in faculty that corruption implies two parties: the corrupt and the person who corrupts. I ask rhetorically:

Where does the corrupting agent come from in east European countries? From the third world or from western, industrialized societies? Corruption cannot be diminished in the East without the change of behavior of the western companies, which abide by the law at home but break it abroad.

As far as I am concerned, from the first to the last month of my term, I demanded foreign companies which operate in Romania to make public any attempt at bribing, and I promised inquests, no matter at what level the bribe had been. No announcement was made in four years.

In the evening, I take a walk in the castle courtyard. It rains a bit. I come back to the topic of corruption. When I made public the fact that I only received representatives of foreign investors and companies in the presence of their ambassador, and when I announced there was no bribe in Romania, I wonder how many laughed heartily behind my back.

The Necklace

28 May 2001, Sofia

I am looking for a quotation from a Bulgarian author for my speech upon receiving the Doctor Honoris Causa diploma from the Sofia University. In one of the books I have with me, I find an excerpt in which Tzvetan Todorov, who left Bulgaria for France in his youth, mentions Maupassant's heroine – a modest woman who borrows a diamond necklace for a ball from a friend. The necklace is stolen and the woman borrows a sum that is huge to her, in order to buy an identical necklace and return it. After long years of toil and deprivation in order to pay back her debt, she meets her friend and tells her how she sacrificed her well being to her honour. My dear – her friend replies – my diamonds were false, the necklace was worthless.

Those who defeated communism and will possibly prevail in post-communist transition may well have to be pitied rather than congratulated.



EAST OF EDEN

LIE MANAGEMENT

Klementis' Fur cap

21 August 1993, Prague

In the summer heat so rare here, the Golden City seems drowsy, but for Venceslas Square which is animated by a meeting devoted to the commemoration of 25 years since the Soviet troops put down the Prague Spring. This reminds me of University Square, but that was much more quiet. Only one representative of the former political prisoners, standing on an improvised rostrum, is ardently asking for the truth about the repressions of the communist regime.

An American tourist, wandering in the square, asks me, looking genuinely interested:

“Why are they so angrily manifesting against Power?”

“It’s not a revolt against Power”, I answer. They are in power themselves. This is a revolt against past Lie.”

“Well, if they are in power, why do they not set things right and restore truth?”

“Because Lie is better organized than Power.”

At the end of the meeting, I and my colleague from ancient Charles University go to the old city center. We talk about the mission of the university: Search of truth. He breaks off his plea to show me a beautiful, newly restored palace.

– In that palace, in 1946, they proclaimed the victory of communism in Czechoslovakia and truth was arrested.

In his *Book of Laughter and Forgetfulness*, Kundera recollects this moment: “Gottwald was flanked by his companions, Klementis stood closely by him. It was snowing, cold had fallen upon us and Gottwald was bareheaded. Showing much care, Klementic pulled out his fur cap and placed it on Gottwald’s head. The propaganda section issued hundreds of thousands of photos with the balcony where Gottwald, the fur cap on his head, surrounded by his companions, addresses the people. Four years later, Klementis had been accused of treason and hanged. The propaganda section erased him immediately from history and, of

course, from all pictures. Since then, Gottwald always appears standing alone in the balcony. There where there stood Klementis, you can only see the empty wall of the Baroque-style palace. The only recollection of Klementis is his fur cap on Gottwald's head".

Replicas of this scene, with slight adjustments in details occurred, in all the ex-communist European countries. A tentative definition of communism could be formulated as the best-performing system of lie management. As for me, who lived all through the communist regime, I realize that, in fact, under the communist system, the future was perfectly known, the present was completely organized and managed; the only uncertain thing liable to be changed all the time was the past. The past, they did change so well, that now we can hardly tell what it really was like.

The dual Mythology

October 1990, Paris

Together with several university presidents from ex-communist countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe, I am now present at the meeting of the Francophone University Association. At the end of the meeting, we are all invited to make a tour of the library in the University of Paris, 10. At the entrance of the new building, we all stand shocked, looking equally amazed at each other. On the walls there hang pictures that we had just put down from our walls so as to hide them in the caves of our universities: they showed workers with bulldozers and tractors, grandiose hydro-power stations, peasant women, their arms full of wheat sheaves, standing by huge combines. Then, I broke off and asked the library curator about the story of those paintings. Maybe understanding our amazement – though I wouldn't bet on it – she answered that those were modernist pictures by some painters who had been trained and specialized in Moscow. And she concluded, jocularly: "I hope you like the subtle colors". She was right, the proletcultist works were all painted in pale pink and blue hues.

November 1991, North Carolina

One year later, when I was a visiting professor at Duke University in North Carolina, I realized that not only the pictures, but the ideas too had survived the fall of communism. A colleague from the Natural Sciences Department of Duke University invites me to attend the political sciences conferences. The professor is an extraordinary guy – my colleague tells me. Actually, he is the best paid communist in the world, his salary is higher than Deng Xiaou Ping's – he concludes per-

suasively, in a laughter. I followed his advice and took part in one of the debates on the topicality of Marxism in the contemporary world. The debate was animated, interactive and soon they reached the usual assumption that we, freshly freed of Ceuasescu's dictatorship, got crazy because of it – the assumption that Marxist doctrine is a valid form of societal organization, but, unfortunately, it was wrongly applied. I raised my hand and asked, in a neutral tone, well-tuned in to the academic debate: how many more tens of millions of victims were still necessary to prove the failure of this doctrine, which had been applied for eight decades all round the world? They serenely skipped the answer to this question, they even talked about “collateral losses” for an eternal ideal and the audience did not seem impressed by the mention of victims who remained so remote in history.

February 1992, California

I have been invited by Berkeley, Stanford and South-West Universities to hold a series of conferences on: Communism – Post communism in East Europe. In the conference I held at the South-West University in Los Angeles in January, 1992 (the text of which is inserted in volume 2 of the present book), I start off with the remark that within an initial stage among the intellectuals later in the Western mass-media and public opinion, the word nostalgic has become commonplace to denote today's devotees to communism in countries from behind the former Iron Curtain in Europe, those who militate for the return of the old system. Nostalgic... what a wonderful word, so full of charm and mystery – to be used for the partisans of the revival of a profoundly criminal system! But if we can say that in Russia, behind the old war veterans, proudly exposing their chests full of decorations, or the retired women – declared heroines in the construction of socialism, there stand the mafias of Red nomenclature in the guise of today's capitalists, the question is what and who in the United States and Western Europe today – stands behind the communist nostalgics ?

January, 1994, University of Bucharest

At the Rector's Office of the University of Bucharest I meet a professor of modern history from George Washington University in Washington, who is working on a study on the communist system in South-Eastern Europe. I offer him the 19-page text of the conference entitled: *The Communist Regime in Romania – Repression and Privilege*

and tell him he can use it as best he can, as I'll make no copyright claims. Engulfed in ever pressing topical issues, I lost contact with that professor and I don't know whether his study was published. But the issue still remains.

The generalization of lie in the communist era makes it more difficult to intellectually deconstruct rather than materially annihilate its system.

“Communism – warns Lucian Boia, reader with the Faculty of History and a subtle analyst of the imaginary in the totalitarian systems – left behind it, apart from economic disaster and physical and moral misery, a state of great intellectual confusion, engendered by the obsessive discourse – apparent along decades. Nazism, with its simplistic mythology of the master race continues overshadowing the crimes committed by the communist regime, since the cynical Nazi programme was to be identically mirrored in its Nazi practices, while in communism, those who so wish, may separate two distinct parts: the mythology of the founding texts (liberty, equality, self-assertion, social justice, rapprochement among nations, peace) and the real part that followed (repression, self-annulment, injustice, evil feud, war)”. This accounts for many people's inability (most frequently having to do with Western minds, but with people who lived in former communist societies as well) to adequately understand the essence of the running system. “Even now, after the fall of communism, the seducing part of its dual mythology protects even if only partially – its memory, as if the double discourse – illusion and lie – were liable to make excuses for oppression and crime or at least – to give way to circumstantial evidence”.

Change of Masks

21 July 2000, Teotihuacan

While climbing up the stairs of the great Pyramid of the Sun, the distinguished historian who is with me gives explanations about the cruel social surgery by means of which the Aztecs used to control the number of the population depending on the natural resources, thus ensuring economic growth. Whenever I find myself in front of the strange pre-Columbian funeral monuments south of the Rio Grande, I remember the story of Vargas Llosa about his Inca ancestors. When the emperor died, with him went into the ground not only his wives and concubines, but also his wise men, who were

called anautas and who had served a great trick – changing fiction into history. The newly installed sovereign came to power together with a plethora of anautas whose main task was to redo the official memory, by correcting the past, updating it, so to say, so that all the brave deeds, all the conquests, and grand constructions assigned to his predecessor, should be transferred ever since his coming to the throne – to the new emperor's curriculum vitae. The consequence was that the Inca Empire remained a society with no history, as no one could reconstruct in a plausible manner that old past, which had systematically been made-up, dressed and undressed, like a professional striptease girl.

“ I think that we can best define a closed society – the mentioned author says – by saying that in such a society, fiction and history ceased to be different, the borders merging between them and one takes the other's place, by constantly switching their identities, as in a fancy-dress ball. In a closed society power not only has the privilege to control people's actions, what they do or what they say, but it also tends to control their memory”.

November 2001, Bucharest

The government launches a great media campaign, trying to convince us that visa cancel in the Schengen Area for the Romanian people, while being a constitutive part of the negotiation process for EU accession set off in December 1999, would also mean granting a confidence vote to Nastase's Cabinet policy in 2001.

The organization of collective memory, the change of history into a governing instrument meant to license those in command and annul predecessors' merits is a congenital temptation typical of any power. But the totalitarian states can transform this temptation into a reality. It seems that Romanian post-transition is trying, twelve years after the revolution, to repeat this experience. Previous such attempts are not missing in history, nor are the anautas of the day, duly ready to ban the past. What else but this mixture – between fiction and history – was the famous literature written to disclose the communist crimes and abuse under Gheorghiu-Dej's rule, just after Nicolae Ceausescu's coming to power? Now, bearing in mind the fact that writers almost abandoned literature for politics and journalism, a new species is flourishing: the talk-show unmasking the old regime.

History repeats itself dangerously.

Just Tell Me a White Lie*June 2000*

Fate willed it that two pieces of sad news came at two weeks' interval regarding two old friends of mine who suffered from a ruthless disease. One of them, living for some time abroad, told me on the phone about the dreadful diagnosis he had received from his doctor. As for the other friend, who lives in Romania, someone from his family told me about it, warning me that he did not know and that he should never learn about how serious his disease was.

In the West, when they find out about someone having cancer or some other fatal disease, the patient is told about his diagnosis and he decides by himself on his own life and suffering.

In Romania, according to some old solid practice, in such cases, from hospital directors down to the last country general practitioner, the family, friends, anyone but the patient is told about the disease. Even when the disease is on its onset and can still be treated, it is others who take decisions for the patient. Even when facing illness and death, when everyone is equal, it is considered that the patient ought not to know the truth as he would not be able to resist it psychically. No matter who the patient might be, whether he is a university professor, some high official, a bank director or a physician; so, people who by their daily work shape others' characters or decide on others' fates and lives are considered to be incapable to decide for themselves.

How deeply were lies instilled in our minds and souls? How resistant is our defense system, or the antibodies that our own organism gave birth to?

The Box of Dirt*6 July 2001, Nové Zamki*

I am attending a collegial Slovakian-Hungarian-Romanian meeting. The former President of Slovakia, Michal Kovac, is telling me about an incredible frame-up that had been played on his son, who had been kidnapped, taken to Austria and then accused of drug trafficking, in complicity with the head of the Slovak Intelligence Service. Although the frame-up was a proven fact and the head of the Intelligence Service was finally brought to justice and convicted, the latter was pardoned shortly when for a couple of months, his rival, Prime-Minister Meciar, also held the position of President of Slovakia.

Within the period 1906-2000, the experts of the old Securitate, be-

ing anchored in the parties of Romania Mare and the PDSR, improved their methods by fitting in to the new globalizing intelligence context and by peddling their influence upon the media, thus adapting themselves to the Romanian situation – press scandals from abroad that were en vogue in the information media. Similarly to the setup mounted to president Kovac's son, an attempt was repeatedly made to compromise the son of Romania's President; when in the US Monika Lewinsky's scandal broke out, a "Dimbovitza" scandal was also set up with Rona Hartner. Gradually, more and more scenarios were set up in an attempt to import the dramas of some tragic events that had occurred in some of the South-East European countries: in '97 the Bulgarization, in '98 – the Albanization, in '99 the Kossovization and in 2000 – even the Belarusization of Romania. Also an attempt was made to found a political party exclusively made up of the structures of the intelligence services, whether new or old, by the former head of the Romanian Intelligence Service. Fortunately, all these equally mad and foolish scenarios failed. What if they hadn't failed ?

For, with the Romanians, danger, once past, no matter how serious it may have been, plunges into oblivion; I will further give details about the meaning of truth and the underlying reason of these scandals, where we must also include the great setup called "Cigarette II", plotted by the collaborators of the Romanian and foreign former smugglers acting in connection with Intelligence structures in the Middle East.

"The communists, being real masters of manipulation and propaganda, laid the foundations of victimization", – Stéphane Courtois warns us, the coordinator of the work *The Black Book of Communism*. I don't think the Romanians will contradict me in this", adds up Courtois in his remarks.

On no account will I contradict him, as I felt experienced all this myself.

Propaganda, which in the totalitarian regimes was the monopoly of power, is now divided, in post-December democracy, among the groups of economic interests and those of organized crime interests, being dependent on their financial force. But the essence of this propaganda is still rooted in lies, in shameful lies. Well – some may wonder – what is the utility of such lies after all, when in the context of freedom of speech and freethinking, they can be more easily deconstructed and counteracted?

My sad personal experience showed me that things did not stand as I thought they did and that three well-known statements remained valid: “the bigger a lie is the more readily it is believed”; slander, slander, something will remain”, and first and foremost, “if you have been lied upon for a long time, even if you do not necessarily grow into believing that lie, you end up by believing nothing”.

I Have Lived in “Liars’ Land”

October, 2001

I read and was quite astonished, as what I was reading was a left-wing newspaper, devoted to the present power, an account on television manipulation: “The public TV in the News Programme had broadcast a report on “The night of the homeless”. In a few second-snapshot a street man declared: “I am glad I’ve come here, I’ll have some broth in exchange”. As by mere accident, the interview had been taken right under the reporter’s eyes and the whole of it sounded as follows: “I’m glad I’ve come here, I’ll have some broth in exchange. But it’s a foul trick, nothing will really come out of it. We’ve been called in here for the camera to shoot us, it’s for the image”.

The old 1990 slogan: “You lied to the people with the TV camera” comes back to my memory in this most explicit manner.

At the dawn of the 21st century, politicians, mass-media and PR or advertising experts try, for different reasons, to persuade us that what is important is not what happens, but what our perception on what happens is like. To put it otherwise, it’s not reality that is important, it is its reflected image. Thus, a different truth is created and imposed, which is in fact false, or, to be honest, it is a lie.

I remember that in 1999, at the Francophonic Conference of Moncton, the volcanic Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Congo concluded his intervention with a few verses from a contemporary African dance: “Truth climbs up the staircase, while Lie comes up by the elevator”. From this point of view we are at the peak of technological progress, we have elevators everywhere.

The Patriotic Lie

August 2000

The investigations conducted by the prosecutors in the organized crime combat brigade within the General Prosecutor’s Office

bring solid, undeniable proof of Romania's infringement on the embargo on oil and weaponry delivery to former Yugoslavia during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The government representatives of 1992-1996, deeply involved in the smuggling affairs jointly with the head of the Intelligence Service, started off a violent attack in press and in Parliament, on grounds of jeopardizing the national interest. Totally false. When the judicial inquests in Romania proved these facts to be true, it could also become evident that all the decision-making factors in the West, politicians, the military, financiers knew about them very well. Now it has become quite clear for everybody why, with no well-grounded reason, all the requests for damage compensation that Romania had made so as to cover the period of the first conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had been left unanswered. Instead, in 2000, after Romania had strictly observed the conditions of a new embargo approved by the United Nations during the Kosovo conflict, the national interest was much better protected, and this was also perceived in the totally different attitude towards Romania.

I am facing now, while trying hard to fight against it, the mentality so deeply-rooted in the Romanians, the people who admit, even encourage the patriotic lie to proliferate. I don't believe in the efficacy of patriotic lie, that is the reason why I rejected it from the very beginning. On the contrary, when it was necessary, I committed myself, on behalf of the Romanian people to shedding some light on some of the dark spots of our history which was partly revealed, unfortunately – not in its entirety; for instance, the repressive policy against the Jews. This approach did not bring damage to the country, on the contrary, it raised respect especially from the people abroad, and I daresay, it brought us self-respect too. Asking forgiveness for shameful acts committed in the past by heads of states on behalf of their peoples is one of the best traditions created after the Second World War. Indeed, they come rather late, as the first apologies came three-four decades since the end of the war, however, they did come. Sometimes apologies exceeded this time-limit and related to acts from more remote times in history, but their mere acknowledgement ennobles those peoples, it does not belittle them.

Life reconfirmed Montesquieu's cogitation, who over three centuries ago, stipulated: "Any citizen is duty bound to die for his country, not to lie for it".

*Genetic Envy**August 1994, Tirana*

In Albania everything is more direct, and harsher. Like their mountains without wood, with the thousands of deserted concrete casemates exposed like visible tumors. The complicated relationships among the rocks, which elsewhere are masked by vegetation and thick layers of soil, can be here more easily deciphered. The hospitality of my colleagues in the Polytechnic University of Tirana is likewise, total and direct. They open their hearts.

Adrian Kysyku is a young Albanian, a PhD student at the Letters Faculty of the University of Bucharest.

“The charming nature, quite complicated of the Balkan people cannot develop without contradictions and gainsaying – he says. It is difficult to find an ordinary Balkan man, rich or poor, who, with an amazing easiness, near his glass in a pub, at a meeting, anywhere he may be, should not despise any type of sacrifice made by somebody else. ‘After all what has he done?’ I could have done it, too!’ And he who did nothing is very convincing, since he has listeners to measure up to the task. He also would have thrown himself into the abyss to save his honor, he also would have forgiven, he also would have stepped over the traitors of the nation, he also would have confronted with the bitter piece of bread of exile, he also would have gone through tens of years of prison, he also would have left the Western Paradise to die in war, he also could have spoken numerous foreign languages, he also would have punched the dictator in his mouth, he also would have discovered the medicine against premature death, he also would have invented the elixir of eternal youth...One can remain mute at the easiness with which the human being at the end of this century steals the memories, sufferings, courage and wisdom of others. The troubles of transition and the loneliness of the Balkan people of today turn them into some beings that have defeated even the impossible. They are only left to keep speeches, to give autographs, to attack each other brutally to be better heard. It is easy to imagine how much this tragic-comedy would have lost if these martyrs of the post mortem medicina type would have truly suffered.”

Is there a predisposition for the noisy gossiping, for the violent demolishing contest, not lacking a certain color and humor, which can even become a regional characteristics? Yes, seems to admit, with the

conviction of those having experienced it, the Albanian Adrian Kysyku and Iordan, my Bulgarian friend. I feel inclined to consider they are both right. Maybe nenuphars, never fir trees.

March 2002, Bucharest

It is the time of frogs croaking in the Parliament and on television, in squares and on the radio, in the public institutions and, soon, everywhere. The cry of eagles and the song of the nightingales, the belling.

The Resonance Box

April 2002

For more than one year I have been waiting for an honest evaluation, no matter how tough it may be, but at least it ought to be based on the concrete data and facts of my mandate. Such an evaluation never came from anyone, not even once. Nor was it asked by anyone.

Political lie is ambitious. It will manipulate tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of people. In order for it to succeed, it needs a resonance box. We are the resonance box ourselves, to put it better, it is the misery inside us that is our resonance box: distrust, envy, obscene curiosities, dissatisfied ambitions, cowardice, the joy of backbiting, of wishing someone's failure, the pleasure of laughing at someone in need. The experts in lies provide one satisfaction for everyone, and they laugh at us, at our foolishness and our weaknesses. The pedestal which the lie mounts is made of the corpses of lost consciousnesses.

Who says no to the lie? I hope the answer to this question will not be some awkward silence.

A CHANCE FOR TRUTH

What Is Allowed and What Is Not

2 May 2001, Windsor Castle

I am in London, as an invited guest of Lord Griffith, with a view to presenting an exposé at the conference on *The Eternal Truths at the Turn of a New Millennium*, hosted in Windsor Castle. Participants are: business people from the United Kingdom, the USA, France, Germany; scholars, representatives of the clergy. The speech was followed by a round of interventions and debates, that, owing to the high interest of the audience, went on the next day too. In my intervention I advocated the point that the eternal truths should not be mistaken for the eternal ideals, because good and evil are equally eternal, and the only thing that Man can do is to choose. I concluded my speech quite pompously, with a quotation from the Oath of the Knights of the Round Table: “May Our Lord give us wisdom to find the Good, the will to rightly choose it, and the power to accomplish it”. On my way back to the slippery domain of the present age, I answered, while in the midst of debates to an assertion that placed democracy among the eternal things; I claimed that democracy cannot be considered eternal, democracy is only a way of managing things conveniently, in the least perilous manner, it keeps a fragile balance between good and evil.

Politics, as a form of human life construction, was considered an art. What kind of art? An art of skillful lie-telling to attain power goals? It's not just so. In a democratic society, politics may, indeed, be considered an art of half truths, if a code of conduct is being observed. Because the art of politics gives allowance to a lie by omission. In more precise terms, within political discourse, art consists of convincingly showing all those truths that put you in an advantageous position while putting the political opponent at a disadvantage; this is different from science, where the scientific truth binds you to quote correctly with no deviation all the hypotheses under debate, both convenient, and inconvenient. Where does this political permissiveness come from? Because the political opponent can do the same thing, in his turn he is free to show those things that are

convenient to him and those that are inconvenient to his rival. If these allegations follow a strict and correct pattern, both for you and for your adversary, the listener may put face to face the two halves of the truth and get the whole truth, the one that better sticks out from this debate, being thus able to knowingly opt for a solution.

As for me, who came from the scientific environment, I found it was quite hard to understand this method, because, as I was saying, the goal of science is to discover the truth and nothing but the truth that shall not be submitted to the vote. No majority ballot can change minerals crystallization temperature or water boiling point. On the other hand, science promised neither economic welfare nor happiness to us. What it only promised was truth, while politics forces its servants to promise prosperity and happiness to the people, provided it keeps itself within honorably accountable limits.

All or Nothing

4 March 2002, Pictor Mirea St.

Work at my book is coming to a close. While revising the speeches and conferences I held between 1990-2001 and comparing them to what happened later, I realized that a few assumptions were too optimistic, some others were unrealistic, others – insufficiently well-grounded, but none of them was insincere.

As regards the first volume, including *Memoirs*, I opted for a radical solution, starting from the idea that when you speak about things you did or you were a witness to, people are not interested in 20%, 40%, or 90% of your truth. You either tell them everything or nothing. And the only way for you to be convincing is to tell the whole truth. But what are a statesman's restrictions after all? Obviously, there are restrictions which relate to state secrets, for which a very precise code was worked out. Such restrictions are coded and equally restricted is also the number of years until the time when they can be disclosed. However, speaking from my own experience as a statesman, I realized that in case you unabatedly respect the moral values, they coincide with the national interest and if you are ready to commit yourself to serve this particular interest straight away and in good faith, whether it brings you popularity and political success or not, then the amount of information that cannot be communicated is very low, it sometimes is almost null.

I fully share René Girard's creed. "I believe truth is not a vain word, or a mere effect, as they say nowadays. I believe that all that spares us

the madness and death in this world is linked to this truth, but I don't know how to refer to these things. The only things that seem approachable to me are the texts and the institutions, and the proximity between these two has always been illuminating from all points of view. I easily admit that for me there is an ethical and a religious dimension, but this is the result of my own thought, it's not some preconceived idea governing outside investigation. It always seemed to me that if I were to make public the evidence of some readings of mine, the conclusions that strike me would equally strike those round me”.

I Did Not Know

February 1992, Stanford University

Debate with the students. They are interested in the truth about the communist world behind the Iron Curtain and in what is currently going on there. Within the University, the Hoover Institute (founded by Herbert Hoover, the first geologist ever to become president), which collects documents concerning the countries of central and south-eastern Europe, functions there. They are interested in the matter, but do not have data. We have now all the data, but we are not interested in the issue.

A perfidious adversary to finding out the truth has proved to be the apparently innocent I didn't know. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe after so many decades has brutally re-launched an older case of guilty conscience: silence in front of repression and crime.

A few days, weeks and months, after which the torch of truth seemed to rise to the sky, the ashes and the mud of lies have gradually covered the spark of our hopes.

The fire of truth, that seemed damaging, has been put out especially under the billions of drops that have been merged into the calm and apparently purifying rain of I didn't know.

Jean Cau told the well-known philosopher and leader of The French Communist Party, Roger Garaudy, who had declared that he didn't know anything about the Stalinist crimes: “How come, that I who was not a university professor and a member of the Central Committee, how come that I knew?”

Vladimir Maximov, in a speech delivered for the writers and intellectuals in the west in 1976, a speech that Pamfil Seicaru had chosen as motto for a book that he had published in 1978, warned: “If for one day your turn comes, do not shout, before being shot at or before beginning the march towards the concentration camp, that you have been fooled.

No, it was you who wanted to be fooled, although we have warned you. Our conscience is at peace as far as you are regarded.”

Following a decade in which we have listened to so many statements we have come to the following conclusion: tell me what you remember to tell you who you are.

I have noticed that the strategy of the guilty ones has been to inoculate the general feeling of guilt to the victims. The fall of the Berlin Wall has been rapidly identified with the demolition of the difference between victims and executioners. In order to pardon the real guilty people and to ensure a field of action for them as well as the cheapest camouflage, they have been covered by the landscape.

The hegemony of the general guilt or the non-existence of any kind of guilt has been proclaimed and a general smearing has been resorted to. When one does not wish to identify the true guilty people, either everyone is guilty or nobody is. The hidden artisans of the seizure of democracy and market economy to the advantage of the old structures from the totalitarian period have set up a programme of action by which differences, minorities, oppositions and diversities have been attacked. Hate towards the groups that make up the diversity has been encouraged, as well as the scorn towards callings and the clientele capitalization of services and servitude. Instead of callings, models, authorities, belief, innocence and guilt, a form of joining a unique, uniform, standardized reality has been proposed.

What is the relation between finding out the truth and innocence?

Eugenio D'Ors warned us that “all human history can be conceived as an itinerary from the innocence that ignores to the innocence that knows.”

One has to know a lot in order to become innocent again.

How much?

Let Us Read the Page Before Turning It

Communist regimes have lasted for so long not because of the repression, but because of the inoculated conviction – both of the victims and of the executioners – that people will never find out the truth and therefore, nobody will be responsible for one's deeds.

Ten years after the fall of communism, we can see that all the predictions regarding the danger of a vengeance on part of its victims or of their descendants have been denied by reality and though the dan-

ger of vengeance and retaliation is no longer of interest due to too much time elapsed, a serious debate regarding the system did not take place and is not foreseeable in the near future.

The interest of the European west in the history of the last century rarely goes over the boundaries of the Second World War. American historians seem to stop, until the attack and the tragedy of September 11, 2001, at the war in Vietnam. Now they are starting to reconsider hurriedly and rather late the history of the last five decades, and especially the future of history, from the point of view of a faceless enemy and the war against terrorism among these reduced perspectives. Among the panels of an outdated scenography, the idea that the communist dictatorship was a good ideology badly applied gains support.

Communism has never stood moral trial and there are no signs of anyone wanting it.

The silence kept about the crimes of communism for a decade since its fall continues to be deafening.

Not even the proposal of the first democratic president of Bulgaria – to read the page of the history of communism first before turning it – did not meet with more success.

One naturally asks: “Is the truth of a communism that seems to have fallen so easily still of any importance?” My answer is definitely affirmative.

The phrase “who doesn't know the mistakes of history risks repeating them” seems an outdated commonplace. And yet, a new generation without its own recollections of communism, having its own experience, more often than not traumatic, belonging to a new kind of society is already active.

An Unfit Relationship

April 2000, Bucharest

I am surprised to notice that there are very few people in Romania who understand the essence of the process of impeachment to which President Clinton is subject, he who is the president of one of the most prosperous periods in American history, a period during which it became the supreme world power in all areas. The seriousness of the allegations does not concern the improper relationship with Monica Lewinsky. It is common knowledge that most American presidents, starting with Roosevelt and more recently, Kennedy, had extramarital affairs in the very place that seemed sacrosanct, not long ago, the White House.

The issue under debate in the Congress within the impeachment procedure consists in the initial denial by President Clinton of this relationship in front of the representatives of justice. What the US Congress, representing the mentality of democracy, wanted to emphasize, beyond any partisan political dispute, was the fact that a president is not allowed to hide the truth from the judicial and legislative power, not only when major issues are at stake, but also when issues that otherwise would be regarded as minor are at stake.

Truth stands a bigger chance in democratic, market economy systems that are primarily based on trust.

The art of success starts from the reputation of a trustworthy person, someone whose word can be trusted and once given that that person abides by it. An open society functions on the basis of a culture of honesty that brings along financial and social advantages. Lies disqualify you right away. Strategy is, therefore, to be trustworthy, to be someone people can rely on. Let us remember Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's famous statement about Gorbachev, which was the greatest compliment a westerner ever made. She said: "He is someone we can do business with", therefore, he is trustworthy. Had he been considered a lying communist, he would have been rejected; perceived as "trustworthy", he was accepted.

There is a clear-cut distinction in behavior as far as truth is concerned, between the heads of democratic states and the heads of totalitarian regimes. It is true that the mechanisms of democracy do not even allow for the prolonged concealing of a truth, so that its acknowledgment from the very first moment, or at least at the point when the institutions of the state start functioning, is the best way of action both for the country and for the person involved. Many of those who have preserved the mentality of totalitarian regimes have understood with difficulty the reason for Nixon's resignation in a scandal of listening to the recorded conversations at a meeting of the Democratic Party, after he had overwhelmingly won the presidential elections in front of the democrat candidate; or the reason for Carter's acknowledgement of a failed American commando in Iran, at a moment when the Iranians themselves did not know about its existence in their country, although he risked, losing the elections, which happened eventually. I have seen later on, even on a personal scale, that all those who at that time were involved in structures of power in totalitarian states were not able to comprehend this. For them it remained a total mystery the

reason why a president of Nixon's caliber would resign for such a trifle as listening to the conversations. In contrast with this attitude the way in which the Soviet Union has acted even during the last decades when something was hard to conceal as it was the case of the accident in Chernobyl or more recent ones, like the nuclear submarine, has led to lack of credibility. Today Carter's popularity is even bigger than it was when he was president and Nixon has been positively reconsidered, while those who have lied are disconsidered.

In Two Hundred Years Time

17-21 December 2001, Bucharest

Confined to staying indoors by a fractured right leg, I keep on watching the sterile and boring debates about the tragic events of December '89. I am surprised at the answer to a stereotypical final question: "When do you think are we going to find out the truth about the Revolution?" given by a young historian: "In two hundred years!" At first I thought this was one of those usual terribilistic statements voiced on the TV screen. However, upon opening: *The History of Romania*, published in 1998 by Mihai Bărbulescu, Denis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Serban Papacostea, and Pompiliu Teodor, one of the most serious pieces of work I have ever read, I have noticed, that the contribution of the three (great) Romanian historians stopped around the year 1821, the period 1821-1990 being handled by the two foreign historians.

It seems that, all of a sudden, a hundred and seventy years of distance are necessary. As for the history of the last 12 years, it has not been written yet.

The Truth that Makes One Lonely

July 2000, Brădet

I am going to see my mother in my parents' house in the village of my childhood. I remember that, when I was a child, my mother would read me a fairy tale from the Petre Ispirescu Collection. A tale about a servant faithful to the emperor, who had been trusted with the secret of the life and death of his master under the menace that he would be turned into stone if he ever revealed that secret.

Faithful to his master the servant revealed him, at all risks, what awaits him, even if with each word, he would first be turned into stone up to the knees, then to the waist, then to the armpits, and then his entire body would become stone.

Today I believe that if peoples would be truly seen as masters of their leaders, this could be the way to erect the few stone statues of those who have led them at a given point in time to the painful path of the truth that makes one lonely.

PILLS TO CURE PRIDE

The Mirror Corridor

June 2001, Elefterie 44

Trying to straighten my back which is stiff because of the long period of time spent bent over the writing desk, I take refuge in an arm-chair and with a reflex gesture I switch on the TV set. At 4 a.m., all TV stations are filled with erotic, horror or stupid SF movies. Only the TVR would broadcast at this prime time hour a cultural show. It must have started for some time but seeing the familiar face of Stefan Augustin Doinas I kept on watching the show. Answering the delicate questions of a feminine voice, Stefan Augustin Doinas was putting together bits and pieces of his own life: warm words for masters and friends, the confession of failures or small compromises, the refusal to talk about the year spent in communist jails because others had suffered worse, the refusal to accept excuses for failures, “those who had value eventually became known even during the communist regime”, the honest joy of featuring with a poem in school textbooks... How many intellectuals, how many people can speak like that nowadays?

I'm looking among my books for his latest book, *T from trésor*, that he had given me as a present with a generous dedication that spring, and I find there again the answer to a friend who had confessed to the sin of being haughty and to the inability of fighting it: “I have the feeling that I am unique, I see myself everywhere and I cannot get enough of me” – that friend had confessed to him. “You should assume your current condition, because it is only in this way that you will have a basis upon which you could try and get another one”. The advice of the author sounds paradoxical, as he offers an original method of treatment. “Imagine you are on a long and elegant boulevard among mirrors. Convince yourself that the only esplanade from which you are offered a view worthy of your fame is this boulevard among mirrors, where you can get by excess whatever you could not get by abstinence. Imagine that a whole advanced system of mirrors goes to great pains to capture, reflect and multiply indefinitely your

superb image under which your unique self puts himself forth as a human model... Is there anything else moving in the world? Nothing whatsoever but for your reflection. Is there anyone left to people this country where illusion reigns as an ever-young queen? No one except you. If you walk at the same pace along the boulevard among mirrors, the pleasure with which you had been watching yourself for a long time would diminish. Your admiration would be gradually disturbed just like glory darkened by cheers. That is to say you will no longer look at yourself in ecstasy, as you have watched your favorite movie actor (who was you), but just as you would watch his stuntman. If the image you have about yourself succeeded in causing you a spasm, then you are saved.”

December 2001, Victoria Palace

Twelve years after the fall of communism, the delirium of grandeur strikes back. Minister Cozmâncă, an old Ceausescu apatitic, revives the teleconferences that were so very dear to the former dictator by using the latest technology in communication.

Every week, live (and replay), Adrian Năstase, the prime minister of the Năstase Government, scolds in front of the press and the nation the incapable representatives of local government, who listen to his precious advice, silent and humble. All along the teleconference, the big and small screens give a huge close-up of the prime minister's face, while his timorous interlocutors take turn in occupying a small square to the left of the screen, as small as a handkerchief pocket under the flap of the new party and government leader's jacket. The prime minister talks for a few hours, looking complacently at himself, very much like in the boulevard with mirrors imagined by Doinas. I haven't noticed so far the least trace of spasm.

The Household People

1980-1989, Deva, Baia Mare, Miercurea Ciuc

The field trips for research or practice with the students begin to be marked by general difficulties: the lack of gasoline, hotels without central heating, empty stores. Part of my former students hold now, however, leading positions in the mining areas. They have entered the network of the local aristocracy where the exchange of goods and connections works well, so I can arrange for my accommodation and meal at the party hotels, the only places where there is central heating and

the meals are served on the spot and as takeaway. What is hard to understand there, at least for me, are the household people: the activists from the Center, flattered by the local nomenclature. It is difficult for me to explain how the mere repulsion to the way they walk, with feet apart and bellies forward, their wide necks over the collar of their leather clothes and their opaque look makes me prefer to arrogance, the cold and poverty of the regular hotels.

The Boastful Soldier and the Nuclear Poker Game

August 1995, Eforie Nord

The University of the Black Sea has invited me to deliver a lecture on politicians in post communist transition. I could have forgotten everything I said then, if, in August 1998, still at the seaside, I wouldn't have read on the cover of Doinița Ștefănescu's book "Two Years of Romania History – January 1995 – January 1997" a small passage from that lecture, regarding the profile of the politician that is the descendant of the former activists of the Romanian Communist Party "arrogant and shrewd, eager to become rich, humble when it is the case, coarse at parties, solemn at ceremonies, prone to remember his national belonging whenever this brings along advantages, patriot in verse, but cosmopolitan when it comes to dollars." I did not know that in the years to come, I was to meet them and know them well.

In the capital as well as during my trips to the countryside, I realize that, as opposed to the arrogance of the newly rich of the transition with the ostentation of their cars, houses, jewellery and tailor-made suits, the arrogance of the old nomenclature, recycled so astoundingly by today's bosses, seems simplistic. But this does not make the connection between them less clear. Because the arrogant man rises beyond say, it is impossible for him however to overcome his human condition. Well-hidden by egalitarian slogans, the communist arrogance emerged at the very dawn of the workers' revolution. The Bolshevik – the big man never knew dialogue; his interlocutor either accepted the dogma without saying a word or he was an enemy that had to be destroyed. Party leaders were never wrong. With the killing during the criminal period of communist dictatorship, of the true, potential or invented enemies, the communist leaders of the 60's – 80's found themselves lacking background contrast for their arrogance that was spreading as a sea with no shores. Lacking the exercise of conversation, or at least dialogue and used to give lessons in their own

homes, leaders such as Hruschev or Ceausescu failed miserably at international meetings. Hruschev's scene of hysterics at the UN is common knowledge when he took off a shoe and started to bang it against the table. However when Hruschev had to play live with Kennedy the scene of nuclear poker from the play *The Cuban Missile Crisis* he acted (fortunately for mankind) as the boastful soldier from the *Commedia dell'Arte*.

Prayer Breakfast

February 1994, Washington

I have been invited to take part in the Breakfast with Prayer by the US Congress and Senate. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war, the United States, now the only supreme world power, has to pass the exam of political and military arrogance. For us, Easterners, it is of utmost importance to see to what extent pounding the table will be replaced by beating one's breast within the gestures of world politics. In the presence of over 1200 personalities from all over the world, president Clinton delivered a speech on the issue at hand. After an introduction that conventionally mimics modesty "I find it difficult to speak about the exceptional intervention by senator Sam Nunn", the American president focuses his discourse on the idea that the position of unique superpower must not lead to arrogance, because only God is above us all, and we are meant to contribute together to the creation of a better world for all of us.

Rhetoric and show aside, I feel a concentrated effort on the part of the US towards building a well-balanced political and military discourse.

A.E.I.O.U.

September 1994, Paris

In the pleasant atmosphere of the luxurious apartment in the 16th arrondissement, belonging to the distinguished Mrs. D., a private talk with a few reputed French journalists specialized in international politics is on the way. Without a recording device, notebooks or pens. After a walk through the Balkans, Russia and central Europe, we come to what the whole world calls *pax americana*. Can imperial arrogance come back to life in today's world? I recall a well-known example in central Europe at the end of the last century: the Habsburgs, during their glorious supremacy, took on as their motto the five vowels we

learn at school when we study the alphabet: A.E.I.O.U; *Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo*, meaning "It is only fitting that Austria should rule over the entire planet".

One of the journalists taking part in this dialogue reminds everyone of a triptych of statements following the end of the cold war. In an article published on the 31st of January 1991 in *Le Monde*, president George Bush claimed that the US had undertaken the unique task of making the cause of freedom progress because they (the Americans) are "the only ones who have both the moral stature and the necessary means to do it". A few days later, rapidly growing aware of how difficult this unique claimed responsibility was and of the danger of the arrogant tone employed, he confessed to David Frost that his statement had been "blown out of proportion", confession that was confidential enough to be published in the *New York Times*. James Baker, secretary of state during George Bush's term. Only a week later, in the issue from the 8th of February 1991 of *Le Monde*, stated as a good patcher, states that he was the supporter of a way of treating "after war issues with a new sense of modesty". These moves in the rhythm of a sonata show us that on the western stage, political arrogance, even if it exists, is sung differently.

The Hours of Challenge

11 September 2001, Bucharest – New York

It is a quiet afternoon. In the reading room of the ASPEC library I am talking to some young graduate students of political science about the tendencies of international politics. Someone enters the room in great excitement and calls for us to come in the next room and watch the TV for a shocking image. The North Tower of the World Trade Centre in Manhattan shows a big black hole caused – we are told – by the impact with a passenger plane. With the eyes glued to the screen, we watch how a second plane hits the South Tower. The fall of the first tower follows shortly after, then the fall of the second. One side of the Pentagon in Washington is in flames following the impact of a third plane. The news of the crash of a fourth passenger plane meant to hit the White House is being aired. CNN is broadcasting live images, posting alternatively the fatal moments at New York time: 8:48, 9:03, 9:40, 10:03, 10:05, 10:29. In an interval of 101 minutes the political, military and financial symbols of the United States, the biggest political, military and financial power of the world had been attacked. In three

out of four cases the attack succeeded. The images bring to the foreground the drama of completely innocent people, sacrificed for the sake of an insane and frightening plan. I suddenly remember that one of my cousins works precisely at the World Trade Centre on the 30th floor. The phone connections to New York are blocked. So seems to be the entire world.

The biggest act of defiance in history seems to take shape. The humiliation of our contemporary superpower. "The world will never be the same", is the general chorus. But what will follow next? Wouldn't the arrogance of terror be born out of the humiliation of a superpower?

The way in which the new George W. Bush Administration handled the crisis of the 11th of September 2001, meant to hit the arrogance of American inviolability, shows how important it is to have a well-balanced behaviour in the tough moments of the new poker round of global terrorism.

"Hold your jaw!"

January 2002, The Romanian Parliament

I'm watching the TV and I cannot believe it. Annoyed at a rather benign question, the minister for the co-ordination of the General Secretary Office of the Government threatens the frail parliamentary opposition by asking it to hold their jaw. The reaction of public opinion concerns mainly the use of foul language. Looking at this scene, I am appalled by the way in which the arrogance towards the interlocutors has extended to the arrogance towards the main democratic institution which does not even deserve that language control the communists maintained. How did we come to this?

Communist regimes used to crush individual personality between the steel walls of ideology and the concrete block of egalitarianism, putting it to sleep in the thick felt network where communication was impossible. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, all these were undone and the post-communist transition became the privileged space for the clash of all arrogance. Arrogance diversified. It is just the coat with which the haughtiness of the oppressed individual emerged into the world which is the same – arrogance. Whoever could succeed better in the new confrontation of arrogance than the former members of the nomenclature, who have become the rich of the transition as well?

The man who claimed that history is something that does not teach you anything went through the consequences of this arrogant approach

to the very end. A tragic approach, which changed however the face of Europe. On a local level of masters and newly rich of you cannot but shudder at the idea of the lack of awareness with which these political post-December leaders, coming from nothing and who declare emphatically that God is on the side of PDSR, will keep on being prisoners of their own arrogance, claiming their successes, blind with haughtiness up to the brink of the abyss, ignoring the terrible experience of the one who had been shot in December.

The Mantle and the Mud

26 March 1999, Rohia

I reach the village Remetea Chioarului by plane up to Cluj and then by car. The peasants, led by their mayor, priest and the school headmaster, are waiting decently. I am glad I have got there. The local people are dignified in their suffering. I am fed up with the shrewd and loud people looking for a profit that I always encounter. A night before I had seen on TV a short broadcast on the broken bridge. The children had to pass the river on a small footbridge to go to school, the cattle had to be walked through the water and the households were separated from the town hall, the church and the hospital. I asked minister Noica if he could do something. He could! He is one of the few people whose word I can count on. I promise the villagers that in five months they would have a real bridge to withstand nature's forces. As I was getting ready to go back to Bucharest, Nicolae Noica asked me whether I wanted to see what had been built in Rohia. Of course, I did. He is delighted to show me the concrete road that goes up in curves from the main road to the monastery. The monastery has got now a concrete bulwark, new buildings and halls. In between them there is a small concrete yard. Everything is solid, massive and ostentatious. The abbot, a good manager, is proud of his achievements. Everyone important comes to us – he says. He asks me whether I like it. I pretend I do not hear him. I do not like it. I appreciate their effort and their pride, but I don't like it. When I used to work in these mountains as a geologist, I used to climb on foot the old path up to the monastery hidden by trees. Had it looked as it does now, I am sure that Nicolae Steinhardt wouldn't have chosen this place for his life as a monk. Is Steinhardt's bookcase still there? – I ask. I go up the stairs hoping it had remained unchanged. I am relieved. It didn't change. The same simple shelves. The same books, with grey paper and their thin cardboard covers, gathered with hard work and listed careful-

ly. The humble fir wood table. The sacredness of thought and senses. The collectedness of the man who knew the exuberance of Bucharest's cafes and the tortures of communist jails.

Steinhardt used to recall an old folk tale in which Saint Nicholas and Saint Cassian, summoned by God, meet a peasant with his carriage stuck in mud. Saint Nicholas rolls up and gets dirt on his mantle, letting God wait for him in order to help the troubled peasant. Saint Cassian keeps his mantle clean hurrying to meet God. God however would shatter his haughtiness and cleanliness by praising Saint Nicholas who was late. The erudite monk from Rohia saw in this small story an example for the church which takes part not only in man's and world's tragedy but also in the troubles and disgusting things of everyday life.

25 December 1989, The Metropolitan Church Hill

The first free Christmas in four decades of atheist regime. The TV and radio broadcast live the Christmas mass from the Patriarch Cathedral in Bucharest. It is an unusually warm and beautiful December day. The mad terror of guns has suddenly stopped and in the unreal peace, our eyes, ears and hearts open to the mystery of the birth of Jesus. There was no better time for God's word to find a more welcoming soil. After three days during which the sound of bullets had been accompanied by the hypocritical statements of the former recycled politicians, we could have had the amazing chance of listening to something else: a simple sermon about the birth of a new world, about love and hope. A declaration of penitence on part of the clergy who have served willingly or not willingly, the regime, a prayer of commemoration for those serving the church who had defended faith, who had suffered and died for it. A terrible burden on the shoulders of the old Patriarch and of the gathering of high hierarchs. Unable to sense the miracle that was to come, they have missed the moment. In front of the millions of Romanians many of whom were seeing a mass for the first time, the TV directors and camera operators, who only a few days before had filmed homage shows dedicated to the dictator, were filming now with the same skill the costumes, the clerical tiaras, the icons and the chalices. Blinded by the lights, the high hierarchs were turned overnight into the actors of the first post-revolutionary show, they fell pray to arrogance, building out of bows and prolonged kisses of the hand of his Holiness the Patriarch a long moment of personal glory, which they would continue frantically during the endless blessings and official

offices for the dead. Most of the onlookers sleeping in the ignorance of half a century of atheism, did not perceive back then, and not even later on, the rustling of the glorious moment that was lost in the mist of the years to come. His Holiness's mantle kept on shining in its spotless whiteness, and the nation's carriage remained stuck in the mud of history. Who has reached God?

The Dust on the Teacher's Desk

25 April 1996, Calea Victoriei 120

The Group for Social Dialogue invites me to its headquarters on Calea Victoriei for a talk on Romania's economic and political situation. In fact, it is a public examination, meant to determine whether I deserve to be given support for my candidacy in the presidential elections, decided by CDR as a consequence of another examination the 22nd of March 1995. I obviously receive it. All my life I have taken exams; ever since '90 more often than not they have been public. I know all the participants well. They are mostly humanists, and have filled in positions within the academic body of the University since '90 either on a full time basis or on a part time basis. As a vice Chancellor and then Chancellor I have read out of duty and interest their resumes, their books and their presentation papers from their files. I have had heated debates with some others, both publicly and privately. Without wanting it, I know both their weaknesses and their strengths, their ambitions and frustrations, their affairs and the gossip they use in order to constantly bicker at each other in the grinder of today's and yesterday's cultural and worldly society. But now it is something else. The TV lights are on, the notebooks of young journalists (otherwise students in their spare time) rustle, a pile of microphones and recording devices occupy the low tables in a relative equilibrium. The egos suddenly increase as a bunch of big and colourful balloons. The show may begin: the prize – two pages with a lot of pictures in the "22" magazine, a few seconds on the evening TV news and, if I make a limp comment, a small headline in a central newspaper.

The meeting resembles a trial, the statements – small indictments. This is how it works here, in the centre-right, with the intellectuals. I know the game, I would act like that myself. An intellectual without a critical approach would be nonsense. Otherwise he would be on the list of supporters for Ion Iliescu. However, it seems to me that every once in a while a good word wouldn't harm.

A rustle arises, as if in *The Third Letter*. Liiceanu is here. In the end, when he considers that I have been sufficiently shaken and stirred, the master speaks:

— How do you think, professor, that you will be able to solve the problems of the country, if you could not solve as rector the problems of the University?

At last, a question I like. It was no longer something about ideologies, programmes, charm, image. I was on solid ground, it was something I knew to the smallest detail.

— And what are the problems I have to solve, as rector, that I haven't solved yet? – I ask in my turn.

— Whenever I go to deliver my lecture, at the faculty, there is dust on my desk, I have found a nail sticking out of a chair and there is no toilet paper at the toilet – the indignant philosopher bursts out.

— Professor, – I answer him – a week ago, the University Senate, where 30% of the members are students, has analysed the carrying out of the reforms and development programme of the University, launched in 1992. I have been charged with its accomplishment when I was chosen rector, and the Senate has unanimously approved the balance sheet I have presented. During the time that I was rector, the number of faculties has doubled, the number of students has tripled, the number of academic departments has doubled as well, conditions have been created for including valuable intellectuals in the academic body, people that had been kept away from the University, among whom you yourself. Twenty-three new research centres have been set up, mainly by means of self-financing. The curricula has been updated. The international scientific cooperation has been enhanced. The study space and the number of student hostels has been increased. It is true that the salaries and scholarships haven't been risen, but I suspect that you know that this is not in the hands of the Chancellor. On the other hand, 25% of the University budget is ensured by means of self-financing and I think that this is relevant. Unfortunately, I am under the impression that you don't know and you don't care about these things. As far as the issues that bother you weekly, I can tell you that whenever there was dust in my faculty or in the lab, I did not hesitate to clean it myself neither as an assistant lecturer nor now as a professor. In my rector's office I have a geologist's hammer and if it is absolutely necessary, I will knock, as a friendly gesture, the nail in your chair, but as far as the toilet paper is concerned, you'll have to bring it

yourself, or you'll have to persuade the cleaning lady to perform her duties from her job description.

Seven years have passed since then, but this event still intrigues me. Maybe it was then and there that I should have realised what it means to become president of Romania and I should have given up my candidacy, if it hadn't been too late. Because those words uttered by a distinguished philosopher, rendered more convincingly than any other political, sociological or psychological survey, the entire confusion in our society regarding the assignment of tasks and responsibilities. We may organize hundreds of symposia on subsidiarity, if the people leading these symposia expect the rector of a university to organize the tasks of the cleaning lady in wiping the dust and replenishing the toilet and that the rector himself and not the others up to him: the tutor, the assistant lecturer, the lecturer, the head of the department, the dean, the administrative manager and the vice chancellor should control and answer each in turn for their responsibilities, leaving the one who has a superior position on the ladder the time and energy to deal with solving what they can't or shouldn't do. And there is something else: "firing" should follow the complicated path required by the law, that of proposals "from below", which nobody, when it comes to it is prone to do.

This event had a positive outcome as well. When I became president, I was able to be more understanding of the circumstances when unemployed, widows, retired peasants and so many poor people complained to me about the lack of solutions for their problems, that were of little interest on a national scale, but of big interest to their lives. If a great thinker of our country thought that the rector of the University should deal with wiping the dust on his desk what can I expect from an old lady complaining that the mailman hadn't brought her pension money on time, or that a peasant has got the ditch in front of his house covered with soil?

Ni de mal, ni de bien

4 December 2000, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant

I lay a wreath on the catafalque of the lamented painter Horia Bernea. He is to be buried in the yard of the Mavrogheni Church, for the restoration of which he had worked so hard. Three days before he had been awarded The National Order of Merit, the degree of the Great Cross. According to the rule approved by law, a military company sur-

rounds the funeral procession. It is, maybe after decades that a great artist receives military honours. The salutes of automatic guns tear the calm of the quiet neighbourhood, scattering the crows on the church steeple. By comparison, the sound of the frozen clods of soil doesn't seem sinister anymore. Horia Bernea's sudden and unexpected departure made me deeply anxious. He was both a man of strong beliefs as well as action. The Museum of the Romanian Peasant is his foundation full of grace. He was one of the few people who had offered me unconditional support. In a short time, those gathered inside the church meet on the other side of the road, in one of the halls of the museum. Irina Nicolau, who had always followed him in inspiration and faith, serves us alms and wine. At the long wooden table there are Liiceanu, Plesu and Patapievici. After saying God bless you for it! Liiceanu starts questioning me in his well-known professor-like manner:

"Mr. President, what do you regret during your term?"

I admit the eternal temptation of observers to hunt down the mistakes of those caught in the fire of action and then examine in a superior manner, their asking for forgiveness for their sins and their lamentation. I look away from the jug of clay towards the deep eyes of the moralist and I answer:

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing."

And yet, I love Liiceanu. I loved him when he wrote *Appeal to the Toad-eaters* and I still love him now. The haughtiness of the philosopher is not arrogance. It is just an opinion stated emphatically. It may be the desperate cry when the absurd move of reality "displaces the lines".

Corneliu Coposu used to tell me that in '92, when he was looking for a candidate for the Convention, he thought first of Liiceanu. And he had asked him how he was seeing a presidential campaign. A few inspired discourses on TV can change the state of mind of the nation – the philosopher answered him. I don't think it was discarding the direct contact with the simple people that Coposu liked so much. It was merely an immense confidence in the power of ideas and the power of the word.

Hybris

23 September 1999, Salonica

After having passed over the high peaks of the Rodopa Mountains, the plane descends smoothly to Central Macedonia. I can see the

Chalkidiki peninsula through the porthole, shining like a hand with long thin fingers spread over the Aegean Sea. On the way to the hotel from Thessaloniki airport, I tell the governor who had come to welcome me that I would like to make a short stop at the statues of Alexander the Great and Aristotle. Alexander the Great dominates from the height of his pedestal, while Aristotle seems much closer to us being surrounded by the tables of the cafes in the Square and assaulted by children who play on the statue sliding down, polishing its bronze. The book has outranked the sword. In fact, the greatest merit of Alexander the Great's empire, as it was of the Roman Empire later on, was the fact of having spread Greek philosophy in their territories.

I remember that when I was running for the presidential elections of '92, a journalist had asked me which was my political model. I had answered without hesitation: the founding fathers of the American Constitution. A year before, I had seen in Williamsburg their simple houses, the church and the school equally humble. The *Bible* and the books of the Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, were the spiritual assets of these industrious and austere people. In Washington, staying in front of the marble plaque where the *Bill of Rights* is rendered, I realised the greatness of their project. It did not limit itself to the interests of some farmers and tradesmen from the New World, but it addressed the human being everywhere in all its greatness or misery.

Congressman Frank Wolf was expecting me in the hotel lobby to show me to the Conference Room. I had come to Salonica for one afternoon, invited to deliver the main speech at a conference gathering the representatives of the civil society from all Balkan countries and an important group of American senators and congressmen. I know many of them, we have met at the civic, academic, ecumenical meetings, before or during conflicts that have troubled our tumultuous region. Others who shake my hand warmly I don't recall. Some are new, most of them very young and this pleases me. Most of them had come a day before and seem well at ease together. Was it a test of compatibility?

I start my speech with a rhetorical question: Are we capable of understanding the depth of the tragic lesson of the 20th century now, when it comes to its end? A terrifying century that began with a blood bath, the first world war, on the ruins of which two horrible evils were born, which have outnumbered the victims, everything that history had known so far: nazi and communist dictatorship. Both of them have a common root: the arrogant will to subdue the world, to impose on

everyone one's own rule by means of violence. On this land full of history and torn by unexpected crises, we have the duty to closely examine the past to avoid repeating it. In this place where we are, it might be easier to remember that, over 2000 years ago, the tragic poets of Athens had understood that the haughtiness of the lack of measure, *hybris* leads to the defeat of mortals. And the first deadly sin mentioned in The Holy Bible is pride. The haughty disregarding of the world's making, as the divinity had intended it – harsh, never perfect, merely keeping in it the secret of redemption – the overlooking of its diversity and the thoughtless attempt at destruction in the name of a perfect world, built only by man's hands, drowned in blood and death the history of the 20th century. The way to a better beginning starts with a humble thought in front of God.

How could we enter the 3rd millennium with the enormous pride of using our God against the others God?

After having finished my speech, I withdrew together with a few American congressmen in a small parlour. On the walls, there were sepia photos of inter-war Salonica. Through the open window towards the seashore I can hear the waves. One of the congressmen started the conversation rather abruptly. "Next year you have elections. How many TV stations do you rely on?" "None." "How many radio stations do you rely on?" "None." "Have you hired a western campaign team?" "No." "How about an advertising agency?" "No." He smiled. "I thought that we will once pray together for your success. I think that we'll have to pray several times and longer."

We put our hands together, Orthodox, Baptists, Catholics and we prayed for peace, freedom and democracy. The sun was on the verge of setting in the sea and maybe because of that our faces seemed bright for a moment.

The Vanity of Innocence

26 April 1990, University Square

It's evening I have finished my classes and I'm heading for the lab. On the hallway a few leaders of the Students' League invite me to speak from the University balcony. "Upstairs there is Mrs. Mia Braia and Mrs. Ana Blandiana will come as well." – they tell me. The access of the Students' League to the balcony of the dean's office of the Faculty of Geology, with The permission of the rector's Office was an unhopd for success. The balcony became a rostrum of freedom and

democracy, triggering an exciting dialogue between the more or less improvised speakers and the demonstrators in the University Square. It was the third day since the opening of the balcony and nobody could foresee president Iliescu's reaction, that of the FSN government and especially that of the former Securitate people who had shown through everything that had happened over the last four months that they would not hesitate in front of threats and would not give up violence. The presence of Ana Blandiana was symbolic both to the people in the Square and to the outside. Mine, much more prosaic, had to give the students a sign that they had support at least on part of the leaders of the University. When Mihai Gheorghiu invited me to step out on the balcony and speak to the people in the Square, I said: "After Mrs. Ana Blandiana.; It was not a polite reflex, but the awareness that I could occupy only a small place in the shadow of the great poetess who had accepted to be a civic voice at a crucial moment. On that night of April, the emotional shock, anyone would have on hearing the thousands of people shouting: "We love you", was blurred by the fact that it was for the first time when I had the opportunity of talking to the poetess whose many volumes of poetry and prose, and articles in literary magazines I had anxiously read. When leaving I walked her out, as a host along the dark corridors of the University and I refrained from telling her (and I haven't told her to this very day) that my first book, for which I had been awarded the prize of the Romanian Academy in 1979, *The Mineralogy of the Skarns from Sasca Montana*, had an opening motto rendering a few lines from her poems. Against all customs I had used those lines even in the issues of my dry Ph.D. thesis in front of the members of the scientific committee. I did not miss the opportunities to meet her in person, before the Revolution as well, through common friends. But I was always kept by the fear that knowing the person would cast a shadow on the impression given by knowing her work, as it happens so often.

During the weeks, months and years to come, we would be granted the opportunity of being close during high moments and painful defeats. I had the opportunity of meeting her husband, Romulus Rusan, a truly rare and wonderful man, and I enjoyed the hospitality of their warm home. I must say that I have never felt the conflict between the person and the author. Blandiana is intelligent, honest and pure as she is in her poems. These qualities are not always those that make you loved by those around you. And, as political struggle had brought

us together, I have taken over not only the liking of those who adored her, but also the adversity of those who envied or detested her. And yet, why is there such a tall wall between us these days?

23rd of November 2001, Paris

On the terrace of a café in the Old Latin Quarter, ambassador Eugen Mihăescu, who in the blurry days of December '89 had come back from the States to Romania in order to join Ion Iliescu, whom he had stayed close to, asks me, with keen curiosity, why in the period 1998-2000 Ana Blandiana had treated me with so much hostility. I knew the question, I was asked many times by many people. I didn't have a convincing answer for a long time, and I was the first to admit it. I'll try to make it more clear now. I think that beyond the obvious ambition of making the Civic Alliance some sort of political office of the CDR government and the wrong approach of the relationship between a civic organisation with political implication and a democratic government subject to pressure from political opponents, there is also another explanation. It has to do with what we could call the haughtiness of innocence, which gradually made Ana Blandiana transform herself into the sole moral instance of Romanian society.

Cloning Purity

16 December 2001, Predeal

Back in the country after the surgery in Paris, immobilised in crutches, I receive the invitation of a friend to spend a few days at his home in Predeal. On a small table I find Andrei Plesu's book, *Minima Moralia*. I had taken pleasure in reading it in 1988, when few people seemed ready to assume it. Looking away from the spotless snow to the black rows of books, I find a better way of answering Eugen Mihăescu's question. "The assumption of ethical competence – the philosopher warns us – is the beginning of ethical drift. In the contemporary area it has two specific forms of manifestation: the tendency of judging people in a trenchant way and the non refrainable tendency towards giving advice, giving as argument our own moral quality together with a presumptuous life experience. Judgement and advice are usually practised as ways of refusing to help others, mimicking, by means of discourse, help itself.

The ethical judgement is a species of the lack of involvement, the same way advice – obviously, always good – is a species of self-sufficiency."

A true ethical competence – suggests the author – is obtained only at a point when you are about to lose it.

29 November 1997-6 of May 2000

I have taken part in two congresses of the Civic Alliance to a small group of personal and unconditional fans, imposing on it the non assumption of any responsibility towards anybody and anything, Blandiana gave a hard blow to what could have represented a true force in the civil society.

The homage she receives today on behalf of her former adversaries shows how much this position by which Blandiana limited the Civic Alliance, was convenient and useful to them. Gradually, paying attention only to the purity of the action, of being involved in the soothing of human illnesses and pains, she is merely interested in turning them into monks and nuns. If we are to make her true human qualities absolute, she seems to be preoccupied only by an infinite cloning of herself, as the only possible model of transformation of a sick society.

There is an artificial halt of daytime to morning, in the haughtiness of innocence, the illusion that we can live a continuous morning of history and reality in a world halted at its dawn, at the hour of its paradisiac life.

The Time of the Ephemeridue

17th of July 2000, Scrovistea

It is half past twelve at night. Judging by the noise of the car doors, I realise that the presidential advisors Zoe Petre and Dorin Marian have come, being summoned unexpectedly. After shaking hands I tell them that an hour before, I have got a verbal agreement from prime minister Isărescu for his candidature in the presidential elections in the name of the entire governmental coalition, if it is possible, or at least of part of it. Anyway, I am determined to offer him my total support to the very end. I give arguments for it that at my plan for the ensurance of the continuation of reforms is based on the idea of assuming myself the failures of this four-year term, while on the basis of the forecast economic growth, Mugur Isărescu would be able to assume the achievements of the last year. They are deeply shocked. Zoe Petre had worked on the campaign programmes, and Dorin Marian had worked organisation. Both of them are full of arguments for my getting involved in the presidential elections. They argue for success. The latest polls

show an increase. The presence in the second round is ensured by the fall of Teodor Melescanu in the latest opinion polls. There are chances to gather in the last act of the elections a wide political spectrum, now divided. My reply: "The success of having power cannot be reduced to the pride of the confirmation by vote"; this does not seem to persuade them. I tell them I need now more than ever, their support to do our duty to the end of this term permanently faced with serious internal and external crises which haven't probably ended. They behave exemplarily and I know I can count on their total devotion as long as I stay devoted to the ideas that had brought us together. Their personal interest does not count in this relationship. Once more, I realise the extraordinary opportunity I had working with a few people – it is true, very few – but honest and loyal. I ask them to take the necessary measures so that at 12 o'clock I could record a message to the nation, to announce that I would not run for a new term as president. When leaving, upon hugging them I can feel they are on edge. I see them off and wait for the red lights and official cars to disappear at the end of the alley. I remain surrounded by the century – old trees among which the royal barouches of the Cantacuzino family, voivodes, kings and dictators had passed. Power is an extreme sport. It is a tough game between haughtiness and humility on a stage populated by violence, intrigues, loyalty, treason, compromises and sacrifices. Power, love and death, three experiences of which you cannot talk until you have faced them directly. I have felt the flame of vanity and the thorn of haughtiness. Power is not for those who do not want it. Whether they wish it just for themselves, for other people's welfare, for a utopic ideal, this is a different matter. You ought to fight and answer for it. You cannot leave it like a suitcase lost in a railway station. You can exchange it only for another kind of haughtiness. The arrogance of giving up in favour of a benefit higher than yours. Even though you know that this haughtiness / humility will neither be understood nor believed. You are left with the appeal to history. It is simply postponed vanity.

Before re-entering the house, I take a few steps onto the pontoon. The sky is full of stars and the water of the lake is dark. Around the street lamp a small swarm of insects dances frantically. They seem brighter than the far away stars. At dawn, after finishing the last sentence from my Message to the nation, I go back to the pontoon. Under the lamp, on the fir wood plank, the tiny insects of the night that had lie like an ash shadow just ended. Another swarm of insects glistens in the sunlight.

10 December 2000, Cotroceni

Presidential elections for the 2001-2004 term. In order to stop the access to power of an irresponsible extremist, right wing democrats vote for a former member of the nomenclature they despise. For the good of the country! In their reckless egotism they will never be shaken by the shiver of a shadow of responsibility for what had happened. Neither will they ever admit that in fact, they feel more comfortable with a president they can despise.

Zoe Petre, who during her time at Cotroceni kept her composure and her sense of humour intact, reminds me that the same political dramas that stir us daily could be found in Pericles's Athens as well. I agree.

My lifelong job has taught me that even two millennia are hard to quantify in geological time. If we were to shrink the history of our planet to the interval of a day, the history of mankind would fit into its last three minutes. Global tectonics has been teaching me for a long time that an event which took place in one area, is simultaneously accompanied by opposite or different events in other regions of the planet. I remember that during the presidential campaigns of '92 and '96, every time that I got fired up by the standing ovations of a hall, of a square full of supporters, I would calm down my enthusiasm forcing myself to remember that beyond all those things, you would always find a crowd maybe even larger in size of hostile or indifferent people. The antidote has to be administered before the drug.

The modesty shown by politicians, artists, writers and learned men alike always seemed suspicious to me. Power as well as creation cannot do without the strength of pride, which leads you to give everything, ignoring material security and your own life.

Whenever pride, indispensable to action, swerves from the path of arrogance, I suggest a different remedy than the one imagined by Doinas on the mirror corridor. Leave the mirror in which you hope to see yourself as the toughest, the most handsome and the smartest in the country should be left for fairy-tall the Queen. Try to look. In the parabolic mirror of telescopes, at the great astral spaces. Behind the silver background of the mirror, open a gate in the tunnel of time. Then watch the dance of the ephemerides in the light of a single day and you will be brought again to your senses.

The Cespitt and Money

September 2000, Snagov

I am visiting Prime Minister Mugur Isărescu. We are strolling along the shore of the lake and he points to a beautiful white building, guarded by a huge tree. It was built by one of the former governors of the National Bank between the wars. We talk about various things. He tells me that after being appointed governor, he went down to the money depots in the basement of that monumental building. He found out that old banknotes have a foul smell contradicting the proverb that Money has no smell. Going up the public administration hierarchy he also had the opportunity to feel the smell of the political underground.

Is it possible, he asked me – exceeded by the countless investigations to trace the money stolen through the occult operations of the investment funds and popular banks – to clean the cesspitt and still keep the stink out of your clothes?

The paradox is that some of those who seem disgusted are the very persons who had filled the treasuries of the underground economy and are now sitting on heaps of freshly laundered money.

A Homeopathic Cure

19 November 1993, Oxford

I arrive in Oxford to give a lecture, feeling an old expectation. After a campus tour, they see me off to the guest residence at King's College. Everything resembles the English novels and films. The only difference – suited or not to the atmosphere – is myself. Otherwise, I am not the movies faithfully reproduce reality or the other way round. At the low table in the living room, I make the final corrections in the text of the lecture, then I move to the armchair in front of the fireplace where real wood burns crackling. It is my birthday. There are still some minutes left. Enough to fill a glass of Scotch. I clink my glass against the square crystal bottle in the bar. The present does not sound too bad! I have turned 53. I followed my father's advice: leave offspring, plant a tree, write a book. I have two children, when they were born I planted a fir tree for each; I wrote several books and I will renovate my parent's country house sometime. I had two professional targets: to become a professor and to be elected member of the Royal Geological Society of Great Britain. They all turned real. I got more friendship and love than I deserved. All my life has been a race behind the hopes vested in me by my parents, professors, colleagues, friends and an ever-increasing number of people I knew or I did not know. I have more debts than wishes.

The next morning, after skipping a horrible breakfast (burnt bacon and warm milk), the head of the Department of Earth Sciences and the President of the International Politics Association who escort me to the Chancellor of the University. We walk across the fabulously green lawns and when entering the building they do not forget to put the traditional black fins on my shoulders. The Vice Chancellor, the unique Magnificus Retor in the world elected through the votes of all the graduates – among which there are numerous kings, state presidents, prime ministers all over the world – gives me a warm reception in his office furnished with no ostentation in the austere tradition of the British colleges – real monasteries of science. Before parting, he asks me what would interest me more in Oxford. I reply with no hesitation: the rare book collections. At the end of the fascinating periplus, when I reached the contemporary books halls, the director of the library suggested to type my name on a computer that stores data concerning all the books and articles in the periodicals in the library's collections. Waiting for the answer I recognize the thump I was feeling while waiting for the results to competitions and exams quite a while ago. This is the sign that the surfeit of becoming famous has not conquered me over. Not yet! On the printed page I find my articles and studies published in the scientific journals in the United States, Germany, France, Japan or the publications in English of the Romanian Academy. Alone for some minutes in front of the computer I couldn't help typing a name, well-known in our country, in the field of humanities. No vanity is sufficiently nourished unless faced with a comparison. The computer showed no signs of recognition. It was just a confirmation of two distinct types of notoriety. The notoriety of those working in the field of natural history and exact sciences (a kind of notoriety rarefied on very large areas) and that of the people dealing with arts and literature (a kind of notoriety very dense on small areas, controlled by language and mentalities). Had I been dealing with juridical sciences or humanities, the printed page in Oxford could have remained blank. In geology I had the chance that the boiling temperature of water i.e. 100°C was still the same in communism.

Scientific notoriety, which comes up in forms difficult to be understood, is the vanity of scientists. Once the hunger and the thirst for notoriety quenched, we can accept abstinence or a diet for the other sub-products of glory: money, the pleasure to dispose of others, luxury, sometimes even comfort. The illusion of this vanity is the pact with eternity.

Vanity is a dreadful poison, first for the haughty. The remedy is a homeopathic treatment. We have to permanently create ourselves the necessary antibodies.

HATRED AND ITS SHADOWS

The Smell of Fear

September 2001, Târgoviște

President Iliescu invited me to take part, together with King Michael, in the commemoration of 400 years since the death of voivode Michael the Brave. The councilors prepared a new action for the NATO file: the reconciliation of the president with the near past with the help of the distant past. The big risk for this show – that Vadim might let the steam of hatred go off – was avoided with ability. It was practically impossible to deny the presence of the second in the elections in 2000 and the leader of the biggest opposition party. They asked me formally if I wished I delivered a speech. I denied the offer. Vadim was announced that only the president and the representatives of the army and the church were to speak. The foreseen hysterical reaction took place but the danger was eliminated. The officials met me with all their consideration and the inhabitants in the streets with enthusiasm! Nevertheless, why, while coming back to Bucharest, on the background of the monotonous rustling of the wheels on the asphalt a certain feeling of burden made room for itself? It can be the fact that too many of those addressing me with: “We love you, Mr. President, we are waiting for you”, said that in a low voice after having looked carefully around.

Roosevelt was advising his fellow citizens right in the middle of the war not to fear of anything but fear. For the majority of people, things are different – they are afraid of all sorts of things, but they are not impressed by living together with this unbearable feeling.

In all the dramatic moments, starting with the Revolution until 1996, it was given to me to be in the street where the unchained passions were put face to face. Even as president I was not spared of anything. I realized why so few intellectuals entered the direct politics of the contact with the people. It was because hatred naturally gives birth to fear. And, as Doina Cornea would say, I had the opportunity to see how it is much easier to write, urging others to take action, because it is difficult to accept contact with a hostile environment.

I was to see again and to feel the smell of fear during the Miners' unrest, but also the light of hope at the White Shirts march in June 1990, a march against fear. I was to feel the smell of fear at the meeting with the intellectuals at Villa Lake 2, in the night of January 1999, when Cosma's miners had taken hold of Râmnicul Vâlcea and were just a few hours away from Bucharest, but also the respect I felt in front of the dignity of the same intellectuals who the next day in Bucharest, and especially in Râmnicul Vâlcea, went out in the street in a sober and impressing demonstration against violence, to defend democracy, betrayed by many of those whose job was to defend it.

I wonder how many white shirts still exist?

The Betrayal of Scholars

11 September 2001, 45 Kiseleff Av.

Reception at the residence of the German ambassador, Wolf Dietrich Schilling – who was in function during my mandate – on the occasion of the end of his mission to Romania. The purpose of the reunion is completely forgotten due to the shock produced by the events in the United States.

We can see a new world ideology shaping itself, one of violence based on hatred. This should make us more interested in studying the psychology of hatred as part of the psychology of crime. Alongside Nazism, Communism was a school of crime, unfortunately less studied.

In 1927, in his book with the challenging title *The Betrayal of the Scholars*, Julien Benda warned us: “Our century would have been the century of the intellectual organization of political hatreds. Hatred is not a new feeling. Hatred and love are two eternal truths of the human being, and hatred which has accompanied man since the dawn of history does not give signs that it is going to leave us soon or ever.”

Benda's warning, trying to define a century which, in spite of the beautiful way it was rendered into Rumanian by his translator, hardly had started, concerned not so much the danger of hatred as human feeling, but the intellectual organization of this as a basis for political ideologies. The title chosen underlined the responsibility of those scholars who were practicing fanaticism, betraying their mission to oppose injustice – to which peoples can be pushed by the very worship of their homeland – the worship of truth and justice.

We have to admit that, during a history which started with Cain and Abel until the present day, the contest between hatred and love

was clearly in favor of hatred, proving once again that sins are more powerful, more concrete, more viable than virtues.

We cannot speak of a society of love, not even in the most advanced constructions developed by man, but, unfortunately, we can speak about societies based on hatred. Benda's forecast was to be confirmed by the two types of totalitarian systems, which dominated the 20th century – communism and fascism – based, as systems, on racism and social class hatred. It seems that the new millenium is running hard on this, too. Both used crime constructed on hatred and cunningly wrapped in a seducing ideology.

A Telegram from Lenin

3 November 2001, The Andes

We halt at 3,500 meters, in the middle of the Atacama dessert. My former student, Nicu Pop, currently the director of one of the great copper companies in Chile and owner of a research office in Canada, tells me about the ordeal of his family of peasants from Maramures during communism. His father had withdrawn to the mountains and was killed by the Securitate. His mother had been deported to Baragan. She had left us a "kulak" and came back as a "middle peasant", employed as day worker in order to support her children. They went to the orphanage house to loose their trail, but the personal dossier was to follow Nicolae Pop, the son of "an enemy of the people", until 1989 when he was be admitted to the doctorate on this grounds.

I tell him I that in a book issued in 1996 by Richard Pipes, I found a letter sent on 11 August 1918 by Lenin to his comrades in the province, a letter discovered, after the fall of communism, in the Russian archives: "for the people to see, to know, to shake and to shout: there have been hanged the kulaks who are sucking the blood of the people. Confirm reception by cable and communicate the execution. Yours, Lenin. P.S. Find some really tough men."

History shows that these tough men requested by Lenin were found and, after leaving behind them millions of dead bodies, they continued to tear each other to pieces, as in a sinister ritual party dance.

Lenin's cable, found out so late, can but confirm the so-called hostile passages in the novel *Panta rhei* by the dissident Russian writer Vassili Grossman, banned and published long after his death: "The radio, the cinema, the writers, Lenin and Stalin themselves kept saying the same thing: the kulaks are parasites, they burn wheat, they kill the babies. We

were bluntly told: the masses have to be raised against them and they must be all exterminated, their whole class, these rascals. In order to kill them there had to be stated: the kulaks are not human beings”

Once again the writers took the lead over historians.

The Sickle and the Book

23 August 2001, Brădet

In a newspaper I find out two drawings by Veluda. In one, in the famous arms of Bolshevik communism the sickle and the hammer, the hammer is replaced by a book. The second one shows a scholar looking at the noose of gallows; in front of him, at his feet, a pile of books. Will he mount on them? Will they slip away from under his feet? Both images had a tragic counterpart in the reality of the latter half of the century.

In Romania, in 1945, from the very first moment of the Russian occupation, communism acted above board. It is difficult to find something more horrible and disgusting than the campaign of the communist newspapers starting with ‘Scanteia’ where direct instigations to violence, incarceration and murder were in abundance. Numerous distinguished scholars excelled in delations and verbal violence. In the end, many shared, in accordance with the classical communist scenario, the fate of the victims.

My generation could read, in school textbooks, the verses of Eugen Frunzã famous in the communist period. Eugen Negrici recently recorded them in a work dedicated to propaganda literature in communist Romania: “Do hate, as there is nothing holier/ Than hate that watches the earth”.

Party literature did not live for a short time and neither did its themes.

May 1961, Piatra Neamt

After graduating from the School of Law, I am drafted in the regiment of Piatra Neamt with other graduates from other faculties of the University of Bucharest. Many of my colleagues, now famous names in the academic and cultural world, in justice and politics also, may remember the lines the platoon commander asked us to learn by heart at the patriotic education classes: “In a dark night, a kulak in the field/ Threw his hatch to the party activist Darie.” Attempts to carry on there too the “unmasking” meetings we used to have in the faculty. Did not succeed then. Some may have succeeded later.

Stone Rain

January 2000, Cantemir 2 B

I am calling on the president of the Chamber, Ion Diaconescu. He meets me in the hall of the three small, dark rooms Ceausescu-type apartment, where he continues to live in. After settling the pressing official problems, I stay for a little while. The thoughts of the senior president of the National Peasants' Party go back to the seven years of communist prison. He miraculously survived the cement cells, with no heat, where he stayed in chains for a while. In answer to my amazement: "how could he?" – because from a medical point of view it is difficult to imagine such stamina –, he told me he had lived with the hope that outside the prison walls, from where he had no news, there were people solidary with those suffering for their ideal of democracy, justice and freedom. The moment he was set free from prison, after he was deported to Bărăgan and got rid of his forced residence, he went like any man in times of hesitation or joy, to his native village Botesti. He was to live there a bitter experience. People would keep out of his way, hiding behind the gates and would come to greet him only protected by the darkness of the night.

When the Revolution started, the people who had suffered in prisons were the first to come to University Square and participated directly, because they had lost the feeling of fear long before. They enjoyed the burst of joy in the moment of liberation and thought that finally the moment to bury the hatchet had come. After few days, there started well organized, violent manifestations against those who should have become heroes of a revolution that had proclaimed itself anticommunist. They went through hostile manifestations with shouts "to death". Their so-called rescue in tankettes was, well staged, to be humiliated to the end, from a furious crowd. I wonder what they had to do with these people?

During the first miners' upheaval, the National Peasants' Party headquarters were utterly devastated. Some believed such things happened in Bucharest, a big city where people did not know them. But they had a shock when they returned to the places of birth of NPP leaders. When the former political prisoners went to commemorate Ion Mihalache in his native village, as a symbol of the fight for peasants' rights and prosperity, [who had set up clubs with a European appearance,] the villagers hidden behind their fences rained stones on them.

Now there are no stone rains any more. Now words are spelled with endless violence that seems to sweep everything out of its way. This has not ceased, neither when the NPP were in power nor when they are not in power any more.

Who are those orchestrating this endless hate?

The Darkness of Violence

21 December 1999, University Square

The Revolution of 1989 seemed a triumph of love. The spontaneous hugs among thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people out in the street like a stream were real and true, making to start something that looked extraordinary in the souls of people after forty-five years of communist dictatorship of hate. But this apparent victory of love, which brought to victory a revolution of people with bare hands in front of well armed troops who did not hesitate to shoot, lasted for a very short while. In only a few days, hate was to burst out dividing irreparably the Romanian society. It is hard to believe that this happened spontaneously, that people dominated by love started, all of a sudden, to be dominated by hate.

The intellectual organization of hate acted without mistake in well-known institutions. The people in whose souls this type of education had left deep traces could, once again, be easily manipulated and used for the benefit of the former communist oligarchy. I do not mean isolated cases when unbalanced persons let their instincts go free -- like the colonel in Sibiu, who obliged people to stay in a pool without clothes, tortured them, and whose trial was so difficult to institute that the indictment could only be finished in the winter of 1999. I am thinking of the hate that stirs masses, and my personal memory is very vivid here, of the groups that were agitating clubs under the window of my laboratory at the University, shouting "We work, we don't think", of those who entered the building of the Government on 28 January, and those who came to "protect" the Government with clubs. Where from came all those clubs if not from those prepared by the Securitate to liquidate the demonstrators in Timisoara? Hoards of miners beat and maimed people whom they did not know, just because they looked like intellectuals. I recall, especially, the image of women with clenched fists and eyes popping out of their sockets, who were applauding and inciting them: "Hit, kill the intellectuals". I recall the burst of hate, well orchestrated on both sides in Târgu-Mures in 1990.

All types of hate orchestrated during the communist era were to be found in the confused events of '90-'92: class hate against those bringing back the land owners and the capitalists; ethnic hate – Romanians against Hungarians; religious hate, which divided two pure Romanian historical churches – the Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholic one; hate against foreigners “come from abroad to steal from us”; hate against the Romanians outside Romania “who had not eaten soy salami”.

In 1992, when I accepted to candidate on behalf of the democratic forces in the presidential elections, I knew what I was to expect. When I ran again for elections, in 1996, I knew as well that, if I succeed in becoming president, it was this people torn with hate for so many decades, and sometimes centuries that I was supposed to lead. I was not unprepared. I lived in the vicinity of hate. I had the ill-luck to feel and to see it.

I was born the year when the World War II started, on the banks of the Nistru, on the line that in nine months time was to mark down the beginning of the war between Nazi Germany and communist Russia. In my childhood, I witnessed the epoch of the black cars taking people in the middle of the night, never to return. In my youth, I saw the face of this hate, during the reproof meetings of the enemies of the regime.

The fact that I managed not to be trapped by hate is one of the few real victories of my life.

An Autopsy of Evil

25 March 2002, Budapest

At a suggestion of the new ambassador of Romania at Budapest, Dr. Călin Fabian, I visit the House of Terror on Andrassy Avenue, created due the efforts of playwright Kiszely Gabor. I saw one of his plays, staged at the Nottara Theatre in Bucharest. This man with a stone-like face permanently stage the two protagonists of terror in the 20th century, fascism and communism. If in the Holocaust Museums in Jerusalem and Washington one can see the horrors of German Nazism and in the Museum of Communist Holocaust in Sighet one can see the horrors of Soviet communism, here one can see them together. At the opening, 100,000 persons filled Andrassy Avenue to the front of the museum, whose emblem is putting together the Nazi cross with arrows and the red five corner Bolshevik star.

A museum of horrors which like their authors are history? No, comes the answer from the French historian Thierry Wolton: "The fall of communism and the re-appearance of the brown-red in Europe as the last synthesis of an evil that tore the whole century, is not an end point, but a stage that can draw humanity towards other trials. If there is really a binder, a common trunk, a reason to be which the reds and the browns share, this is their hate of democracy, human rights, individual liberties. The fall of communism in Europe, whose impact we are only now measuring was far from being the perfect evidence of a long-term victory for modern liberalism, as Fukuyama was tempted to think in the moments of euphoria of 1989-90. Since history demonstrated that there has never been a final triumph of reason, be it in the name of spiritual – Christianity –, philosophical – the enlightenment –, or political – democracy.

During the postcommunist transition period many democratic institutions are in danger of losing their legitimacy in front of the population before they are really experimented and a part of the new democracies run the risk of becoming a prey for the populists, nationalists, or Mafia organizations which manipulate the most extremist parties. The discourse of the inheritors of the red-browns is clear: the defense of the nation against a foreign presence that would threaten its identity, priority given to the security, promotion of the authority cult and respect of hierarchy."

As a classical example for these tendencies, Thierry Wolton presents Romania: "where the party Greater Romania, led by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, a promoter of a typical nationalist-communist discourse, makes progress from ballot to ballot." It was 1999.

That he couldn't be more right we saw a year later. Sometimes one has a better perspective from afar. Revenge voting predominated. The professionals of hate and lie capitalized it.

23 JAN 24 1993
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4010

January 25, 1993

LEGISLATIVE
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D-VA
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4010
FRANK R. WOLF
D-VA
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4010
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D-VA
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D-VA
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4010

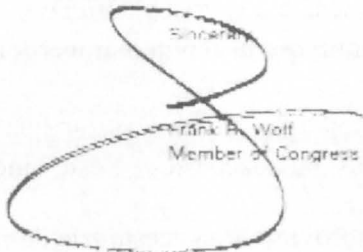
The Honorable Emil Constantinescu
President of Romania
Palatul Cotroceni Palace
Bucharest, Romania

Dear Mr. President:

I know this past week must have been difficult for you. I have been following the press accounts of the miners' actions with great concern.

I wanted you to know that I am praying for you and the other government leaders as you seek to do the right thing for your country.

May God bless you during these days of challenge.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:adj

Geo Bloss



THIS STATIONERY PRINTED ON RECYCLED OR RECYCLED PAPER

Congresul Statelor Unite
Camera Reprezentanților
Washington, D.C.

25 ianuarie 1999

D-lui Emil Constantinescu
Președintele României
Palatul Cotroceni
București, România

Dragă Doamnă Președinte:

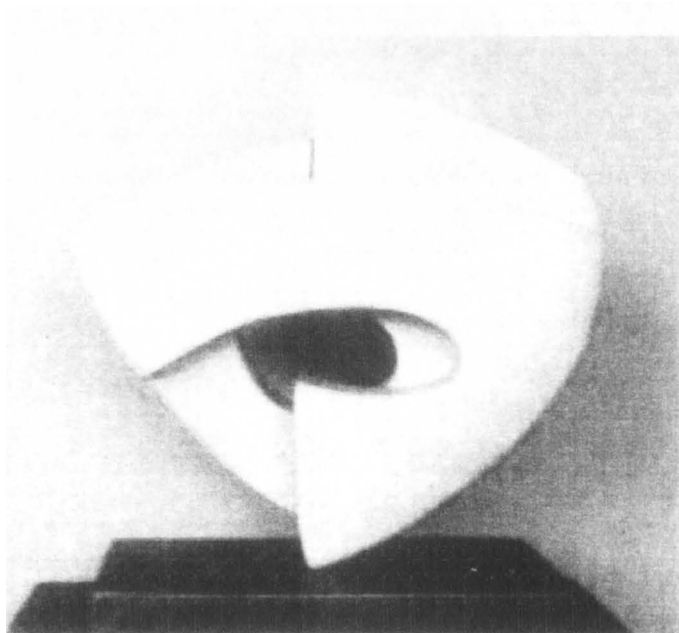
Știu că ultima săptămână a fost grea pentru Dvs. Am urmărit cu îngrijorare relatările din presă cu privire la acțiunile minerilor.

Doresc să știți că mă rog pentru Dvs. și pentru ceilalți lideri ai Guvernului în încercarea Dvs. de a face ceea ce este bine pentru țara Dvs.

Dumnezeu să vă binecuvinteze în aceste zile de provocări.

Cu sinceritate,

Frank R. Wolf
Membru al Congresului



ELECTED TO DECIDE

THE NECESSARY WASTELAND

The Pillar of the World

January 7-10 2000, Jerusalem-Bethlehem

In the first days of the last year of this millennium seven heads of state with a Christian-Orthodox majority gathered in the Holy Land to celebrate, according to the ancient rites, two thousand years since the birth of Jesus Christ.

Before returning to Romania, I went to Jericho together with high officials of the Romanian Orthodox Church, to lay the foundation stone to a prayer house for the Romanian pilgrims to the Holy Land. Modern means of transport made it an easy task for us to cross the Negev Desert to reach the Dead Sea where the oldest construction ever erected by man is still standing: The Pillar of the World.

Advancing through the hallucinating scenery of the Negev Desert at twilight, I asked myself, perhaps like many others before me, the most distressing question: Why here? Why in the middle of these desolate sands, by the salted waters of the Dead Sea and the bare cliffs of the mountains beyond the sea? How loud must have been the call of the trumpets of Jericho along the centuries and millennia for the Assyrian, the Persian, the Macedonian, the Roman, the Arab, the Ottoman and the British Empire to fight their way here? Those empires reigned over rich fields, rivers and lakes with fresh water, endless forests, gold and precious stones deposits, all the riches on earth and underground. What was it then that lured them here, what made them spare no effort and, sometimes no lives, in coming all the way to this desolate places? What was it that they wanted to prove to themselves or to other people with this crossing of the desert? After thousands of years, nothing of the mystery enfolding the deep motivations of human action has been dispelled. Maybe there is no answer to these questions.

‘Sitting on a dune in the desert, you see nothing, you hear nothing and yet something glitters in the silence’, wrote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in one of his beautiful short stories, ‘perhaps because a fountain

lies hidden somewhere... like in an old house where the legend has it that a treasure is hidden. Such spaces are fascinating because they are hiding something. What renders the stars or the desert beautiful, remains unseen.'

The Lost Generation

June 1994, Cairo – Alexandria

I've been invited to deliver a series of lectures at the Universities in Cairo and Alexandria. I've asked my Egyptian colleagues to take me to the Desert of Sinai. Leaving the highway and taking just a few steps into the desert, sends a shiver down your spine. Without any doubt, the crossing of the Desert of Sinai on foot, thousands of years ago, was one of the most daring enterprises in the history of mankind. But why had it to span over forty years and why had it to take the toughest, roundabout way?

In the last decade of the 2nd millennium, the nations of central and eastern Europe, which had just thrown off the yoke of the communist dictatorship, tried to cross the desert of the transition to a society closer to human aspirations. With the exception of eastern Germany, whose transition can be compared to crossing a desert in a car with air conditioning, they re-enacted, thousands of years later, one of the fundamental experiences of humanity – the road leading the Jewish slaves from Egypt to freedom. The Exodus is a precious guide to all nations crossing the post-totalitarian transition. It stands witness to how difficult it is to build a society based on the rule of Law and on solidarity, on sharing the same goals. It stands witness to the temptation of obscene vulgarity, to betrayal and crime, to worshipping the Golden Calf, but above all it speaks about the exigency of the price paid in advance, and of a whole generation sacrificed in order to change the life of the future generations.

The Temptations of Power

April 1990, Haifa

I'm visiting the Universities of Haifa and Rechvod, in Israel. This time I have asked my Israeli colleagues to take me to see the Desert of Judaea, by the Jordan river, near the Dead Sea. It was here, in this desert, that Jesus Christ spent forty days preparing himself before setting out on his three-year journey to redeem humanity from sin. He showed us that before setting out to change the world, you must look

onto yourself. Theologians say that besides the trial of fasting, silence and prayer, Jesus was subjected to the temptation of wealth, power and domination. These are three permanent temptations in the life of a contemporary politician. It is a moving example for those dreaming to be the saviors of their people. If not in deed, at least in thought they should put themselves to the test of the desert. It is a way to purge themselves of all the motivations that are alien to their mission, which is to serve their people. And there is one more thing. If the great, happy king David claimed at the end of his life: 'Vanity, all is Vanity!', those leaders, who are disappointed in the ingratitude of the people they have led through the desert of transition, would better know the desert before they are acclaimed or contested, adored or betrayed.

We should never forget the teachings of the Holy Books, which show us that neither Jesus Christ, nor Moses before Him, were given the chance to enjoy together with their disciples the fruits of the change whose seeds they had sown.

Climbing the mountain that we call life, I have realised that with every step I take I see further, I feel the world opening before my eyes and I discover things I have never known, things about the world. Advancing through the desert, where everything is the same as far as the eye can reach, you feel the world closing upon you, and, in that immense monotony and loneliness, you discover things you have never known, things about yourself.

PROPHET, MANAGER, FLOOR SCRUBBER

Anger and Vision

The first democratic presidents after the change of regimes in the east-European countries in the 90's had rather similar experiences. Brought to power by crowds filled with enthusiasm, they had to learn quickly that a president elected by the direct vote of the people must be a prophet, a manager and a garbage-man. If he's not a visionary and he's not endowed with the gift of ancient prophets to inspire people, he never gets to be president, because after a dictator is overthrown the people is not interested in a good manager. However, once a president, unlike prophets who forebode soon-coming misfortunes and future happiness, but who are never forced to bear the responsibility for their own prophecies, the newly elected presidents must be good managers of the immediate present. Not only must they solve economic, administrative and social problems, but, at the same time, they must be the successful managers of all the hopes for change pinned on them.

Amelia Pavel takes over a Hasidic story about a Rabbi who, having got tired of the suffering around him, went one day to heaven and asked Messiah why he kept delaying his coming when all the people have been waiting for him for so long. Messiah answered: 'It's not me that they are waiting for. It's the things they wish for themselves that they are waiting for: some want health, others money, knowledge, etc.' 'If this is true', the Rabbi said, 'then You can stay where you are.' After that he went back to his people and told them: 'My fellows, it only now that the waiting begins.'

How could it be possible to fulfill the general wish of the people and, at the same time, each and everyone's personal wish?

Illusions and Ideals

Several years ago, when I was rector of the Bucharest University, I conferred the title of Doctor Honoris Causa on Václav Havel in the

name of the Senate of the Bucharest University. In his reception speech Havel outlined the difference between ideals and illusions. To have ideals, he said – with a conviction I was not able to understand very well at a time when he himself was a president of ideals –, is a hard thing, because you must fight, yourself, for your ideals. To have illusions is much more comfortable, because you commission others with turning them into reality.

Writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who was defeated by a cynical-populist leader in the presidential elections in Peru, goes even further in understanding human nature: ‘People do not live only on truths, they need lies as well: lies they make up by their own free will, not lies that are imposed on them, lies that come naked, not disguised in the dress of history. Fiction makes their life richer, completes it, and allows them to escape, for a while, the tragic condition of their human existence, which is to dream about higher things than what they can truly accomplish.

That’s why the east-European leaders brought to power by the enthusiasm of the people and not by a functioning political system, are responsible not only for the promises they make, as is the case of Western politicians, but especially for the hopes and the illusions of the people. And that’s why, at the end of the ‘night’, they must apologize to the people for having appeared in their dreams.

Who Cleans the Sewage and Who Scrubs the Floor?

Watching TV and reading the newspapers one may think the president is some guy isolated in his palace, who spends his time chairing meetings and seminars, going abroad on official trips, having official dinners, inspecting the army, and giving orders to an army of public servants.

To a certain extent this is true; it is part of the so-called job description of a president. But the other, less known side of his job is being the garbage-man of the society. Behind closed doors, he starts in the morning reading the reports of the police, the intelligence service, the governmental agencies, to end, often after midnight, with reading desperate letters sent by common people. The president’s mail box is stuffed full of all that goes wrong in the country: wrongdoing, misery and helplessness, statistics of crimes, robberies, rapes, bankruptcy, dirty businesses, corruption, natural disasters, offensive reports by international diplomatic and financial forums, administrative blockades, rebellions, conspiracies, complaints, the cries for help of the people oppressed by fate or by their fellows.

I often recall the heroine of Antonine Maillet's novel *La Sagouine*, a woman whose job was to scrub dirty floors. On her knees, with the pail of water in front of her, she sees the world mirrored in the dirty water: the world of politics, of business, the misery and the joys of daily life. Above all she sees, as in a dream, a peaceful Christmas, the breeze of spring, a Paradise with God, The Father calling people to the Saturday evening dance.

THE MINUTE 90

The Blind Guide

12 September 1999

The idea in *Picnic by the Side of the Road*, the short story by the Strugatki brothers, which inspired Andrei Tarkovski's film *The Stalker*, is that fate gives you not what you ask, but what God reads in your soul, even if you're ashamed to admit that was the wish of your soul.

Red, the stalker, a man with a natural gift for avoiding danger, faces many difficulties and risks to discover a fantastic machine which could make true any wish. But once in front of it, he realises with despair that he doesn't know what his wish is, because nobody ever taught him what was really important for his life and for the life of those he loves. All the things passing through his mind were fleeting and lacked substance. It's interesting that this man, who up to that moment had proved able to guide and help others go through the most difficult moments to fulfil their dreams, cannot answer the fundamental question of his own existence. Of all people, he, the stalker skilled in solving concrete problems, is in trouble not knowing what to ask for himself, and he curses those who haven't taught him.

It's a terrible warning, both to those who are chosen to lead nations and to decide their fate without being prepared for it, and to those who stand aside knowing what's to be done but being afraid of taking the risk.

Three in One

October 1964, Dude^oti

In the late 50's and until 1966 there was flea market on the outskirts of Bucharest, on the place of today's district Balta Albă. At one end of this fair there was a bazaar with old books, which, by a miracle, had survived the raids of the Securitate. A good deal of my scholarship grant went there. One day I came across a book entitled *Politics as Words and the Statesman* by Simion Mehedinti. I had heard the name of the author mentioned in a family of intellectual boyars I used

to visit at their forced residence in Pitesti in my adolescence. I bought the book telling myself I could learn something different from the rubbish poured into our ears by the professor of Constitutional Law, a retarded man with red diploma earned in Moscow. Later as a student in geology I was to rediscover Simion Mehedinti as a founding figure of Romanian geography, as a minister in the government between the wars and, later in his life, as a political prisoner in the communist jails.

His book came out in 1928 in Bucharest and London. In the first part, *Politics As Words*, he brings politics under sharp criticism, to ask in the final part: 'Does this mean that politics is a sort of inferior occupation or that a politician's contribution to the development of the Romanian society does not measure up to that of an artist or a man of science? On the contrary. A statesman sees the work of the artist and treasures his gift of striking the deepest chords of the human soul, and of sowing sympathy in people's hearts. He sees the work of the man of science and values his untiring efforts to carry the light of progress even further. He sees the man in the street, working for others even when he thinks he works only for himself. He values them all according to their merits. He brings them all together in a unity of thought, feeling and will to create one single force – the state, the highest expression of a nation's will to live.'

Apart from the enthusiastic style characteristic of the beginning of the 20th century, we find here one of the very rare pleas for the state and its servants.

In a more analytical register, Simion Mehedinti makes it a condition for a statesman of high stature to be the embodiment of at least three people: a thinker, who can raise every day matters to the level of a synthesis of ideas in order to formulate a view of life that suits best his time; an artist who can listen to and understand the deepest movements of the soul of his nation; and a man of action, who can bundle up in his hand all the energies of his nation, and who can take the initiative to accomplish all the things that are hardly perceived by the chaotic will of the people.

That's why, Simion Mehedinti says, 'The politics of a country is worth as much as the man representing it.' He thinks that a statesman must necessarily have two qualities: he must be realistic in choosing the idea that yields the best results for the development of his country, and he must be impersonal in choosing his collaborators. 'Because', Simion Mehedinti adds, 'in life any idea is worth as much as the man entrusted with putting it into practice.'

Killed by a Gentle People

Let's see how Romanians treat their leaders. The official histories of the Romanians carefully avoid making the grim review of the way in which Romanians treated their leaders in ancient or modern times. Between 1934 and 1989, most of Romania's leaders, be they kings, presidents or prime ministers ended up badly. They were either shot in the street, executed, or exterminated in communist jails. Others were sent into exile or thrown into prison following political vendettas. This frightful list of crimes starts with the assassination of prime minister Armand Calinescu to end with the hasty execution of Nicolae Ceausescu following a sham trial which practically makes it a political assassination. I think this list is unequalled in Europe and in the civilized world in general. Maybe it's unequalled even in less civilized yet not so vindictive countries. If we follow this list deeper in time, we trace back the assassination of Barbu Catargiu, the last Romanian ruler before the union of the principalities and, of course, the shameful exile of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. How can all these facts be explained when we're talking about a nation whose self-created image is that of a kind, tolerant and understanding people? We could look for an answer in the accounts of foreign travellers who were acquainted with the 16th century Romania. In 1574, Polish Bartolomeu Paprocki wrote: 'The people of Moldavia are evil and unfaithful to their leaders.' Michele Bocignoli of Ragusa, who studied the ways of the people in Wallachia in 1524 goes even further: 'Romanians are always discontent, no matter how things stand. They are so prone to fighting and quarrelling, that most of the times they do not step back from killing their rulers.' Anton Verancsics who travelled to Wallachia in 1538 is even more explicit: 'As if gripped by an inborn madness, the Wallachians are in the habit of killing almost all their rulers, in secret or in broad daylight /.../ and it's through a miracle that somebody gets to rule the country for three years, or to die a natural death. Other times they kill two or even three rulers in two years time, and there's not one potential ruler of princely family who's not sure that death awaits him when he succeeds to the throne.'

In this book *Petre Țuțea Between God and My People*, Andrei Pleșu brings forward a discussion about the executioner who legitimates himself by his high ranking victim. Pleșu starts from Constantin Noica's confession him that while in the communist prisons, the inter-

rogator warned him: 'Listen to me, I have interrogated Tutea, too!'. The high ranking victim enhances the vigilance of the executioner. What's the rank of the Romanian people?

What Cannot Be Forgiven

10 December 2000, The Jean Monet High-School.

When I came out of the polling station, where I cast my ballot in the second round of the presidential elections in which I no longer ran, poor Faur Isaia, his mind twisted, half by his own insane ambitions, half by the brain-washing propaganda of an extremist party, threw on me all the ink in a small bottle, just like Kohl and Blair were pelted with tomatoes and cream tarts. The gesture seemed laughable to me. For four years I had received litres of ink in the face; the ink of newspaper articles slandering me, flinging mud and lies at me. More than half of this ink was the overflow of malice, hate and pent up frustrations of some 'distinguished' journalists and democrat intellectuals published by so-called rightist papers.

I refused to consider myself a part in Faur Isaia's trial. 'President Constantinescu loves me', he told the prosecutor. After the trial, his simple mind prevailed and he came to me at the University and apologised.

But there's still enough ink in the tub of the Romanian 'intelligentsia'.

In the last years a line by Nichita Stănescu has kept coming to my mind:

'People, I have loved you, beware!'

EVENING SCHOOL FOR PRESIDENTS

Another Azimuth

25 April 1999, Washington

The Plenary Session of the Council of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership takes place at the Merlon Auditorium. Heads of NATO member states, as well as heads of applicant states, participants in the Partnership for Peace are present. NATO has decided to grant Romania the honorary presidency of this session. Thus, after declaring the meeting open, NATO General Secretary Javier Solana invites me to deliver the opening speech. Statements by the other presidents and prime-ministers of NATO member states and applicant states participants in the Partnership for Peace follow; after that there is a break for the usual family picture. It is quite difficult to have all the participants in one frame – there are forty-nine heads of state and government present, plus the General Secretary – 50, the same number as that of the years NATO celebrates these days.

After the break we meet for the breakfast offered by President Clinton at the Pavilion Room at the International Trade Centre in Washington. The atmosphere is different. There are members and experts of official delegations missing, there are no press opportunities anymore, there are no more translators. The hosts have gone to great efforts to prepare a refined West-European menu, the dishes have a symbolic size, and that seems to puzzle some heads of state from areas of the world where the opulence of breakfast is considered a sign of hospitality. In exchange, Western-European heads of state make great efforts of adjust to the informal American style. The tone is set by José Maria Aznar, to the right of whom I happen to be. He slowly pulls out a huge cigar which he lights and then pulls out another one which he offers to President Clinton, who bursts out laughing taking it for the general amusement. The time between hors d'oeuvres, the main course and desert is filled by small talk. We are located in a large rectangle so that we can see each other very well.

Opposite me I can see the relaxed face and the debonair smile of the Georgian president, Eduard Shevarnadze. Ten years ago, he was

negotiating in the very same place, in Washington, in the name of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty. Now he is present as the president of a country taking part in the Partnership for Peace. In a way he is both the father and the son of the same project. Within a democracy, the career of a head of state is much like that of a ballet dancer. The performance in the lights of public interest is short lived. Shevarnadze was then taking part in a historical event that was to shape the last decade of the 20th century and maybe the beginning of the new millennium and almost no one of the current Western political leaders was at the top of politics. Clinton was an obscure governor of a tiny state Arkansas, Blair, Aznar, Schneider were somewhere in the second line of their parties, without holding official positions. Only Jacques Chirac had been for a short while prime-minister, under the heavy shadow however of president Mitterrand, his access to foreign policy had been extremely limited. The big personalities back then, Margaret Thatcher, George Bush, Helmut Kohl, François Mitterrand are either retired from politics or dead.

I'm looking at the faces of the heads of state that I had met on various occasions during the last three years. The round massive figure of the president of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov or Turkmenbas, the father of Turkmenians – as he had called himself – and who had recently proclaimed himself president for life is easy to recognize. That is something that Ceausescu himself did not achieve even though he was also struggling for peace.

I have listened carefully to the speeches by the heads of state of the former Soviet Union republics. They were far from being the most determined by far. As it was the case during the well-known party meetings, the first point on the agenda was the condemnation of the Milošević regime; secondly, support for NATO actions. One could not be any clearer. It is no doubt that south-eastern planes have taken another azimuth. They have changed their direction from Moscow to Washington.

Kwasniewski brings back a well deserved relaxation with an unexpected remark:

– As you can see, we have four former members of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Isn't this extraordinary?

– Five – Petru Lucinski corrects him while everyone is laughing.

Indeed, this is a good participation for the anniversary of fifty years since NATO was set up to defend the West from the threat of the Soviet block. This would have been hard to imagine fifty years ago.

The Geography Lesson

September 1962, Balta-Albā residential district

A friend asks me whether I want to earn some money. As a second year student of the Faculty of Geography and Geology I am a little short of money, because being a student at a second faculty, I cannot get a scholarship. A teacher at a high-school at the periphery of a neighbourhood of blocks of flats has to go on a maternal leave and the job is vacant for a while. Nobody wants it because the classes are only in the evening and the make up of the class is difficult.

– You can earn good money, – my friend, a young teacher at that high-school gives me the hard facts – you’ve already got a bachelor’s degree, so you will get a whole salary and all in all you will do what you like and what you do best.

This is truly an interesting life experience. The evening class seems a small replica of society. The students have all different ages and totally different biographies. Some of them have the regular age for the 10th grade, and have passed to the evening classes for different reasons: either because they have been eliminated from the daily courses, they have a job, or they want to go back to the daily courses. Others are older and are here because they want to or because they have been forced to continue their studies. The most interesting of all are however a few students who occupy important positions such as directors or high rank RCP activists. According to a recent law regarding the bachelor degree, they check on you whether you had your high-school diploma before going to university. This was all about those who had been admitted to university without having first graduated high-school. As it is easy to guess, they were not coming to school, but to the teachers’ office to discuss their graduation grades.

April 1999, Washington

I’m looking once again towards the side occupied by the members of the Partnership for Peace. In a way, this resembles that 10th grade of that evening classes high-school. This time however the subject matter is no longer geography but democracy.

Toast with Small Glasses

4-5 September 1998, Italy

The conference is held in the same hall where the historical conference of 1945 was held. Upon leaving I see a door half-open, a rectangular room with paneled walls which has many pictures of Stalin,

Roosevelt and Churchill as well as the ministers of foreign affairs of USA, USSR and Great Britain. In the centre there is the table at which the treaty was signed. One can enter a smaller room from the first. There is a campaign poster of Roosevelt on the wall there, in which 'Uncle Sam with his top hat in the colors of the American flag is pointing a very aggressive finger towards Roosevelt telling him: "You've made it, you have to go on". American campaign at Yalta? Dorin Marian is looking at the poster with interest.

'Should we use the idea?'

'No way. It is easier to win a war than transition reforms.'

For breakfast we leave the sea shore in the official cars, in a long convoy climbing the mountain through a birch forest looking like white candles. Now we can see the Iusupov Palace which was the executive headquarters wherefrom in 1945, Stalin was leading the war, as well as the Livadia Palace where Roosevelt had stayed. This is the place where the 1877 treaties were signed between Russia and the Romanian Principalities, for the War of Independence. To the background, there is the Vorontsov Palace. Churchill tells in his memoirs that he had passed such a good time there. After an almost twenty-minute walk we reach a glade where Stalin's former villa is located. Before breakfast we are invited for a short visit within the villa. The chief of the Ukrainian protocol shows us the room where Stalin used to receive his collaborators and the room where he used to receive the chief of the fierce NKVD. I remember the first photo of the Politburo of the PCUS as well as the one taken towards the end of Stalin's life, where white crosses marked the few survivors of the initial organism. A reduced inventory of comrades left alive or dead due to natural causes. For most of them the room we were passing through was the waiting room to their execution. Under Brezhnev, things change and most of my interlocutors today are former young members of his Politburo.

The table is set in the Round Hall in a neighboring wing. There is a fierce gritting and as we turn our heads, we can see the circular walls are pushed aside by means of pulleys offering us the view of the forest around us, where there is a bodyguard for every tree. A huge TV set is switched on mute and we can see images from the state Duma where there is a debate for the proposal by the Communist Party of impeaching President Eltsin. Amused by the violent and contradictory interventions at the tribune of the Parliament, the people at the table are giving even before the first glasses of vodka the final results of the

vote. After a while, when it is posted it would be exactly the same to the one announced. It is also quite sure that this is the political end of Primakov. The lack of political support of the prime-minister for the president is a sin which is neither forgotten nor forgiven.

The toasts begin with the first glass and with caviar. I am not in Ukraine for the first time so I have learned my lesson. Each guest at the table has to make a toast and then drink up. I remember a sentence from Churchill's *Memoirs*: "Toasts at banquets have always been drunk by the Soviet representatives in small glasses, and Stalin has never given up this." I'm looking at the set of glasses and I try to jot down on a napkin a few Russian words to make something of it.

The presidents sit alone at the table, there are no translators. There is no need for them either. Everyone speaks Russian. I am the only one who do not dare to speak although I understand a few words in Russian. I can count on the friendly help of Lucinski. Haidar Aliev laughs: "A luxury translator." In fact, Petru Lucinski is a guide for me; rather than guiding me from one language to the other, he is leading me from one world into another.

NESECRET

**DEMOCRATIC
PARTY**

President
**Mr. Emil Constantinescu
President of Romania**

Belgrade, 13. September 1999.

Dear Mr. Constantinescu,

In behalf of Democratic Party, and on my own, I would like to thank you for kind and open reception during our visit in Bucarest.


We have been especially delighted by the fact that even in these hard moments for our country, we have found friend in you, who have shown the willingness to help the Serbia people and its democratic forces.

Bearing on mind that one of the main objectives stated in the political program of the Democratic Party is opening of Serbia towards the world, I am sure that our meeting was just the beginning of developing good relations between our countries on new, democratic bases.

Being aware that our interests are mutual, I am looking forward to establish permanent contact with you and your country.

Please, accept the assurance of our highest considerations.

Sincerely yours,



Dr Zoran Djindjic
President of Democratic Party
Serbia

IN THE VICINITY OF WAR: A TRENCH DIARY

Overture and Prologue

Sunday, 4 October 1998, Cotroceni.

7 p.m. No meeting scheduled, so I seize the opportunity of putting things in order and writing them down. Except for the security personnel and Mugur, who is always close by, the Palace is empty. On my desk, I find two thick folders, one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) and the other from the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE). The same topic, Kosovo: the history of the conflict, the latest developments, the forecast of possible evolution. The radio broadcasts classical music in an undertone. I recognize the solemn notes of *Cavalleria Rusticana* overture, which anticipate the tragedy. As a student, I would often go to the opera and I remember *Cavalleria Rusticana* being performed together with Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Two stories of love, hate and death. I'll never forget Ștefănescu-Goangă, alone on an empty stage, singing the *Prologue of Pagliacci*. The composer knew perhaps, that only the human voice can announce the heartbreaking tragedy to follow.

As a geologist, I have studied the Iaramic granitoids in the Carpathians – Balkans area. Over the years, I have worked on various sites with my Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Macedonian, Bosnian and Croatian colleagues. I have seen the places, met the people in their homes, near the campfire, in libraries and cafes.

The SIE folder is filled with maps. At my request, both SIE and MAE staffs have pinned up the map in every office. I recognize the places. I can remember Kosovo Polje – Blackbird's Plain – and the steep mountains covered with forests that surround it. The sites of ancient battles, monasteries and mosques, smugglers' routes as well. But how much do Kosovo, Yugoslavia and the Balkans count on the world map? It is only when crime, rape, arson, devastation and the overwhelming number of refugees become unbearable that these places are no longer ignored and they appear on the maps supporting the CNN coverage. Bombardments, explosions are soon to follow. What can be

done to stop hate and violence from spreading like a contagious disease? Will the Balkan gunpowder barrel explode? Again, Romania is very near on the Euronews and CNN maps. For the time being, it appears as a white spot. An area of tranquility (specialists call it stability). Will it remain so?

I go on reading the files, which show an abundance of new world politics terminology: "Partnership for Peace", "Peacekeeping". On the radio, the baritone starts the Prologue. I cannot distinguish the Italian words very well, but everything can be solved now. Things have changed since I was a spectator seated in the farthest rows of the gallery. I ask Mugur to call Anca Calangiu, who is able to find solutions to the strangest problems. In no time at all, she finds the libretto on the Internet, translates it into Romanian and mails it to him. Everything seems so easy. If those in Kossovo had a computer, would they be better?

Ma non per dirvi come pria:/ Le larme che noi versiam son false

Not to tell you as he did some other time/The tears we shed are false/The author has tried/to bring you/a fragment of life/a bundle of memories/ he wrote with real tears/So that you may see/ how people love on another;/You'll see the bitter fruits of hate./ Groans of pain,/ howls of wrath/and cynical laughter!/ And, instead of our poor clowns' garment/you'd better see our hearts,/ for we are humans/ made of flesh and bones/and, just like you,/we breathe in this miserable world!/I've told you the plot.../now listen to the story.

Wednesday, 7 October, 1998

6 p.m. I was told that the situation in Kossovo is on the verge of explosion. We have to take an official stand and prepare for whatever comes. I summon Prime Minister Radu Vasile, Foreign Affairs Minister Andrei Plesu, Defense Minister Victor Babiuc, Chief of Staff General Constantin Degeratu and Advisors Zoe Petre and Dorin Marian. Andrei Plesu and General Degeratu present the latest developments: compared with the previous weeks, the international community seems now decided to threaten Yugoslavia with military strikes.

We'll support this decision, but only after exhausting all the other peaceful ways of settling the conflict through dialog. In case NATO takes military action against the Serbian troops in Kossovo, Romania will comply with its share of responsibility resulting from the Partnership for Peace. This decision does not imply our participation in com-

bat operations. At the end of the meeting I shake their hands and tell Dorin Marian to convene the National Supreme Security Council (CSAT) on Monday, October 11.

Friday, 9 October, 1998

8 p.m. I learn that NATO has sent us a verbal Note requesting Romania's permission for overflying towards the Yugoslav territory. We need to resume the discussions we had on Wednesday on completely different grounds. This time, we're not making any guesses, it's something much more concrete. Again, what are we going to do? What we must do, confronted with what we can do. It is very clear to me that our position at this moment is a crucial test for how trustworthy we shall be for the Alliance in the future. In my opinion, we should reply promptly and with full readiness to NATO's request. But is it possible?

It is not the question whether Romania should participate in actual military operations. Since the conflict in Bosnia, there has been a principle for the close neighbors to refrain from taking concrete action, to leave the door open for good interstate relations in the long run. But, as I know too well – and General Degeertu was very clear on this, and so was Plesu – it is actually the same thing whether you give permission for overflights or open your territory: it is still direct participation.

Hungary is almost a full member, it can and must participate by all means, but Romania was not invited to join NATO in Madrid, last year. I truly believe we have to act as a *de facto* NATO member; but how many of my fellow citizens share this view?

The wish to join NATO is a very popular option, but how many of those 80% eager to join NATO are ready first to undertake the responsibilities and only later to enjoy the benefits? The idea of joining NATO has grown into a matter of such national pride and emotional commitment that few realize now that this is first of all a military alliance.

Besides, the issue here is Yugoslavia, a country for which all of us, Romanians, have feelings of brotherly affection, since it was our passageway to the paradise of free western societies throughout the communist regime. This strain of thoughts seems never-ending: out of 10 Romanians, how many realize why NATO is ready to intervene in the Kosovo conflict? How many of them would understand why their Government would support such an action? And, among those who understand, how many would approve such a stand? Two – it seems too much already. Yet, I'm the president who's going to decide on behalf of all ten.

*Cross-talks**Saturday, 10 October, 1998*

11 a.m. It's Radu Vasile's birthday. Together with President Diaconescu I go to Victoria Palace, where everybody seems to be feasting in a rustic atmosphere of abundance and carelessness. So as not to forget the hard times we are living, I give the Prime Minister a sword. It is actually no larger than a ballpoint pen, a paper-knife from the collection I've been putting together for years. Diaconescu gives him an icon. We both leave rather quickly. In one of the rooms I pass by I see a huge cask. How did that get there?

2.30 p.m. A new meeting with Plesu, General Degeratu, Dorin Marian and Zoe Petre. CSAT will discuss NATO's verbal Note no. 98/1023 on October 9, 1998, which requires unlimited access to the Yugoslav territory. The unanimous position is that Romania cannot participate in combat operations in Yugoslavia; that would traumatize bilateral relations. If we are to be consistent, it follows that Romania can neither provide NATO forces with its airports if the alliance is going to use them as attack bases. However, we'll allow access to Romanian airspace for emergency or unpredictable situations. If necessary, our country will participate in humanitarian actions, providing medical care with a military hospital. It's a minimal position, I'm not satisfied with it, but it's one first step.

I have to see the opposition parties' stand; I ask the Cabinet to find out how I can convene an emergency meeting with President Iliescu, Valeriu Tabără and Theodor Melescanu. There is nothing I can find out from Vadim Tudor. In the meantime I have to clearly know our neighbors' positions. I tell Dan Petre to contact the ambassadors and arrange talks with Stoyanov, Demirel, Kuchma, and, if possible, Stephanopoulos and Milan Kucan. Fortunately, Lucinski is in Bucharest, I spoke with him and he is very concerned. They will be cautious, but are waiting for our position to clarify theirs. I briefed him on the situation, explaining the limitations of any decision; he will see how this situation is reflected in Chisinau.

A long telephone conversation with Iliescu, who sturdily rejects the unconditional permission to overfly Romania. He keeps on saying that NATO has a wrong approach to the issue. It lacks the Security Council's approval. It's an abusive sanction that paves the way for arbitrariness in international relations. Romania has historical an-

precedents when it proved dignified rejecting such matters. When the Russians attacked Czechoslovakia, the Romanians stood against the invasion, although it was part of the communist bloc.

I try to bring him arguments, quoting from the agreements he himself signed, and I read from The Memorandum of Agreement between NATO and the Romanian Government on Overflying Romanian Territory by NATO Military Transport Aircraft, on August 7, 1995, which, besides the President's signature, also features the signatures of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defense (MAPN). Then, from The Romanian Parliament's Appeal to NATO States' MPs on June 5, 1996, where it is stated that, in accordance with the Washington Treaty, Romania undertakes to take on the rights, commitments and obligations implied by the status of a NATO member. There is also The Program for Interoperability between the Romanian Armed Forces and NATO Structures 1996-1997, approved by CSAT, which stipulates that the Romanian authorities are ready to provide NATO and other cooperation partners within PfP infrastructure facilities for the joint military applications to be carried out on Romanian territory. The document furthermore indicates the use of military airfields by NATO aircraft in distress, setting up search, rescue and recovery operations as well as providing facilities on Timisoara, Craiova, Kogalniceanu and Bucharest-Otopeni airfields so as to supply the aircraft with specialists, spare parts and necessary materials. Romania's Statement presented during the first round of the individualized dialog on NATO expansion, on March 29, 1996, indicates Romania's wish to join NATO and underlines that, depending on the Alliance's option and the evolution of European security, Romania will be able to provide the allied forces with the infrastructure facilities for their deployment.

We have therefore already assumed certain responsibilities both within the Partnership for Peace and by our application for NATO membership.

All my arguments have met with stubborn persistence. My interlocutor seems to think we only formally undertook those responsibilities, with no real intention to stand by our pledges. Everybody has a different understanding of Security Council Resolution 1119: for the Bulgarians, as well as for NATO, the expression "by all means" includes military operations; for Iliescu – it rules them out.

Will we be able to overcome the wave of hostility raised by this

dispute? As usual, the prospect of tough winter lies ahead. Can we afford to add a major contradiction on the paramount issue of our foreign policy to people's dissatisfaction? NATO integration implies stability at home and an agreement between the governing parties and the opposition ones on the issue of joining the Alliance. What is more important then, a maximal response or the idea of preserving this agreement? If PDSR rushes into tough disputes with the Alliance, aren't our chances for integration compromised in the long run?

Late in the evening To sum up: after the failure of the negotiations at Rambouillet, I have talked to many of the heads of state and government in the West to see whether the options for a peaceful solution have indeed been exhausted. Together with the leadership of other states bordering Yugoslavia, who are, as I am, well aware that an attack on this country would have far-reaching consequences for the entire region, I have tried – until the end of March 1999 – to identify the ways in which we could persuade Milošević to spare his nation the worst possible ordeal: war with NATO.

6 p.m. Stoyanov calls me and he is quite worried. He is due to chair the Security Council in one hour and he wants to consult with me.

10 p.m. He is inclined towards a minimal response to the same NATO request that we received. I call Mugur Ciuvică into my office to phone ambassador Talpes in Sofia. He informs me that discussions in the president's Security Council are still underway. I now learn that the Bulgarians have two Security Councils. One is chaired by the president, the other by the prime minister: an expression of the clashes between two poles of decision makers; an unsound system. At least we have only one CSAT.

11.30 Ten minutes after the communiqué is released at the end of the Council session, Talpes calls back. He has got it already translated. The decision is radical: the Bulgarians are ready to provide the Alliance with everything, above all unrestricted access to airspace. "What? The President's Council?" – I ask. "Yes. Nadezhda must have spoken with her mentor, Madeleine Albright, and they decided to overbid." Anyway, it is one way to stand out when compared with Romania. How long is this stupid competition going to take?

At the end of the conversation with Talpes, I ask him: "Mr. Ambassador, you know President Ilescu better than I do. He's been through situations like that ... what stand is he going to take now?"

The reply comes dryly: "He has and he will be wrong". Then he explains: "He will reject NATO's proposal and he will be wrong."

The worst part is, indeed, that Iliescu doesn't have the slightest intention to support a more radical stand and I don't think Melescanu will embrace a different point of view; as for Tabără, there is not much hope for me either: not only that he is the president of PUNR, a more moderate politician than Vadim Tudor when it comes to nationalism, but he is also from Timisoara, so I expect him to be very sensitive to the Banat Serbs' opinions. Anyway, all the MPs of the opposition parties have brought forward a motion of censure, they say against the Government; it is actually against the President, so I don't really hope I could find support from them at this moment, even if it is very clear for them that Romania's best interest would urge them to support a position as close to NATO's request as possible. Their schemes to attack the President probably seem more interesting to them than the NATO integration process.

Sunday, 11 October, 1998

12 a.m. The Supreme National Security Council is in session. I open the debates on NATO's verbal Note no. 98/1023 on October 9, 1998, which requires permission for unrestricted access to Yugoslav territory. Andrei Plesu outlines the arguments that compel us to give an affirmative answer: Security Council's Resolution 1119, which, as a member of the UN, our country has the obligation to support; the responsibilities derived from the Partnership for Peace, as well as all the statements made by the Romanian leadership starting with 1993/1994. Victor Babiuc also recommends that we firmly endorse NATO's stand, as long as the planned operations are designed to restore peace.

General Degeratu makes a clear, carefully documented and comprehensive review of all the options, their assumptions and consequences. In conclusion, he asserts that our armed forces need more funding to increase their operational potential, in response to the increase of tensions in our region.

We decide to draw up a memorandum involving both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense, focused on UN Resolution 1119 and the present conditions of the approximately 50,000 refugees, demanding an end to hostilities, the beginning of negotiations between Yugoslavia and the Albanian leaders in Kosovo, and taking the first steps to prevent a humanitarian disaster; an end to

security forces' actions against civilians and proper conditions for normalizing the situation in Kosovo. We shall also include the urge to the Kosovo Albanian forces to condemn terrorist activities. We shall point out as clearly as possible that preserving Serbia's integrity, with wider autonomy for Kosovo, is a must. Yet, in essence, we are going to give a minimal reply to the maximal request in NATO's verbal Note. Otherwise, the Parliament would become sheer hell.

On this account I'll file a request to the Parliament in order to secure its approval. We have yet to find the financial, military and humanitarian resources. Then we'll draw up our official reply to Brussels. We also decide on creating a special group to keep the public opinion informed as well as a crisis situation group formed by SIE and MapN specialists; the two groups will stay operational throughout this crisis. Furthermore, we decide to release the following note to the media:

"As a result of the aggravation of the Kosovo crisis, which could pose risks and threats to Romania's national security, the Supreme National Security Council analyzed and then approved the steps taken to increase the armed forces' capabilities to prevent any conditions likely to affect our national security.

In accordance with our duty as a member of the United Nations, Romania supports the UN Security Council Resolution 1119 in its entirety and anxiously takes note of the conclusions of UN Secretary General's report.

Romania supports the steps taken by the international community to solve the crisis, even if, as a neighboring country, it cannot become directly involved in combat operations, in case such operations take place.

Romania is ready to participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations with a Mobile Multifunctional Unit for Humanitarian Support, consisting of a medical unit, accommodation facilities for the refugees and an engineering squad for rebuilding houses destroyed as a result of military operations. To this purpose, the President shall require the Parliament's support.

Well aware of the serious consequences of any military action, Romania reiterates its hopes for a peaceful solution to this crisis."

8 p.m. TV and radio evening news programs broadcast a piece of MEDIAFAX news: "PDSR President Ion Iliescu states on Sunday that the CSAT decision reflects the basic ideas of the conversation he had with Romania's President Emil Constantinescu and he believes the CSAT position on the Kosovo crisis as a fair one."

Did the call from Sofia reach the Kiseleff headquarters too? Anyway, one first obstacle seems now easier to overcome.

Wednesday, 18 November 1998, Zenica

I'm inspecting the 96th Engineers Battalion within IFOR-SFOR deployed to a small locality near Sarajevo. The battalion, established in December 1995, has been in Bosnia since March 1996 as part of the peacekeeping force (IFOR). The members of this unit are selected on a volunteering basis from army engineers groups and they are replaced every six months. Their primary objective is to ensure freedom of movement for the multinational peace force in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 96th Engineers' Battalion took part in 228 missions including highway rebuilding and repairing, bridge construction, reopening railway routes, rebuilding the hospitals in Goradje and Sarajevo, and the steelworks in Zenica. Since August 1998 Romania has participated in the discouragement force in Bosnia (DFOR) and with a military police platoon.

In the Parliament Palace riddled with bullets and projectiles I meet the three members of the Republic's joint presidency, Alja Izetbegovic, Zivko Radisic and Ante Jelavic and the SFOR commander in Bosnia.

Meanwhile, in Bucharest, the Senate debates the motion filed by the Opposition, whose text is directed particularly against the President of Romania.

Thursday, 19 November 1998

At Cotroceni Palace, from morning till evening, I have been meeting with all those who wanted to personally greet me on my birthday. All morning and much of the afternoon, waves of people come to see me, to touch me. There are several thousands. I wonder where this tactile affection comes from; it may well be the sacramental nature of power that attracts them. I don't want to be unfair, many of them stood by my side even before gaining political power, but others may come equally enthusiastic to Cotroceni, no matter who the "tenant" may be. I don't want to be cynical. It's the one feeling that can kill you.

At night, amidst old friends. The atmosphere is relaxed and warm, I'm with people – some of them famous – who know each other and can talk about things of common concern. I try to speak with as many as possible, for I know why they are actually here. If I tell them I want more than they do to have time to talk like we did in the old days, they

might think I am a hypocrite. Time keeps widening the gap between us, time that they still have for themselves, time that I spend talking on the phone with Opposition party leaders, trying to unfold the bundle of ever growing tensions. How can we talk like we did in the old times, when even the seconds I have are carefully numbered and I have obsessive thoughts that we cannot share? If I talked to them about the Kosovo crisis, they would listen politely, maybe even interested – they are educated, brilliant individuals –, but still we would be having a conversation between people living on two different planets, for they judge things from the outside and I have to make decisions from within. These decisions inevitably affect real interests, change some real people's lives, mark the fate of multitudes. How could one take on this condition from the outside?

Tuesday, 24 November 1998

3 p.m. Yesterday afternoon in the Chamber and today in the Senate, the opposition MPs continued their attacks, threatening to go on strike. PDSR again requested the decrease of the number of government ordinances and the establishment of a code of conduct governing the relationship between the opposition and the majority in Parliament. In fact, they are greatly dissatisfied by my refusal to accept the PDSR request to appoint their representative – Florin Georgescu probably – as First Vice Governor of the National Bank of Romania (BNR). The coalition decided not to accept any political appointment to BNR management and will maintain this view.

If I had tolerated political influences on the National Bank, I might have been more radical in the reply to NATO's overflight request. That would have been impossible. BNR is so much part of the basic state institutions that having given up on that particular issue would have sustained the most important principle I had sworn to defend. I did not accept the appointment requested by PNTCD, and I didn't accept the PDSR proposal either. At least until we join the EU, the National Bank must remain true to its origins, as an integral part of Romania's foundations, beyond political faction interests.

5 p.m. At his request, I receive the US ambassador, James Rosapepe. He is a very interesting person, maybe because he has nothing in common with a typical diplomat. Neither is he a career diplomat; he distinguished himself as a remarkable fund-raiser during Clinton's electoral campaign. He seems always relaxed, good-humored, a little

confusing, but in fact he is extremely sharp and quick at drawing the line between essence and appearance. He has nothing that could remind one of his predecessor's self-contained and commanding style.

We discuss the Kosovo situation and the limits within which Romania is able to react. I ask him to send our requests to the US Government:

– We want Romania mentioned by the Washington Summit statement as well as a clearly specified date for announcing the new countries invited to join NATO;

– to jointly set up a road map for NATO integration;

– to intensify the Romanian-US relations, including the investments, within the Strategic Partnership.

7 p.m. A meeting with the leaders of PNTCD, PD, PNL, PSDR, ApR, PAR, UDMR, and with the ethnic minorities' representatives in Parliament. The three opposition parties – PSDR, PRM and PUNR –, although invited to attend this meeting, refused to participate considering the dialog useless as they were preparing to go on parliamentary strike. PRM even stated that the opposition did not want to solve the crisis in Parliament, but on the contrary, to inflame it, so as to push for general elections before the due date.

In the introductory speech, I explain to the participants that I thought I needed a mandate for tomorrow's meeting with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and the NATO states ambassadors (the 19+1 session) in Brussels. I ask for the parties' positions on supporting our NATO integration policy. President Diaconescu and President Quintus state their unconditional support, adding that there is no other option for our national security but NATO membership. Sergiu Cunesu also declares that PSDR unconditionally supports any action that is necessary for Romania's admission to EU and NATO. Vosgian says Romania lacks a powerful ally and, therefore, his party supports everything in connection with the process of integration. Theodor Meleşcanu also subscribes to this idea and he is joined by Varujan Pambucian the leader of the ethnic minorities' representatives in Parliament.

I proceed by reading the message of the main opposition party, PDSR, in which they restate their "full and unconditional support" for Romania's NATO integration policy, adding that this position acknowledges that Romania's admission to NATO is a fundamental political option for our country. PDSR thinks it would be "useful" that the delegation led by the head of state should insist on "the need to consolidate Romania's status secured in Madrid, as a result of negoti-

ations between the member states in the South and the countries exclusively favoring the extension in the North, more precisely between France and the United States” and express the need for certain concrete aspects that would give substance to the open doors policy, namely by announcing a schedule for NATO’s future extension or by signing a Romania-NATO declaration that would regulate bilateral relations until the moment of Romania’s admission.

Unfortunately, in addition to this “unconditional” support they propose a series of other, less encouraging terms: guarantees that the new member states will not use their veto right on future enlargements; the Alliance must clearly state its intentions concerning SouthEastern Europe, which is thought to be the main source of challenge to member states; NATO should state whether its strategy provides for the full integration of this region or it seeks to perpetuate the role of buffer zone for this region, meant to filter and weaken immediate threats to the Alliance. The text ends with a typical Adrian Năstase sentence (he is indeed the person who signed it): “This way, we’ll know better our real chance for NATO integration”. I can give him the answer myself: “Under such conditions – no chance!”

In the second part of the meeting I ask the parties’ representatives to express their stand on the crisis started by PDSR, PUNR and PRM in the Parliament. I present the extremist position taken by PRM, which sets out to lead to general election before the legal term, and my opinion on this demagogic approach to the problems our country is facing, with no clear solution. Such an antidemocratic approach to our problems – I go on telling the politicians, and I will certainly include that in the press release – is likely to produce chaos, economic malfunctions and poverty, threatening domestic stability, which is the basic ingredient of progress within Romanian society. I express my strong belief that, given this important and difficult moment, the political parties should put national interest above individual ambitions.

All of those attending believe the opposition should rejoin the Parliament session, as a major condition for a dialog concerning the requests made by PDSR, PRM and PUNR. I request the government coalition leaders to immediately start the dialog with the opposition parties, within a Mediating Commission, so that they return to the Parliament sessions as soon as possible. PNL President Mircea Ionescu Quintus confirms that the parliamentary opposition groups will participate in a round-table meeting with the leadership of the majority coal-

tion at the Senate, on Wednesday. Varujan Vosganian claims that PDSR's alliance with PRM in this political crisis is likely to work against the main opposition party, shedding a negative light on its image. "PDSR has to decide whether it is a democratic party or it stands side by side with extremist parties" – he concludes.

Wednesday, 25 November 1998

10.20 a.m. NATO General Headquarters in Brussels. I run the Romanian delegation to NATO 19 + 1 session.

NATO ambassadors' desks are positioned in an oval cut in the middle by the chairperson's desk. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana welcomes me and, together, we enter the hall, then he opens the session saying: "We are grateful for Romania's participation in solving the Kosovo crisis and for its contribution to security in the region". For two hours I answer the questions asked by NATO ambassadors and high-ranking officers from the General Headquarters. Then we listen to their interventions. Very positive. Even beyond the usual diplomatic restraint.

Monday, 4 January 1999

The miners start their protest in the Jiu River Valley.

C.V. Tudor ignites the "Rona Hartner" scandal – a faithful imitation of the Monica Lewinski scandal in the US – only this time there is nothing true in this story. The scandal is strongly fueled by Dan Diaconescu's broadcast on Tele7abc, by Tuca's talk show on *Antena 1*, by *România Mare*, *Atac la persoană*, *Libertatea*, etc.

Tuesday, 12 January 1999

4.15 p.m. I receive George Robertson*, the UK Secretary of Defense, a Scotsman that is not very tall, but sturdy and red-faced; his entire appearance recommends him as a very resolute man. He firmly pledges: "We shall be supporters of Romania's joining NATO in the second wave. There are no reasons to be pessimistic about Romania's NATO integration."

Friday, 15 January 1999

The first worrying signs related to the miners' march towards Bucharest.

* În noiembrie 1999, a fost ales Secretar General al NATO.

Sunday, 17 January 1999

Adrian Năstase says the Police have no right to oppose the miners.

Monday, 18 January 1999

Miron Cozma orders the about 10,000 miners to make for Bucharest. Ion Iliescu claims that blocking the roads in their way creates a real concentration camp. The miners overcome the barrages and come out of the canyon.

Tuesday, 19 January 1999

The miners disperse the police force and occupy the city of Targu Jiu.

Wednesday, 20 January 1999

PRM hails the miners' victory and calls for the Government's resignation and the establishment of revolutionary Councils.

Friday, 22 January 1999

Unable to move further towards Bucharest, Miron Cozma concludes the "Cozia armistice" with the Prime Minister.

Monday, 25 January 1999

At Cotroceni Palace, the reception of the Diplomatic Corps.

Monday, 15 February 1999

The Supreme Court gives the absolute decision to convict Miron Cozma for the attempted coup d'état in 1991.

Wednesday, February 17, 1999

Miron Cozma refuses to obey the Supreme Court decision and initiates a new march towards Bucharest. At Stoienesti, in the Olt Valley, the miners are repelled, disarmed and encircled.

Miron Cozma is put under arrest and so are others of the miners' leadership.

Wednesday, 16 February 1999

Adrian Năstase, the Number Two in PDSR, Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies, states that "Miron Cozma's arrest is a great defeat for democracy".

Wednesday, 17 February 1999

Zoe Petre, who has returned from Washington, says the tension over the situation in Yugoslavia, has suddenly increased to a critical point, after having been “smoldering” in January. In Washington, her interlocutors from the National Security Council and the State Department seemed to have come to terms with the idea of tough intervention (“we won’t stand by watching how he massacres his own fellow citizens, as we did before 1995, a new Munich is unconceivable”) and they were genuinely concerned with the possible connection – she even heard the word “co-ordination” – between the developments south of the Danube and the miners’ march in January.

They don’t seem to be taking the risk of a “Slavic Corridor” seriously; this corridor between Serbia and Belarus is supposed to cross, willy-nilly, the Romanian territory; they may have more accurate information from Moscow, but we think this could be an important element of the current situation, especially since it is supported by the State Duma. However, things may be seen in a different light from across the Atlantic.

Thursday, 18 February 1999

One last, almost desperate, attempt to negotiate in Paris is scattered by the Serbians’ unflinching attitude and then by the Albanians’ unilateral signing of the accord. Unfortunately, Albania supports radical solutions: Andrei Plesu tells me at the very last moment that their Foreign Minister called off his participation in the Bucharest Meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs from the South East European Cooperation Process member states, on March 19, claiming that they “will be celebrating the great victory won by their brothers in Kosovo”. This is not a good sign.

4-5 March 1999

Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski’s visit to Bucharest.

Sinaia, 12 March 1999

1 p.m. Romania – Bulgaria – Turkey Trilateral. The agenda includes certain issues already approached at the previous meeting in Antalya, especially those related to military cooperation and preventing the risk of unconventional weaponry. However, the Kosovo crisis has monopolized the entire agenda and everybody’s attention now

seems focused on it. Demirel, with the majestic appearance of a Roman senator, who has already been through any imaginable problem, with a tired look in his eyes, still blue and clear, though, is wise, but not relaxed. The Turks are extremely hurt by the persecutions that the Albanians, most of them Muslims, have to suffer. In a passionate speech against the danger of civil war in Yugoslavia and calling for action to prevent its spreading, Stoyanov uses some very effective images. "When you want to put out a fire, you have to isolate it from anything around it that might catch fire. As long as we are unable to show our fellow citizens that they live better and earn more in their democratic countries than do the Serbs under dictatorship, the danger of that fire being spread is unavoidable." However, he doesn't have to persuade me. Over and over, I myself have tried to prove the same case. I write down the fire metaphor, though, so I can use it later.

Stoyanov suggests we send a letter to Milosevic, signed by all the three presidents. Demirel agrees immediately and so do I; we send our diplomatic counsellors to a smaller room where they can draw up the draft. They work quite fast, for they collaborated a lot in the past, they are now accustomed to one another's style, and, most importantly, they know how to find a common denominator for the three presidents; they return in less than half an hour. We all read the text and approve it. The letter is quite tough, showing neither condescension nor too much conciliation. We express our deepest concern for the possibility of the increase of violence, we tell him how much Bulgaria as well as Romania have gained from political solutions to ethnic tensions, and, most importantly, we strongly emphasize that peace through negotiations is the only guarantee for preserving Yugoslavia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is obvious that we think in the same way: any potential challenge to the existing borders is likely to trigger a domino effect, creating an avalanche of territorial claims throughout the region. I'll never know why this principle is constantly ignored by our great specialists in nationalistic rhetoric, who never stop urging for the revision of our eastern border, without realizing that this would almost instantly lead to our western border being challenged. That is why I signed the Treaty with Ukraine with a clear conscience.

It's highly probable that Milosevic will never reply to our letter. But maybe its message would somehow get to the people of Serbia and provide them with something to reflect on. Anyway, we have done

our duty to warn them. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon any leader to deal with such matters responsibly.

Monday, 15 March, 1999

I decide on an initiative meant to deal with the political crisis. PDSR is always making a lot of fuss about meeting the Government to “correct the serious defaults” – actually to tear down whatever could be torn down. I’ve decided to bring forward something different: mediation through bringing together representatives of the majority and of the opposition, Cabinet members, representatives of trade unions and employers’ associations, in the presence of experts – from the Romanian Academy, from relevant institutes and some serious think-tanks – side by side with the representatives of large NGOs and opinion leaders. It would be the first time they all found themselves together round table and my only regret was that I did not summon such a meeting at the very beginning of my presidential term.

To set up this meeting I first have to meet Prime Minister Radu Vasile separately and the coalition parties’ leadership, then the Opposition leaders, business analysts, the great NGOs so that afterwards we could all take part in a public meeting to review and harmonize the conclusions in the presence of parliamentary parties, employers’ associations, trade unions and civil society representatives, all this in order to agree on a Declaration of Social Peace. I also felt a CSAT meeting would be necessary to scrutinize the consequences of general strike when a military conflict is to unfold close to our country’s borders. This assembly was, by the way, the first of its kind and it took place on March 16, 1999.

The Die Is Cast

Friday, 19 March 1999

Bucharest hosts an extraordinary meeting to analyze the Kosovo situation, attended by the chief diplomats of Bulgaria, Greece, FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Romania and Turkey.

Sunday, March 21, 1999

12 a.m. It seems we have been cursed to deal with emergency situations only at night or on Sunday. It’s not about me, I have given up Sunday quality time long ago, and so have my team. However, others

want to live a normal life. They are hard to find, they have no secretaries, no typists, they sound irritated. We need to make a statement on Romania's position with respect to the Yugoslav crisis, and we have to make it right now. I immediately speak with Prime Minister Radu Vasile, who is as relaxed as usual, and with Andrei Plesu, who is concerned, but determined.

I have to undertake responsibility. Time for half measures has passed. The developments of the latest months have radicalized positions. It is no use to make amends for the Opposition, the result is the same; they want to destroy us by all means. At least they'll know why.

In the long term, our nation's interest urges us to immediately formulate an unequivocal position that would place us side by side with NATO, EU and the democratic countries in the world. During Ceausescu's regime, we were angry that the West does nothing to help us. I know very well that our friends in Yugoslavia now think the same, and they will understand that we join those who fight Milosevic, not Serbia, whose territorial integrity is as important to us as it is to them.

On the phone, I quickly brief Zoe on the main points of the statement: from the very beginning, Romania joined the efforts of the Contact Group of NATO, EU and OSCE to look for a political solution to the crisis in Kosovo, knowing from our own experience that there is always room for dialog, when both parties show good faith and will to avoid conflicts. Then comes the enumeration of all Romanian efforts to end the conflict in a manner that is quick and lasting. The provisional Rambouillet accord is the sole document that guarantees the total territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the rights of ethnic communities in Kosovo province, in accordance with international standards and regulations. The failure of these negotiations will result in new bloodsheds, thousands of refugees and the escalation of tension in the whole region. The arguments must point to a firm conclusion: in case the peace negotiations fail, Romania believes a NATO intervention to stop the conflict is necessary and legitimate, and, consequently, will support the efforts to restore peace.

By the time I get to Cotroceni, a draft of the declaration is ready. I carefully go through the text, word by word. Every word is important. Will the international community clearly hear our commitment to negotiated peace? I hope at least the commentators took note of it, if not the general public. The two letters to Milosevic, signed by Demirel, Stoyanov and myself prove our good faith.

7 p.m. The press office has recorded the declaration on tape and released it for radio and television. Down in Union Hall, all TV stations are there. I feel the need to talk to someone. I leave the elevator and go downstairs to Zoe Petre's office on the second floor. I'm aware that the two words that justify NATO's reaction will be singled out from the whole statement: legitimate and necessary. Shall we leave them? We'll leave them.

The truth is I set out on a difficult journey and I've closed the way to any kind of compromise. I've decided not to take one step back, no matter what. The die is cast. What lies beyond this Rubicon?

11 p.m. I receive a call from Bulgarian President Stoyanov, who proposes that we draw up a joint appeal to Milosevic, urging him to accept the presence of NATO troops in Kosovo, while also emphasizing that Romania and Bulgaria are decidedly in favor of observing Yugoslavia's territorial integrity.

Monday, 22 March 1999

9 a.m. Again in contact with Stoyanov to finish the letter. We send the text to Belgrade, copies of it to NATO and make it public. It's one last attempt to prevent the irreparable – if Milošević does not accept the deployment of NATO troops in Kosovo, the allied forces will bomb Yugoslavia. We agree on keeping close contact, so that he could use the Romanian example for overcoming the negative reactions of the Bulgarian public opinion.

My idea – for which I had undertaken full responsibility – was first to quickly give our approval for NATO plans in principle and afterwards to negotiate the actual terms that should be ensuring and favorable to us. All the countries in the region finally expressed their agreement for all NATO requests, but they left the impression of hesitation, which they tried to correct, going to the other extreme.

Tuesday, 23 March 1999

10 a.m. In the context of impending war, the Opposition's direct attack must be counteracted at all costs. I release a detailed statement on this issue. I explain that, less than two months since the miners' violent protests, I will again use dialog to try to prevent new actions that could lead to an even worse crisis. The trade unions announced a series of protests culminating with a general strike on April 26. The business community, also disappointed by the severe deterioration of their

profit opportunities, stated their intention to support this protest movement by going on a fiscal strike. Aware of the effects of such conjoint actions in the context of Romania's serious financial crisis, I decided to initiate consultations with the representatives of the main political parties, civil society, trade unions and business community. The purpose of these discussions is to reach an agreement among all the influential forces of Romanian society, on developing the basis for economic and social measures.

I emphasize that I do not have executive powers, but I believe it is time to exert my constitutional prerogatives trying to maintain and, eventually, reinstate the social and political balance, which is clearly threatened by the prospect of such strikes. My strategy follows two directions. The first aims at initiating a public dialog with the opposition parties and some segments of civil society that are unhappy with the Government's performance so far. The dialog with PDSR especially plays the role of showing the people that now, more than ever, our country needs national consensus on its future – and this is impossible to achieve without the involvement of the main opposition party.

The second purpose is to try to do what the Government doesn't have time or ability to do: to explain how we got into this, who is really responsible, why it is impossible to do more under these circumstances, to show the progress made, the support we are getting from abroad, which is not sufficiently popularized by the Executive. I plead for the present government structure and for the continuation of its policy. Even if it means support for unpopular measures, I set out to persuade the most hardened and influential opponents – the opposition parties, trade unions, business communities – that they have to come to terms with the idea that the steps now taken by the Government are the only possible ones – and, ultimately, they are non negotiable – as part of the effort to get the country out of this predicament.

Although I cannot ignore the Opposition's proposal to organize general elections before term, that is in this year's fall (an idea that cannot be constitutionally put into practice), and the idea of a technocrat government proposed by PDSR, the trade unions, but also the business community, I personally reject them as unconstitutional and completely unreasonable. On the contrary, I'll try to persuade the dialog partners that Romania is faced with two challenges. First, we have to step out of the crisis due to the lack of financial resources, in order to be able to pay as we are expected, a large portion of our foreign debt

and also to reinvigorate economic reconstruction. If there is one thing I clearly understand from the other post-communist countries' transition, it is the fact that no successful transition can be carried out without foreign capital input. That is why Government's negotiations as well as the resources it seeks to secure in this way are vital for this objective in the short run. The post-FESAL agreement with the World Bank has already been signed and the agreement with the IMF is closer than ever, since the IMF says a new agreement with Romania depends upon signing the post-FESAL agreement. The Government is also looking for important financing from the European Union and tries to refinance part of the foreign debt with the help of the private capital market. Any change in the structure of the present Government would jeopardize the success of these negotiations.

Another objective is to secure a place on the list of applicant states with which the European Union is due to start joining negotiations at the end of this year. Romania's inclusion on the list is not at all certain at this point and, once again, elections before due date or a Cabinet reshuffle would instantly disqualify us. In case we can't achieve this objective, Romania would be the only country engaged in preliminary negotiations with the EU to be left out, with incalculable consequences.

So, here are some of the tasks this Government has to carry out and the reasons why the head of state will continue to pledge his support for the current executive team. In addition, this government has its merits too, but unfortunately they were scarcely popularized by the media: privatization has extended at a faster pace, and successes such as the selling of Petromidia Oil Refinery give us some clues on the effects, which, put together, will soon lead to the much wanted result: economic growth and the improvement of living conditions. I am confident that the policies of Ciorbea and Vasile governments have brought forth massive restructuring, which did not enjoy enough media appreciation, but, in a few years is sure to change Romania into an "owners' country".

My initiative is meant to prevent the erosion of the rule of law by asking all participants to express their claims and discontent within the existing legal and constitutional framework. I will persuade the most outspoken opponents that there are things beyond negotiation that should form the grounds for any political and social consensus: reform, restructuring and EU and NATO integration. In the decisive

context of negotiations with various international bodies, I will persuade the business community not to join the contention movement and PDSR to stay in Parliament, within the democratic political game.

In exchange, I will ask the Government to produce as soon as possible a report on the current state of affairs, but also a clear outline of the strategy to overcome the present critical situation and to instate sound development. The Governor of the National Bank of Romania is also invited to make similar predictions. I express my hopes for a broad consensus on the economic reform among the main political actors that will participate in the discussion at the beginning of next month.

5 p.m. The meeting with the PDSR leadership. Far from being the first one, although their leaders claim that the President avoids the dialog with the Opposition. As a matter of fact, I have participated in six such meetings, where PDSR has systematically requested that I impose measures contrary to the governing program and I have explained, respectfully, that the Government was voted on the grounds of this program, not on the basis of their policies, whose benefits are well-known to Romanians. After leaving the discussion room they would make inflammatory statements before the press about the uselessness of such a dialog. Had they asked for my intervention in a matter of common concern at least once, I would have gladly proceeded. When they came up with sound arguments – for example concerning the privatization strategy in certain sectors – I supported their opinion. I asked them to initiate laws, such as the Referendum Law, genuinely believing that it's best to have the Opposition's full support for this law, so that it would not seem favorable to the current government. But I could not impose PDSR governing programs on the coalition.

Again we failed to agree on the fundamentals. I asked for their support to ensure political stability and to be able to overcome the financial problems – largely created by their own government between 1992 and 1996 and by the loans negotiated by their representatives – and to negotiate the IMF agreements and refinance the foreign debt. Then I presented them with the project of wide debate on this issue. President Ion Iliescu requests that the meeting should rely on a Government and BNR report and I immediately agree. Adrian Nastase tries to push matters further and demands general elections for the fall of 1999 and even claims this announcement would make us more reliable in the eyes of IMF, NATO and EU. I suppose he doesn't really

believe what he says. Ioan Mircea Pascu explains there are certain groups in the West interested in destabilizing Romania – an issue that Nastase will strongly reiterate in the weeks to come. We part after this disagreement, but at least we've agreed on the roundtable project.

Wednesday, 24 March 1999, Cotroceni

11 a.m. I release a new statement asking Milošević “to prove his good faith and choose to start negotiations before it's too late” contending that this is “to the best interest of the people of Serbia”. I try to pacify the public opinion, now confused by the avalanche of criticism directed against NATO, myself, the Government, the US – but not against Milošević. This is a strange and unfair stand from some of my fellow Romanians who suffered under Ceausescu for a quarter of a century! Provided they are sincere. I conclude by saying “only a clear and resolute policy can win us the respect of the international community and completely suit Romania's national interest, as long as NATO remains our only option for security.”

The blamed formula

Romanian Athenaeum

7 p.m. I promised I would attend the ceremony of awarding the Prize for Excellence. In the middle of the ceremony, a counsellor tells me NATO started to bomb Yugoslavia. I look to the box on the left and I see President Iliescu being notified as well. He gets up and leaves the hall. I know my team is at Cotroceni, we are ready for this, so I do not leave right away to avoid creating a feeling of panic. I ask General Degeratu to keep me informed and I remain at my seat, I applaud in the end, I shake hands – everything as if through thick fog.

9 p.m. Coming back to the office, I learn the first reactions on television: the violent reaction of Antena 1, broadcasting from the Yugoslav Embassy, then a live interview with the Yugoslav ambassador in their TV studio; on ProTV, Tinu and C.T. Popescu are raging. All give the impression that I bombed Belgrade.

I cannot accept to go back on my initial statement. I realize this statement will become a label for me, but, considering Romania's major interests – NATO and EU integration – I thought we should make proof of our total loyalty at a moment when the US and the EU are faced with a difficult decision and need the unequivocal support of at least one leader in the region. In the end, all the states neighboring Yu-

Yugoslavia will rally to NATO and EU viewpoint, but whoever does that first, clearly and decidedly, will make a difference. I took up an unequivocal stand.

Over the decades, I have been haunted by the idea that hesitation has been the curse affecting large parts of our history. I don't want to say that I quickly made a previously known decision. On the contrary, I have pondered a lot over this issue. I've been heartbroken. I know most Romanians think we cannot do that to the Serbs. There is hope that anyone will understand Romania's hesitation, for we have been here with the Serbs throughout the centuries, for better or for worse. I spent many hours oscillating between one stand and the other.

Faced with the prospect of choosing ... indecision, I remembered some of the many episodes of our history when we kept waiting to see what was going on, to put ourselves in the best position to the very last moment: the hesitation between the Entente and the Triple Alliance, in the First World War; between Germany and the Allies in the Second World War and so many other similar situations. This type of foreign policy, justified by the necessity to survive, has often borne fruit. You can get results, but you may lose your honor. If we look at the Poles for example, we may see that honor and survival are not always incompatible values. At least in the long term. It may well be that the tentative feeling of self-doubt among Romanians lies in this very kind of historical hesitation.

I also asked myself the following question: can the Serbs avoid the catastrophe induced by Milošević just because Romania keeps quiet? What do they have to gain? But what about us, what do we stand to lose? Can we afford to enter the third millennium with the curse of hesitation on our shoulders, or has the time come to first make a decision in a serious situation and then to stand by it till the very end?

Soon after Yugoslavia is first bombed, confidence in the President and, to a lesser extent, the pro-NATO and pro-EU options decrease dramatically. After the end of the conflict, the options in favor of NATO and EU recover. The 20% plunge of the President's popularity has never been recovered.

In domestic and foreign policy, and, usually, in life, the truly important things have a price and someone has to pay that price, so I think the Romanians reacted fairly. They behaved quite rationally. They understood the national interest and reaffirmed their support for NATO and EU. They never forgave their president for the words nec-

essary and legitimate, maybe because the media – ignoring the usefulness and the reasons behind this approach meant to defend and promote national interest – exclusively and obstinately focused on the expression as such and on the moment of statement, as if they had wished to imprint it on Romanians' minds and hearts and damn the one who made it. They succeeded.

Help that will not be forgotten

Thursday, 25 March 1999

White House spokesman James Rubin says the US is pleased that Romanian president Emil Constantinescu issued a statement indicating that, in case the peace negotiations fail, Romania deems a NATO intervention “necessary and legitimate” and reiterates the US administration's concern for the security of countries in the region.

President Clinton's statement on NATO action refers to a regional leader, who approved NATO action and deemed it necessary and legitimate.

The Voice of America broadcasts a US State Department communiqué, which says the Romanian president's statement on March 21 is proof of regional support for the peace process and the degree of isolation of Slobodan Milošević's regime.

The converging statements of US leadership assure me that I did exactly what they needed. It was the help they needed then, at that moment, and they got it.

Why is this important to the Romanian people? – someone might ask. It is, because the Americans never forget those who helped them. There have been few moments in their history when they needed help as they are, almost by definition, the ones that help others. The particular cases in which, for a certain period of time, they need support, are rare, and those who provide them with that support, at that particular moment, are never forgotten.

Friday, 26 March 1999

During a visit to Baia Mare for an inauguration, Remus Opris calls me: Radu Vasile was rushed to the hospital probably because he suffered a heart attack.

I immediately return to Bucharest and, straight from the airport, I go to Elias Hospital. He is sedated but perfectly lucid. I feel my prompt presence there does him good, I encourage him as much as I can, we even joke, but he has got the look of a scared child in his eyes.

Saturday, 27 March 1999

Endless phone talks with Diaconescu and Quintus – nobody knows when the Prime Minister will recover – on the issue of an interim solution.

10 a.m. Meeting with the Economic Council, which includes many influential businesspersons. It is crucial to give up the idea of fiscal strike, which would be a catastrophe with respect to the liabilities of our foreign debt. I manage to convince them, mainly with the support of Marian Milut. They eventually state they do not agree with organizing anticipated elections or with appointing a technicians' Government which would destabilize the economic environment. Mihai Ionescu, the President of the Romanian Association of Importers and Exporters, says that businessmen do not agree with the unions' initiative to start a general strike and Marian Milut, who is the president of UGIR-1903 (The General Union of Romanian Engineers), highlights the risks of a signal of political instability and advocates solidarity, as the delay of the top payment of external debt would have negative consequences and businessmen have to cohere in order to overpass the top payment of external debt.

2 p.m. Long and positive discussion with the representatives of the NGOs, present in a very large number. They appreciate the constant availability for dialogue with the civil society, they – justly – accuse the lack of money and ask – justly again – that the bills should be drawn after consultations between the various ministers and the experts of the civil society. The general conclusion is that a parliamentary strike, as well as the hypothesis of anticipated elections is groundless, and the idea of a parliamentary strike causes indignation among them: the parliamentarians have not been elected to go on strikes but to endorse laws.

7 p.m. Meeting with the leaders of the coalition parties. There are present Ion Diaconescu, Gabriel Tepelea (The National Democratic and Christian Party of the Peasants – NDCPP), Sergiu Cunesco, Alexandru Athanasiu (The Romanian Social-Democratic Party – R-SPD), Mircea Ionescu-Quintus, Valeriu Stoica (The National Liberal Party – NLP), Victor Babiuc, Bogdan Niculescu-Duvăz (The Democratic Party – PD), Marko Béla, Attila Verestoy (The Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania – DUHR).

I briefly present the situation, the previous propositions and discussions, then president Diaconescu is the first to take the floor: outspoken as usual, he pleads for dialogue but he does not favour the idea

of anticipated elections or of a national coalition government. This is one of president Iliescu's favourite themes, which he reiterated in 1992, and further on, as an actual means of eluding the results of the elections, and one can ask why he did not plead for such a government in January 1990, when FNS (the Front of National Salvation) had took hold of the government for itself. Anyway...

Minister Babiuc, concise, as usual, agrees with the idea of dialogue and proposes that the close perspective of a round table gathering the majority, the opposition, the associations of employers and the unions, should be confirmed.

President Ionescu-Quintus says that NLP rejects all the versions for changing the current governing formula. None is justified, neither the national coalition government, nor the one of the anticipated elections. As for the technocrats' Government, which had become the fad of media, but which is now exploited by the big businessmen around Dan Voiculescu, in order to simply claim the power for themselves, despite any democratic rule. NLP could not even consider bringing this hypothesis into discussion.

The president of DUHR, Marko Béla, rejects as well the idea of anticipated elections, but he welcomes an analysis of the year under the Radu Vasile Government.

Alexandru Athanasiu, the excellent minister of labour, competently breaks into the conversation, asking the urgent endorsement in Parliament of the laws demanded by the unions, especially those envisaging the organisation of courts specialized in labour conflicts.

I also add that it is necessary that the Economic and Social Board, which reunites representatives of the Government, the associations of employers and unions, should not be considered as having a decorating function by the Parliament; the ESB notifications do have to be taken into consideration when endorsing the laws. I will also send the presidents of the two Chambers a formal letter on the subject.

Sunday, March 28, 1999

Anca Toader initiates a pro-NATO talk show for Sunday – 7 times 7, the only one that she has on TVR1 – with M. Ionescu Quintus, V. Babiuc, an analyst in favour of NATO, probably Codita or Valentin Stan and with Zoe Petre. The next day, Hadji Culea personally announces media that she was fired, claiming that she broke some internal regulations, by appearing in the show herself.

Next week, ProTV starts to invite as well pro-NATO analysts – Valentin Stan, Cornel Codita, both of them being excellent. There is even a debate Liiceanu – C.T. Popescu. It's hard to decide whether calm and rational arguments, exquisitely set forth by Liiceanu, can go beyond the vehement and demolishing pathos of his gloomy interlocutor.

James Shea – quoted by all televisions and newspapers – utters the unfortunate sentence about collateral victims. The opposition obsessively recurs with statements on all TV channels, the newspapers *Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Național* (and Antena 1), *Curierul Național*, *Dimineața* – not to mention *România Mare* – go on with irate attacks, the public radio company pretends to be impartial, but slips in all sorts of anti-American hints, and TVR is dull flat and broadcasts nothing but images from Belgrade. They complain they do not have money to send a reporter in Macedonia, where the amount of Albanian refugees is dramatically increasing; we are going to find a sponsorship, but the results are going to be tardy and insignificant.

In Timisoara, demonstrations with target-people, like in Belgrade. In Bucharest, Vadim's attempt to have a pro-Yugoslavian demonstration is a failure.

The debate in Parliament for a Declaration of principle meant to support the NATO and EU position is not encouraging. Ilescu proclaims that he is going to promote in Parliament his own declaration regarding the Kosovo conflict, in case the text which is about to be endorsed by the two Chambers does not include the ideas of the main opposition party. Or RPSD (The Romanian Party of Social Democracy) considers that the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia is a faultive act which aggravates and amplifies a conflict in Kosovo. RPSD advocates the cessation of the NATO aggression and dialogue between the parties involved.

Monday, 29 March 1999

11 a.m. I am announced that four civil aircraft JAT have landed at Baneasa. The permit has been given according to the national and international regulations for civil air forces. During the check-up after landing, it was ascertained that the permission to access our airspace granted by the Romanian authorities was completely in accordance with reality.

Discussion with Basescu: they will be confined to the ground until consultations with NATO are held.

Tuesday, 30 March 1999

President Clinton mentions in his speech the steps taken by Romania in order to host those who wanted to escape the curse of living under Europe's last dictator.

Wednesday, 1 April 1999

12 a.m. The joint press conference of the NATO General Secretary and of the Supreme Commander of NATO troops. Javier Solana declares: "As far as Romania is concerned, I have personally written a letter to President Constantinescu, in order to reassure him that we are going to efficiently respond if Romania faces any problems..."

In order to prepare the meeting at Cotroceni, I request from Governor Isaescu the NRB report, demanded by RPSD and I ask the government to seriously elaborate their own report. Every day my office reminds those appointed to draw this up that the deadline is coming close, they respond slightly exasperated. Radu Vasile has decided that he is not going to be unavailable: I am convinced that he was whispered all sorts of gossips and plots and that he is under the impression that I am betraying him. Does he really think that I could leave Romania without a government in the current situation? Anyway he has decided that he should be healthy, which does not give me the peace of mind as far as the report of the Government is concerned. Even if, on the phone, Ion Iliescu seemed to understand that we had to postpone for a few days the Round Table, there are only a few days and I am afraid that for the Prime Minister this report is the last thing he has time for.

2 p.m. Petru Berceanu draws my attention to the fact that a cable television suddenly starts broadcasting a Yugoslavian TV channel, actually the official channel in Belgrade. Interesting, as a propaganda show (almost exclusively military-nationalist clips but on Serbian music which can make one think of everything but the war). Inflaming for a country where the discussions about Yugoslavia are held with fists clenched. I urge Petre Berceanu to call the NAB (The National Audio-Visual Board), and I found from Moldovan, the President of the institution at the time, that they had approved the new channel grid of the cable company, including the Yugoslavian TV channel.

9 p.m. On TV, Sorin Roșca Stănescu and Ion Cristoiu are debating the crisis. Sorin Roșca Stănescu says that the intervention was necessary, because the Serbians were chasing away, killing and raping the Albanians. Cristoiu replies: how can you possibly know, have you been there?

After that he makes a demonstration of independent journalism, reporting his visit to Belgrade as a guest of the Propaganda Minister from there. It is terrible the passion which some people living in a democracy develop for dictatorship. I almost believe that Cristoiu would love a Propaganda Minister in Bucharest. If he were the leader, so much the better.

Friday, 3 April 1999

• Zoe Petre, puzzled, tells me that during a phone conversation with Quintus, which I had asked her to make in order to get a confirmation, he reproached her that she was “supporting” Anca Toader: the condition negotiated by NLP for accepting Hadji Culea was a “modest” one: Alina Mungiu and Anca Toader should be fired from TVR. “How can I look Vadim in the eyes now?” asks the venerable.

Monday, 5 April 1999

12 a.m. I receive at Cotroceni, the Ambassador Sergio Balansino (NATO General Secretary Deputy). I briefly reassert Romania’s determined and unconditional support for NATO. The Parliament has passed a balanced declaration of support for the NATO efforts to support out national interests. I highlight the importance of some direct communication lines with NATO as well as that of some experts in air traffic management around Timisoara. We also need financial aid regarding the problems of the refugees. Balansino presents extremely favorable appreciations for Romania’s position. He brings into discussion the issue of transit for the Russian “private” aid convoys.

Tuesday, 6 April 1999

1.30 p.m. I receive Strobe Talbott, the USA State Secretary Deputy. The same warm appreciation, the USA and President Clinton personally are impressed, etc. etc. I reply that we tried to behave like an actual member of NATO, I suggest that I am informed not all the rightful members behaved like this and I highlight the importance of the states with solid military tradition, like Poland and Romania. He is concerned about the attitude of the opposition, I am trying to render it less grave and to nuance but I am not very successful.

7.30 p.m. Meeting at the Villa “Lac 1”, in view of the last preparations for the Round Table. I find that the Government Report is a stale and incomplete sketch of incoherent data.

11.30 p.m. I come back to Cotroceni in order to discuss with the counsellors. The idea of a social pact does not seem realistic, but the perspective of a general strike does not seem so threatening either. I have taken the pulse of the participants of the tomorrow meeting, most of them are concerned – just like myself – about the fact that the laws for the restoring of property seem to have reached a dead end in Parliament. Eternal mediations, eternal obstructions – not only from RPSD and RMP (România Mare Party), whose deep hostility against anything that could make up for the immense injustice of the nationalisation is very familiar to me; but so does PD, whose opinion leader is Triță Făniță, the Romcereal tycoon – they make the debates for the law to be postponed unacceptably. Or, the whole thing is about the fundamental commitment the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) made and about a decisive action in order to settle account with the past. I wonder whether we could not lead the discussion towards a commitment of all the political forces in order to hasten the endorsement of the laws that consolidate the private property. So I should formulate my intervention consequently and I make the draft of a declaration.

1.30 a.m. Desperately I demand the immediate reformulating of the text under Răsvan Popescu's coordination. I know him well, he was my student, and after 1990 he has become a good journalist. Now he is a State Secretary for public information and the Government spokesman, therefore I can hope that he would draw not only a coherent report but also to well formulate some ideas.

I go down to Union Hall to personally check the location of the guests' seats. I know them all well. I know their huge egos. In the official columns, on planes, at the commemoration ceremonies, the order is what they are most concerned about. A misplaced chair can ruin everything. I charged Sandra Pralong with the organisation, as she came a few days ago from New York as a personal counsellor, supported by USAID. She is experienced in PR, so she has thrown herself into preparations for the Round Table with the energy of one that wants to show what she knows and what she can. She knows some, but there are some others she knows less. Her aesthetic vision about the seats distribution in the Union Hall for the meeting would have resulted in a war atmosphere: on one side, the Government, the coalition parties and the representatives of the civil society; opposite, like in a duel, the opposition and the unions. She had already moved the

tables around for about three times. Now it is late and the administration employees have left for a long time, so for the fourth time we are moving the tables together – Sandra, Zoe, the adjutants and myself.

The Round Table

Wednesday, 7 April, The Basarabs Hall

11.30 a.m. Before the beginning of the Round Table I make a statement in front of the journalists, that this debate involving all the political forces, the business media, unions and civil society is a novelty in Romania, the purpose of the dialogue being to find out some ways of doing away with the tension induced by the current crisis situation. I am aware that the chronic discontent of the population comes from the absence of a real dialogue between the political forces. The number of those who have lost their confidence in the ability of the politicians to prevent a major crisis is, unfortunately, very large and the current difficult situation Romania is in is doubled by the vicinity with some political and military troubled areas. It would be exaggerated to believe that this dialogue will lead us to a consensus but we have to agree on our disagreement points for their further settlement. In the end I lay a strong emphasis on the necessity of a poised and feasible solution of the real estate problem and on my expectations that the debate is going to make headway with this major problem.

12.00 a.m. When I go through the library into the big marble hall, the Union Hall – which can accommodate up to 400 people – I am really impressed by the number and quality of the participants. The RNB report, presented by Mugur Isaescu is very reliable and persuasive, most of the interventions – remarkable. Logical and concise, my old friend for bad weather, Marian Milut, speaks on behalf of ESC, where he represents the association of employers. The intervention that practically changed the course of the debate was that of academician Constantin Ionete, a distinguished economist, who develops such rigorous and eloquent arguments in favour of the laws for real estate restitution and acceleration of privatisation, that even Vadim who was raving and storming against the landed gentry, the bourgeoisie, finds himself singing a hymn to the private property.

I have the premonition that the debates could not only end well but bring about an unexpected progress. Iliescu demands that an independent commission of the Romanian Academy should study the effects of the restitution, hoping probably that this commission will

reach the conclusion that these will cause some kind of catastrophe. As I know he feels great consideration for academician Tudorel Postolache, I support Petre Roman's proposal and we decide that under his coordination, a commission of the Academy should analyze these problems and that we should meet again in order to discuss the conclusions.

The Round Table, that – according to some – should have put down the Government and, if possible, the President as well, is concluded supporting, in fact, the theme I have formulated in the beginning of the debate. I reiterate it more clearly in my closing speech: the legislative and executive priority is the consolidation of the private property.

6.30 p.m. After I shake hands with the participants, I remain trying to convince the journalists – most of them had been in the Union Hall – that it was not a mere festivity, but we actually managed to defuse two crisis situations, the one announced by the opposition and the unions and the time and confidence crisis, caused by the big delay in the progress of the ownership law.

Friday, 9 April 1999 (Good Friday)

8 p.m. I have demanded a phone conversation with Javier Solana. This is the transcription of the most important part, where after a few formal phrases, I say the following: What I mean to tell you is rather of humane than political or military importance but I believe the crisis grows severe and that its settlement depends more and more on the individual and collective psychology. As a Spaniard you can better understand these things.

As you know I was present on the TV and radio in Romania in order to declare that the NATO intervention is equally necessary and legitimate. A week later, after the bombing had started I reiterated our unconditional support for the NATO action in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, I must notice that while the attacks go on, the public opinion in Romania and in the Orthodox Balkan countries develop an attitude that can become more dangerous on short term, but particularly on medium and long term. Before it is too late there is necessary a gesture. Such a gesture, with a huge impact, could be announcing a pause in the NATO air attacks in Yugoslavia on Easter Saturday and Sunday. For the Orthodox, the Lord's resurrection is celebrated the night between Saturday and Sunday. It is the most important moment of the

year. Pious or not, almost everybody goes to church and out in the streets with torches and candles.

Javier Solana: When do people go to church?

E.C.: All night long.

Javier Solana: What time does the service start?

E.C.: It starts in the evening. Around seven o'clock. And on Sunday people celebrate all day long, it is a holiday. It is very important. I insist. Under the communism, this used to be the most important form of solidarity against tyranny, and it would be terrible to see it now turning into solidarity of all these people against the democratic countries members of NATO.

Javier Solana: So, Saturday night is very important.

E.C.: Yes, and Sunday as well. I urge you to use all your prestige and influence in order to persuade all those who decide the schedule of the air raids, to stop them.

Javier Solana: I'll do whatever I can. I will take into account what you told me and all the arguments you have given to me. I might call you again tomorrow to give you an answer.

The same day, in a conversation with Madeleine Albright, Plesu supports the same point of view.

Saturday, April 10, 1999

During the briefing of the NATO spokesman, Jamie Shea, broadcast live on CNN and Euronews, and then broadcast again all day long, a western journalist asks him a question: "Jamie, I have read a piece of news, about General Secretary Solana's promise to Romania's President, to stop any NATO action during the Orthodox Easter festivities. What do you know about this?" Jamie Shea's diplomatic answer: "It is true that the General Secretary talked to President Constantinescu yesterday... The General Secretary pays attention to all the suggestions or propositions forwarded by the leaders of the partner countries... I would like to say that we are extremely grateful for the help and solidarity constantly shown by Romania during this crisis."

I can still hear Solana's questions: "What's the interval when people go to church?", "What time does the service start?". He didn't promise anything, but he insisted to find out exactly when the Saturday evening and the Sunday morning services start and when they end. There were no raids during this interval.

There was no announcement of canceling the bombing, considering that the Alliance would appear weak, but there was found a compromise solution and, invoking the bad weather, the bombing took place with a lower frequency. The bombing takes place also during the Catholic and Protestant Easter.

Of course, there is one thing to bomb and something completely different to be bombed. But if you really believe in God, in the life after death, things may be just the other way round.

Sunday, 11 April 1999

Back to Washington, Strobe Talbot declares: "The courage of the states in the first line, whose solidarity with NATO involves extraordinary risks and costs, is impressive; they act like this because they trust in the Alliance."

Romania's availability to offer humanitarian aid to the F.R. of Yugoslavia, so quickly expressed, is promptly remarked and appreciated. It becomes obvious for the Serbians as well that solidarity with the Alliance is also oriented against dictatorship and not against the people brought on the edge of the abyss by Milošević's desperate attempt to keep the power at any cost. It's useless. All the important newspapers, except for 'Evenimentul Zilei' and 'Ziu' have a hostile attitude. 'Adevarul' is violently against NATO, TVR (the national television) is hesitating in presenting the news, the vehement reactions of RPSD are everywhere, the coalition parliamentarians seem to be speechless.

Wednesday, 14 April 1999

7 p.m. I receive Hubert Védrine, the French Foreign Affairs Minister. He reassures me of President Chirac's support, as always. In France, the President, a rightist, has to lead the country with a socialist government, but there are no dissensions in the foreign affairs.

8.30 p.m. Dorin Marian informs me that he met the USA ambassador, James Rosapeppe and Carolyn Johnson (Mission Deputy), at their request. They let him know that we are going to be requested air access for the NATO aircraft and a location for America's Voice, in order to broadcast, from Romania in the Serbian language.

10.30 p.m. Villa "Lac 2". I invited several political analysts in order to discuss the risk of occurrence of the axis Russia – Belarus – Yugoslavia. I realize that all of them share my concern, even if the idea launched by the Belgrade Parliament seems to be a desperate attempt

with no perspectives. They have not forgotten either Lukashenko's statements and if not only the Duma but President Eltsin as well would take this seriously, the risks for Romania's security would be considerable. We discuss whether Romania will be pushed towards the Slav axis. Their conclusion is that, by unambiguously supporting the NATO actions, I have managed to actually block this direction: right now, NATO cannot ignore Romania.

Thursday, 15 April 1999

5 p.m. The President of the United States addresses himself to the American people and to the whole world with a message regarding the situation in the Balkans. The speech is entirely broadcast by CNN all over the world, and replayed over the next 24 hours. From his intervention: 'Who is going to define the future of this part of the world? Who is going to stand out as a model so that all the people freed from communism might handle their legitimate problems? Slobodan Milošević, with his propaganda machine and the para-military troops who urges people to leave their country, history and land, or a country like Romania, which has built up democracy observing the rights of the other ethnic minorities?'

Friday, 16 April 1999

7 p.m. I address a TV live message to the nation: I feel that people are really worried and frightened. It is not easy to see every night images of the bombing in Serbia and to be assaulted in your own home by terrible information and comments. The war is very close to us and the risks are very high. Stoyanov called me in despair when an American missile was dropped, by mistake, on a block in Sofia. Fortunately, the block was deserted, so there were no victims. What if there were any? Every night I pray so that the same would not happen to us.

I try to tell the people that, as far as Romania is concerned, there will be peace and safety. That the sovereignty, integrity and unity of the Romanian state will not be a matter of discussion. That our option for NATO had in view the security of these objectives. That there is not a middle way. That I don't think that there is any clear-minded Romanian to prefer Belarus to an alliance with the Occident, that there is essential that Romania be united in matters of external policy and also, as much as possible, in those concerning the internal affairs. And

that, during the Round Table at Cotroceni we were able to show this. I dwell more on the daily problems and I am thankful for the understanding of the difficulties.

Saturday, 17 April 1999

3 p.m. I convene a meeting with the Minister of Defense, Victor Babiuc, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, general Degeratu, to analyze NATO's request to unrestricted access to Romania's airspace. Victor Babiuc agrees, he even proposes that we make an offer for the location of a NATO military basis in Romania. In exchange, we will be asking for explicit security guarantees from NATO and the inclusion in an eventual plan of economic aid.

Sunday, 18 April 1999

Phone call from President Clinton to discuss Jacques Chirac's proposal to convene a special meeting NATO – neighbouring states of Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in view of a program of development for south-eastern Europe, when the conflict in Yugoslavia is over. This summit could be held in Washington at the end of the week following NATO's anniversary. As he had previously promised Chirac declared that a meeting of the heads of states from the seven neighbouring countries of Yugoslavia – Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia – was necessary in order to study the security matters which this conflict poses and the necessary means to respond.

I state our full support for this reunion. He requests of me to think up some proposal in view of the meeting and assures me that they will be carefully considered.

At once I give dispositions to my counsellors to do so and also ask Andrei Pleșu to do the same.

Tuesday, 20 April 1999

9.00 a.m. Meeting with the coalition leaders regarding the unrestricted access for NATO airplanes.

I unreservedly support this decision. In their turn, Diaconescu, Roman, Quintus, Cunesu, Alexandru Ionescu from FER, Varujan Pambuccian from the minorities' group from the Chamber, they all declare themselves in favour of the unrestricted access. Marco Béla observes that our decision is going to bring the conflict to a quicker conclusion

(shorten the conflict). Only Otto Weber (PER) is being ambiguous and utters one of his characteristic phrases: we are against the Milošević regime, but with the Yugoslavian people. Lately he has let himself be seduced quite often by the sirens voices coming from PRM. Once more I see that my statements have encouraged them and that, beyond the circumstantial conflicts, we stand united in point of essential matters.

10.30 a.m. Meeting with opposition leaders: Ion Iliescu states plainly that he disagrees on the unrestricted access, that the former decision of the Parliament has to be maintained. He says that we have a treaty with Yugoslavia which prevents us from accepting NATO's request. That there are no reasons for an air attack and especially that the NATO action is pointless and without any justification. And that it is regrettable that for ten years NATO and UE have not given any aid to the countries in this area and now they are talking about a post-conflict reconstruction. Valeriu Tabără also adds that PUNR does not approve of this and that there is no UNO mandate for NATO forces. Meleşcanu joins them, and he even proposes a discussion with Yugoslavia. PNL, represented by Viorel Cataramă, and UFD, whose spokesman is Varujan Vosganian, declare, on the contrary, that they are going to vote for the unrestricted access.

12 a.m. The meeting of the National Supreme Security Council. I have also invited President Iliescu as a former head of the state. To begin with, we have a private discussion and I tell him that he should think in the long run. PDSR is a major party, it could be back in power and it is necessary that the option for NATO should appear as national and not as one-sided. If PDSR keeps opposing NATO, the risks may run high. My proposal is that, although they may attack me as much as they want, they should not veto NATO in the Parliament. In case they wouldn't vote for the unrestricted access, at least they should abstain. His answer is that he will take it into consideration.

I add that, as a matter of fact, the unrestricted access to our airspace is much more beneficial and safer than a restricted one. In the case of the unrestricted access, NATO has a well defined flight corridor, from which it cannot stray, but which also extends the umbrella of security over the rest of 80% of our airspace unaffected by NATO flights, because NATO will actually take over the responsibility for the safety of the Romanian airspace. Moreover, if the Romanian air-

space is considered safe for NATO and UE, all planes which can no longer fly over Yugoslavia will be paying taxes to the Romanian authorities and it is, by no means, a small sum of money. On the contrary, if we restrict NATO access, they will still fly over if necessary, under one pretext or another. On top of it, in order to protect themselves, they will declare our airspace insecure and then no commercial flights, not even Tarom will be going this way. I make it specific that I leave it up to him to use these arguments to persuade his reluctant party colleagues, but if the vote in the Parliament, which is crucial for the long-term status of Romania, goes wrong, I will make use of them myself in a public discourse addressed to all Romanian citizens.

At the National Supreme Security Council we decide to grant an "operational access" to NATO planes, to and from Yugoslavia, the right to refuel during the flight, and to be escorted by flight patrols able to fire back in case of any attacks.

Wednesday, 21 April 1999

Dorin Marian presents to the joint Defense Committees of the two Chambers the letter which requests the Parliament the approval of operational access for NATO airplanes into the Romanian airspace. The Committees grant it by a reasonable margin despite the opposition protests.

Tuesday, 22 April 1999

On the way to New York, for the NATO summit – the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. On the plane I work on my speech, I read the file but my thoughts are running away to the debates concerning the approval of unrestricted access to our airspace, which are taking place on my request and especially to the outcome of the vote in Parliament. The STS officers have fit a satellite station on the rear part of the plane therefore I can establish a permanent contact with those left back in the country. During our flight over the Atlantic I get the results of the voting: 225 in favour, 21 against and 99 abstentions.

When I get to the hotel room I find the extracts from the minutes of the debates of the joint session of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate; the customary virulent attacks against myself and NATO from PRM. With PDSR, things went as agreed upon with president Iliescu. The position of the party was presented by Ioan Mircea Pascu, former secretary of state in the Ministry of National Defense in the

Vacaroiu Administration. He attacks everyone; he warns the states members of NATO that the military intervention has deepened the crisis, that the situation is getting worse and shows no signs of amelioration, he disavows the forcible steps taken, warns the people that an acceptance of the unrestricted access into our airspace could get us involved in a hostile relationship with our own neighbors; he criticizes the Government for its way of handling the crisis, reminds the MPs of the opinion of the voters, which are against our intervention and shows that the best solution would be the maintaining of the previous decision. He eventually announces that the PDSR MPs will abstain from voting the approval of unrestricted access in our airspace.

Sunday, April 25 1999

The NATO summit, in Washington DC starts, in fact with a discussion between NATO's and Yugoslavia's neighboring countries. Clinton opens the summit by speaking of conference for reconstruction, which is to be held in Bonn and that would launch a development plan for the entire region. Then, in an alphabetical order, speak the president of Albania, requests that NATO should remain in Kosovo as long as possible, the president of Macedonia considers that the above-mentioned plan should be based on the return of the refugees, the president of Bulgaria stresses out the dire economic consequences of the conflict for the countries in the area.

Within the few minutes at my disposal, I show that when devising post-conflict strategies we need to be keeping in mind three aspects: the political, the military and the economic. I emphasize that Serbia's integrity must be respected, that NATO's integration of Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia will bring a long-term solution to the security issue and that a plan for economic reconstruction is indispensable. Each aspect – security, economy and democracy – ought to be the subject of a workshop that would discuss the reconstruction plan for the area, that is to involve all the countries in the region. An active reconstruction partnership is necessary, which should inherit from the tradition of the Marshall plan the principle of the "right to the first refusal", meaning the right to buy materials and use the workforce, including the highest qualified workforce; the economy of the UE should be resorted to only when the area offers no possibilities. I also propose the establishing, in the US, of a guarantee fund for the investments in the South-East of our continent.

The Slovenian president emphasizes the fact that the establishment of a democratic regime in Yugoslavia is an essential condition for the success of any stability plan; that Kosovo's independence is not a solution and that, for the time being, there should exist some form of international protection in the area. President Demirel shows that the countries in the area have made significant progress in the direction of freedom and of the establishment of democratic institutions and accentuates the efforts made by Romania, as the incumbent President of the South-East European Cooperation Process, SEECF.

President Chirac brings out the need of the countries in the area to receive from NATO a guarantee of the fact that their security represents an essential objective for the Alliance. Prime Minister Blair puts things the most clearly: we are indebted to the countries in the first line, he says. We shall pay this debt, not only from the point of view of security, but also from the economic perspective.

12 a.m. The Council of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership. Romania has been appointed President of the Council.

Solana opens the conference and I am given the floor. I present a few of our ideas on the relationship PFP-NATO and on Romania's aspirations. Clinton goes on to talk about the continuation of the cooperation with Russia and Ukraine and declares "we will continue the NATO enlargement"

Tuesday, 4 May 1999

10 a.m. Reception of Tony Blair at Cotroceni. After the ceremony we enter together in the Museum and, when asked about the president of the Chamber of Deputies, I briefly inform him of the biography of the PNCTD president. Impressed, he changes the opening address to his speech in Parliament, by bringing homage to the sufferings of those held in the Communist prisons.

Our discussion is particularly friendly. He is a warm man, flexible and full of life. It is easy to see why he is Clinton's personal friend, being so much alike and belonging to the same generation. He reiterates Great Britain's full support towards Romania's integration in NATO and in the EU structures, which is indeed a great victory. Even more significantly, he is going to make this statement in front of Parliament, as he was asked to in Washington.

In Parliament, the opposition deputies and senators are wearing targets on their chests, like in Belgrade. He does not pretend to ignore

them, makes a joke and praises Romania's freedom and democracy, comparing them to England's. In fact it is not a joke. Who would have imagined a similar scene in the disciplined, morgue-like Communist Great National Assembly?

He pointed out the importance and righteousness of the decision of the Bucharest Parliament to grant NATO's request for unlimited access in the Romanian airspace, despite this being such a difficult choice to make, and which involved sacrifices.

"If this conflict has any importance to my country, then let me tell you in all humility, that Romania is even more deeply involved in it. There is instability on our continent, but also in your direct neighborhood. We are deeply touched by the conflict, but it is your future that is being threatened by it, Blair said.

He claims to have been impressed by the "strong support" to the NATO military action in Kosovo, expressed by the presidents of the first-line countries, present at the Summit of the Alliance held in Washington. "Romania's support was that of an exemplary partner and of a future ally and I know that this support involved a difficult option and great sacrifice" – Tony Blair added. In a powerful, suggestive phrase, he promised the assistance of Great Britain in view of a fast integration in NATO and in view of the beginning of the negotiations of integration in the European Union.

Wednesday, 5 May 1999

4 p.m. Meeting of the National Supreme Security Council (NSSC). They present the application details of the Romania-NATO Agreement on the unrestricted use of Romania's airspace. We discuss the supplementing of the budget of the Ministry of National Defense.

Considering the effects of the campaign against the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia I am tempted to discreetly probe the moral of the Romanian soldiers who watch TV, listen to the radio, read the newspapers and who, after all, do have friends and families. These past few months I have had permanently by my side general Degeratu, chief of the General Staff, as well as the Cotroceni military counsellor, general Adam Badea, secretary of the NSSC, and colonel Boris Popescu, counsellor on defense matters, but I do need a direct and open discussion with more commanders.

I notice no hesitation on the part of the military corps, but I still need to check if the political demagoguery of the opposition parties, doubled by the aggressive anti-NATO discourse of certain television chan-

nels and central newspapers have not triggered some doubts regarding the righteousness of our decisions so far.

I summon all the commanders of the armed forces categories, as well as the commanders of the three armies to take part in the NSSC meeting. We discuss the steps that are to be taken in the following months, the needs of the army and the supplementary costs required for the support of the military effort.

I watch each speaker closely. The civilian ministers have been firm and determined during this difficult period, but I find the militaries to be even stauncher: Romania's position is the right one, we belong with the North-Atlantic Alliance; real partners stand side by side for better or for worse. One after the other, severe-looking in their uniforms, speaking concisely, not necessarily in an elaborated fashion, but decently, they seem unbreakable. I came here from an academic world, unaccustomed with the military style, and which does not appreciate army rigor, to put it euphemistically. In December 1996 I automatically assumed the role of commander of the army. I learnt to understand its members beyond the almost ritual formulas which, from an early age, they are taught to limit themselves to. But I particularly learnt to respect them for their precision and loyalty, which is not, as it is too often the case among the civilians, facultative and incomplete. Here loyalty is closely connected to the idea of military honor, a notion which, for them, or at least for the best of them – and they are not few – is an imperative assumed once and for all.

This is one of the rare meetings where the main issue is no longer represented by the many needs of the military corps, but by their desire to make sure that Romania pulls it through from a conflict so close to its borders. It is hardships that got us united.

Friday, 7 May – Sunday, 9 May 1999

The visit of Pope John Paul II in Romania. It is the first visit in history made by a Pope in an Orthodox country.

On this occasion I invited to Bucharest the representatives of civil society in the South-Eastern countries: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Croatia. On Saturday I clear an hour in my schedule to have lunch with them. They are extremely friendly; they thank me, both Catholics and Orthodox, for the opportunity I gave them, of seeing His Sanctity. We share experiences from our political combat; I notice the radicalism of the Serbs and Croatians.

Wednesday, 26 May 1999

3.30 p.m. Phone conversation with Zoran Djindjici, whom I invite to Bucharest. His visit due on September 8th 1999 will prepare the ground for our future collaboration.

Tuesday, 22 June 1999

1.30 p.m. I welcome Madeleine Albright, who is on an official visit to Bucharest. During our discussions at the Cotroceni Palace, both with the delegation and in private, she mentions the fact that the US are aware of the economic impact of the conflict and that the Congress has voted a first installment of 1.4 million dollars, that will be added to that promised before. She also adds that the US support Romania's candidature for the presidency of the OSCE. I reply by bringing up the need for examples: the need for a positive example (Romania might become unstable, a new version of Bosnia, if we do not come with the suitable political solutions; the need for a stimulating example – Montenegro must be immediately helped.) Romania could offer considerable help to the democratic forces in Yugoslavia. Similarly, I claim that the Romanian companies ought to be supported to take part in the reconstruction of Yugoslavia, together with companies from Bulgaria, Hungary and even Serbia and I also raise the vital issue for us, of the free navigation on the Danube, vital for us.

Sunday, 27 June 1999

General Degeratu calls me in Iasi; there has been an incident related to the transit of the Russian aircrafts to Pristina. As agreed, on Sunday morning, when the Chief of the General Staff received from EUROCONTROL the three notifications regarding the request that the three Russian planes could enter the Romanian airspace starting with 06.43, we give our permission, on condition that the planes should transit the Romanian territory at four-hour intervals, in compliance with previous agreements with Russia and NATO. This interval was necessary for the planes not to be considered as part of a formation, case in which a special validation by the Parliament would have been necessary.

The first aircraft entered the Romanian airspace at 09.43 and exited it at 10.27. Shortly after the entrance in the airspace, the General Staff of Military Air Forces and Anti-aircraft Defense was informed that the second aircraft had already taken off and would reach the frontier around 11.15. I validate the GSMA proposal and inform the Ministry of Na-

tional Defense of this situation, so that the Russian authorities should be asked to observe the schedule agreed upon, failing which the aircraft would be considered to be in breach of Romanian flight policy.

Despite all warnings and despite the efforts of the Romanian Ministry of Defense, the second aircraft entered the Romanian airspace at 11.16, 92 minutes after the first. As a result, with my accord, the Russian plane was declared to be in breach of our flight policy and the chief of the Romanian General Staff of Military Air Force ordered that it be intercepted and given the challenge. Since the aircraft was a transportation vehicle, it was not considered to be an imminent danger for the national territory, but was nonetheless escorted by MIG-21 and MIF-29 planes originating in the airbases Mihail Kogalniceanu, Deveselu and Timisoara. At the same time, the anti-aircraft units were alerted, in order to prevent any further descent. The Russian aircraft eventually exited the Romanian airspace heading for Yugoslavia.

I inspect the Center of airspace observation near Balotesti. This center is part of a joint Romanian-American program (ASOC), whose objective is the replacement of our archaic system of air traffic control, with another one based on the sophisticated American FPS-117 radar-systems.

While we are going down several floors in a concrete bunker, I remember my first inspection in a similar center in Timisoara, back in 1997. We had entered a building that looked exactly like a block of flats and where, in a large hall, behind a semi-transparent screen, several persons were manually tracing the routes of the various planes that were flying over Romania. Flight lanes, civil or military airplanes, commercial or for special purposes. With an amazing dexterity, the operators behind the screen were writing backwards, so that we could read the correct coordinates of all those planes, coordinates which were updated every five minutes. It felt like living in a movie about the British pilots, back in World War Two.

I remember asking how long it took for an aircraft in breach of our flight policy to be identified and intercepted. I was answered that, if it were coming from west to east, it would be able to get as far as the Oriental Carpathians. Which meant in fact crossing the entire Transylvania. Almost instinctively, any enemy aircraft was expected to come only from the West. Which means that the legacy of the Ceausescus, brothers in arms and brethren in ideas concerning “the war of the entire people” is still very much present in their minds.

The local commander tells me that the new ASOC program will start soon.

Here, in Balotesti, our equipment meets the western standards: computers, digital maps of Romania, flight lanes, dots gliding silently on the map. The militaries are satisfied with the new machines. The management of the airspace, an essential criterion for our integration in NATO, is on the right track.

. I inquire about any problems that might exist and I feel the shadow of a hesitation in the voice of the chief of the Air forces. I am informed that the components of the machine for the identification of the airplanes transiting the Romanian airspace have been held back at the customs for quite some time, due to the scarcity of the funds necessary for the payment of custom taxes. I glance at General Degeratu. He tells me that the Government Decision of exemption from taxes was sent on, but that it had somehow been lost at the Ministry of Finances. I call Minister Remes from my car and the problem is solved.

Friday, 2 July 1999

I attend the Salzburg Economic Forum. The Russian Prime Minister, Serghei Stepashin, a participant as well, solicits a meeting and, surprisingly enough, apologizes to the Romanian authorities for the incident on June 27th.

Saturday, 3 July 1999

The wedding of my daughter, Norina.

General Degeratu calls me up again on the short line: the Russian Federation has again asked permission to cross our airspace in order to transport new troops in Kossovo. NATO is not pleased with this zeal. This must be why Stepashin apologized in the first place. We resolve not to grant permission and I inform MAE of my decision. We all hope that they will not attempt any forced entry at the border. Indeed, after some time, which NATO must have found quite useful, the Russians get Poland's and Hungary's permission of access.

Thursday, 8 July 1999

9.00 Javier Solana's reception. He embraces me, thanks me, I thank him, discreetly, for all the efforts he has made so far, as well as for those made last April. Solana states once more that Romania has behaved as a NATO member de facto.

Thursday, 15 July 1999

12.30 am. Reception of Wesley Clark, SACEUR, (Supreme Allied Forces Commander for Europe), the supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe. A qualified expert in problems of geo-politics, he brings arguments to the idea that Romanian assistance has been decisive in limiting the duration of the conflict and thanks us for our courage and determination.

Stability

Thursday, 30 July 1999

Sarajevo, the Reunion for the Start of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

We land late at night, and after the first shock at the sight of a devastated airport, hastily rebuilt by the Americans, I see the tragic shadow of the city in the moonlight. The following morning, the ruins are still there but the large sports hall where the reunion is held looks strikingly new; it was, in fact just as hastily rebuilt by the Americans. In April, in Washington, when no one could make any correct estimates about the duration of the conflict, the NATO officials were planning the reunion to be held in Bonn. But their talent for creating powerful and lasting symbols made them choose Sarajevo instead, the martyr city of the previous Yugoslav war, a place where the tradition of good vicinity and flourishing multicultural synthesis had turned into an inferno of hatred, still haunted by the ghosts of the snipers shooting at anyone, either children or elders coming to their water wells. I am still obsessed by the horrors of this merciless hunt, by the cruelty that makes you stop your fellow from quenching his thirst.

As I enter the hall I am startled by quite a unique spectacle. The first part of the discussions unfolds following a pattern I am accustomed to by now at the NATO or UE summits: the presidents members of those organizations are gathered round a table, at which we are invited to take a seat, with cordiality, yet not without a shadow of condescension, like by some friendly schoolmasters. But here it is us who are playing the part of the schoolmaster.

The Round Table on democratic issues analyses what has been done in the interval between the end of April, in Washington, when we proposed the three directions to be followed, which later on were turned into workshops, and yesterday. The president of Finland, Ahtisaari is presiding the meeting in his calm and jovial manner. After the

end of discussions, the participants decide that I am to be the rapporteur in the plenary session on the democratic issues. I feel flattered and touched, as it represents a high level international recognition of all our efforts and even successes in the last years, proving that, beyond the confusing and not always agreeable appearance of an ebullient, sometimes anarchic political life, Romania has proven to be, as I had repeatedly said, a stable, fully functional democracy.

The plenary session is unique indeed. I have never dreamed to see, not even on television, all the great leaders of our world gathered in the same room: presidents and prime-ministers of the NATO countries and of course the president of the United States, all accompanied by their ministers; the Americans are represented here by Madeleine Albright, Sandy Berger, the chief of the National Security Council and the Defense State Secretary, William Cohen, surrounded by experts and many Secret Services agents (in 1997 in Bucharest there were several hundreds of them; I wonder how many are here today.); Presidents and Prime ministers of all the UE countries; the Japanese Prime minister; the chief commander of the NATO troops and all his adjuncts, as well as the generals from the southern commandment; Michel Camdessus; World Bank president, John Wolfensohn; BERD president. Then there is the UN Secretary General and the state and government leaders representing all the countries in the region. The President of Switzerland sits quietly, somewhere in a corner, at the modest table of the Observers. The members of the various royal families are the only ones missing. It is quite understandable that ensuring the security, of the building, any professional's nightmare, must have been utterly overwhelming and that the organization and logistics of the reunion must have raised almost insoluble problems.

The airplanes of the leading figures of our world, who have put aside their important affairs to come here, are queuing for hours to land or to take off. They are aware of exposing themselves to huge risks, in a fragile region, torn apart by inner conflict. But I realize that this impressive accumulation of forces is sending an extraordinary message to the world: they are all here because they care. The Balkans, with their tragedies, ancient or recent, are part of their inner universe, of their security or power interests, but also part of their imaginary. We are hardly some strangers to whom they could display some abstract, aloof form of compassion. We are their brothers, at times tormented, at times feeble, yet fundamentally part of the same world.

The Balkans are not the only region devastated by poverty and wars. But the impressive solidarity displayed by this “parterre de rois”, all present at the startup of the Stability Pact, is a token of brotherly feeling and of belonging. This is what I told a few Bosnian journalists and to the foreign correspondents that recognized me when leaving the room.

At the end of the meeting the more unusual part of the meeting begins: all, without exception, were seated on low benches in a sort of huge hall and, while waiting for our cars to come at the exact moment scheduled by the organizers according to the time of take-off of each plane, everything minutely calculated; meanwhile we were given bags with sandwiches, like in the Pioneer camps.

There could have been made quite a movie from the spectacle of this world of presidents, bankers and generals obediently seated, eating sandwiches and conversing with old friends or sometimes unexpected interlocutors.

A moment came when our ambassador in Sarajevo, who speaks fluently the languages of the area and is everybody's friend, suggested that we should leave. I don't know what strings he pulled, whom he asked to bring our car without observing the order. What is sure is that we managed to get to a small hotel where we were finally able to quietly wait for the departure.

Upon our return, all went smoothly. At the airport we all met again; it had been asked of us that four state representatives from the same region should share a plane, so we got back in my plane: Peter Stoyanov, Petru Lucinski and Victor Orban. The first stop in the reverse sense was for Victor Orban. In Budapest we were supposed to have a stopover of about half an hour. The Hungarian Prime minister glanced ostentatiously at his watch and left, claiming that his brother-in-law was expecting him. We gossiped about him throughout our trip back to Bucharest.

At our second stop, in Bucharest, I was expected by no brother-in-law, so we did stay together in the official hall until the taking off of Stoyanov's and Lucinski's planes, which had remained on Otopeni.

Tuesday, 30 November 1999

11 a.m. I receive W. Cohen (US Secretary of Defense), who declares that Romania's plan of integration in NATO is ready and is now to be followed step by step.

*Epilogue**Monday, 25 September 2000*

Things are confuse in Belgrade. I phone Vojislav Kosturica to congratulate him on his victory in the elections. I am firmly convinced that he won and, one way or the other, Milošević will have to admit it as well. He replies warmly and I tell him: I want to present you my hearty congratulations for your great victory in the elections. Myself and all the democratic forces in Romania are by your side. I consider that we will be brought closer and closer by this victory that will undoubtedly lead to the establishment of a democratic regime in Yugoslavia.

Mister President, I have just spoken with Macedonia's president Trajkovski and after our present conversation I shall contact president Stoyanov. I intend to propose all the presidents in the countries neighboring Yugoslavia to come forward with a joint statement that would support you and the Yugoslav democratic forces. I would be happy to know your opinion on the matter.

He answers that the existence of this joint statement would be very important and we end our conversation promising to have further contacts. Another positive legacy for my successor.

*The price, the gain, and the difference**September 2002*

The conflict in Kosovo has unnecessarily torn apart the Romanian society once more. As in all crises, the people's true nature resurfaced, irrespective of the level of intelligence or education. For me it was extremely clear that my position as President of Romania required of me to protect Romania's interests. The protection of Yugoslavia's interests was Milošević's responsibility and we all know how well he handled it. But I am firmly convinced that the large majority of the Romanians were well aware of Romania's best interest. Many were those who, I state this cynically, put their personal interest before the national interest, which they nonetheless kept invoking demagogically. Many were the bastards who tried to throw the country into chaos and ruin the nation's future with their foolish ambitions. It wasn't about choosing between NATO and the Serbian people, but rather about choosing between Milošević and the Serbian people. Most of the voters chose Milošević, choosing in fact Ceausescu, once again, because they were utterly fascinated by the ideas of dictatorship, ha-

tred and revenge, a fascination triggered by the losers' and cowards' appetite for brute force. National communism haunted Romania in 1999, because, at the same time with the Yugoslav conflict there were miners' strikes, tax strikes, parliamentary strikes, as well as an outburst in organized crime. A particular role in this respect was played by the press that was in the service of Mafia clans. There were agents, mercenaries, but also the professionals and the amateurs of hatred. Fortunately, there were also those who rediscovered the values they believed in and for which they fought, even if at times only briefly. I hereby pay homage to the Army, to the members of Government and of the Presidential Administration, deputies and senators of the parliamentary majority, workers of the secret services who served their country; but also to the honest, brave intellectuals, who staunchly fought the newly reborn national-communist tide.

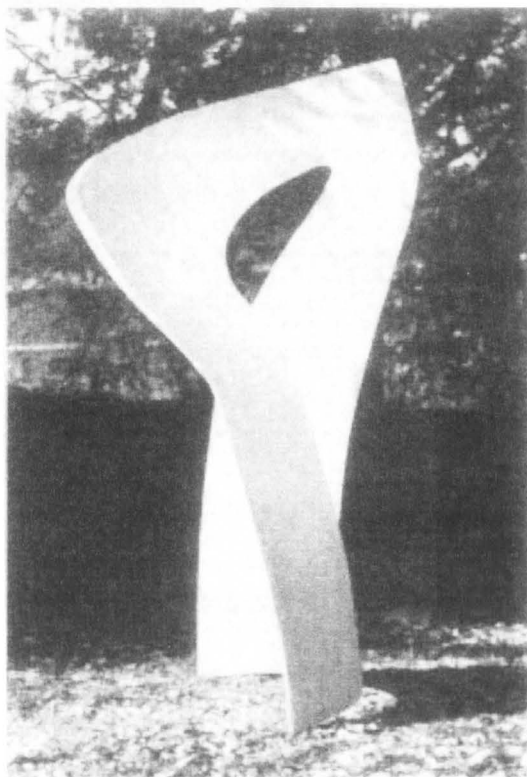
Between the two camps that divided Romania stood, as usual, the cowards. And I've been asking myself ever since; where were, at the time of those bitter debates, all the NATO grantees, who benefited from the largest grants? Where were those who, ever since 1990, have been building their careers and wealth on the generous funding provided by the US and Western Europe? With remarkably few exceptions, they were hiding, kept quiet or lied.

If one watches the variations in the opinion polls, back in 1999, it is not hard to realize that the first victim of the American bombing in Yugoslavia was not Milošević, but myself. Perhaps even my most relentless adversaries somehow, subconsciously knew that my position back then was the only possibility, but hated this reality and thus directed this hatred towards myself, like an exorcism. I had no spokesperson at the time; I was nonetheless aware how unrewarding this institution was because the person you represent can recant you if the things you said, albeit in his/her best interest, happen to trigger a crisis. During the conflict in Yugoslavia I represented the citizen and was his/her official spokesman. Good or bad, this was my job. And the citizen recanted me because of the crisis that was brought about within themselves.

It is in the interval between March and April 1999 that the bases of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and the US were consolidated; this may still seem to certain people a consolation prize for the postponement of our integration in the first wave of NATO enlargement. But the changes in attitudes towards Romania had already

taken important steps. What Romania gained in her relationship with the US is visible today in the difference between the two-hour visit to Bucharest of the former state secretary, James Baker, back in 1990, and the arrival, in July 1997, of President Clinton, who came accompanied by the entire American delegation that had taken part in the Madrid Summit, a delegation that practically included all the key figures in the American Executive. To this something else should be added; that elusive element less mentioned in official discourses – trust. For trust there are no measuring scales – it simply exists or not.

We needn't fool ourselves by believing that the Americans ignore the violations of the embargo on oil which were going on during the 1992-1996 government. They did know and even if these violations stopped after 1996, the memory of those moments when the Romanians said one thing and did another still marked the bilateral relationship. These are not things discussed in the open but they do weigh a great deal in the shaping up of the attitudes towards a certain country. A clique of opportunists is now greedily trying to take over our successful changes of image in 1999. Let us not forget that what we achieved in March 1999 can be spelled as: gaining US's trust, the trust of the NATO and UE countries and more than that. Should we manage to completely go beyond the policy of hesitations and lies, the destiny of the Romanian people and of Romania herself will take on quite another course, moving on from a policy of mere survival and humiliation, to one of self-assessment and dignity.



ROMANIA: A CASE STUDY

THIS ABOVE ALL

Glorious Defeats and Shameful Victories

August 1997, Mărășești

It's eighty years since the battle at Mărășești. It's a round number. There'll be a public commemoration broadcast live on the radio and TV. In the past decades I had seen many such anniversaries. All those shows giving praise to Ceausescu are still vivid in my memory and his empty speeches still resound in my ears. What should I tell the people now? How could I reach their souls without betraying my principles and my conscience?

I think that only those nations which can accept to discuss openly and publicly about their defeats are unbeatable. This reminds me of one of the most inspiring books I've ever read: *This Above All* by Eric Knight. It is the story of a deserter from the army after the humiliating defeat at Dunquerque, the battle lost to the Germans. The book was written and published in 1941, with England fully engaged in the war against Germany, which seemed invincible, and with the threat of a German invasion of the continent looming large. I know that in most countries this book would have been banned, and the author repudiated, if not condemned.

Another novel of defeat, resembling in a way Eric Knight's book, is *July 1940*. But this one was brought out in 1960, twenty years after the events accounted, and it was published with the consent of the communist authorities because the myth of Stalin's military genius had to be demolished. No novel of this kind has been written in Romania to this day.

Beyond the Wave

August 1966, Brădet

One of the people who left a deep mark on my life was my uncle George Cumpănașu. I met him late in his life. I was finishing high-school and he was back in Bucharest after years of political detention in the communist prisons. He graduated Law and Philosophy and he

was among the first arrested by the communists because, in August 1944, bookshop windows exhibited his latest book, a critical study of the communist system. His wife was a painter and she managed to save the library full of books where he received me. He looked at me with that smile, a strange combination of warm eyes and a sad face. Back then I couldn't understand that smile. I was to understand it later when I was to discover it on the face of many intellectuals who had met and stood up to the communist terror. It gave them a kind of wisdom coming from sufferings they never mentioned, and a detachment from events that overwhelmed other people. He looked at me in silence for several moments. It's only now, after a personal experience that wanes when compared to that of my uncle, that I find myself shivering thinking of the future of this generation. It is only now that I understand my uncle's deep concern about what's in the mind and soul of a generation buried by the wave of lies and complicity. After we talked about many things, upon my departure he took three books out of his library and handed them to me saying: 'Take them, and read them when you have time. They are written by my teacher, professor Constantin Rădulescu-Motru. Judging by the way in which communism has succeeded in disposing of and isolating the Romanian intellectual elite, I think this regime will have a long life and will die a violent death. Try to keep your ideas and your conscience. I hope this books will be of help to you.'

February 1996, the Rector's Office

I have carried those books with me everywhere. Now and then I would lend them to close friends. Their covers and pages are worn out and yellowed by time. I haven't fixed them up, I have left them as they are because they remind me of my uncle who passed away soon after he gave them to me. The communist prisons hadn't crippled his soul or his mind, but had ruined his body which despite everything kept some of the elegance of the old country boyars of Wallachia.

In 1957, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, a former president of the Romanian Academy and dean of the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest passed away. He was arrested by the communists at the age of 81. He was released, and several years later he collapsed in the street because of hunger.

The three books he gave me, *Romanianness, the Catechism of a New Spirituality, The Psychology of the Romanian People and Time*

and Destiny could answer many of the questions of our times. Published between 1936 and 1940, they have escaped the attention of the new generations for almost half a century. Although they were republished in 1990, few of the young people I've met have read them. The long excerpts I reproduce here are not just a series of quotes embedded in disparate rational frameworks. They speak, much better than I could ever do it, about the foundation necessary to understand the discourse resuming my life experience: you cannot propose or implement a national project if you do not rely on a real understanding of the way the people of that country think and feel. The Bible has helped me understand the human soul. Constantin Rădulescu-Motru's books have helped me understand the Romanian soul better.

THE SOUL AND THE THOUGHT

'Knowing a nation, revealing its qualities and flaws is not a work of patriotism, but a work of science', says Rădulescu-Motru in the opening chapter of his book, *The Soul of Our Nation*. 'The good intention to praise your own people has no place here. To say nothing of the intention to belittle it. Patriotism may step in only after an objective conscience is in place. A fire in the dark can only guide you, no matter how intensely it burns. But your way is lit up by the moonbeam gleaming in the cold, blue sky.'

In *The Psychology of the Romanian People*, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru writes: 'The biggest problem one faces when trying to understand the soul of a nation, can be reduced to the following question: to what kind of culture does the soul of that nation belong? The kind of culture the Romanian people has emulated is the West European culture.' To find the similarities and differences between the Romanian type of spirituality and the Western European culture as it has been crystalised after the French Revolution, the author makes a review of the main characteristics of the Western civilisation: "obeying the opinion of the majority, observing contract obligations, free competition between equal individuals; cultivating individual initiative by encouraging private property." "Let's see now", Rădulescu-Motru goes on, "in what points this type of culture matches Romanian spirituality. In terms of politics, the similarities are rather vague. In economic terms they are even less defined. Free competition is not at all part of the Romanian mentality. Romanians want to enjoy benefits just be-

cause they are Romanians. Social agreement is totally inexistent. Individual initiative aimed at achieving social progress through risky and ingenious enterprises, is the feeblest offspring of the Romanian soul. The reform programmes proposed by the young generation do not provide for changes that can be achieved through concrete legislative measures. Instead they claim sweeping changes in unrealistic periods of time. As long as this new Romania is something impossible to attain, people feel robbed of their rightful heritage, and consequently, they feel they are treated unfair.

Are there any affinities between Romanian culture and the Western type of civilisation? Romania's future cultural and political orientation hangs on the answer to this question. Is there any soul connection between Romania and Western Europe? If yes, all we have to do is adopt the western political and economic principles and implement them, ridding ourselves of everything that hinders this process. If not, we should start by finding out who we are and what we are capable of before replicating foreign laws and institutions. It's not a shame to know that you are different from other strong and glorious nations, but it is a shame for a nation not to have the courage to look into its own nature and destiny."

According to Rădulescu-Motru, it is characteristic of Romanians that they have more of a group conscience than personal conscience. The author wonderfully enlarges upon this theme, a demonstration I take over because it has been highly valid to this day. And I think you'll agree with me if you take the time and read it carefully. "In the front line, at war, in gangs, in rebellion, working in the field and going hunting, the courage of Romanians is unequalled. But individually taken, he is as gentle as a lamb. Romanians prove an unparalleled courage in expressing their opinions in the name of a group, for instance from the position of an editor working for a newspaper. If you belong to the same group as he does, he is full of praise for you. If you belong to the others, you are beneath contempt. You might think, "here's a courageous journalist, by all means". Well, you're wrong. He is courageous only when he speaks in the name of his group. Talk to him in private and you'll see he doesn't remember very well what he has written. Romanians are also religious, but only as long as they see that the rest of the world is religious, too. It seldom happens that the religious feeling springs from the bottom of their heart, where personality comes from. The same goes for patriotism. Romanians flaunt

their patriotic feeling. But only as long as it needs no proof in deed. Because deeds are personal, that is, individual, the patriotic feeling ends where concrete personal action begins. Give them the apostolic rod to preach patriotism to others and they'll be ready to start in the next minute. They jump to give good advice, but only as long as they are not requested to do anything. Just ask a Romanian to do something properly. You'll see that things become a little bit more complicated. If he is a teacher, there's no way you can have him stick to his teaching; if he is a craftsman to his craft; or if he is a peasant to his land. Everyone begins dilly-dallying when it comes to starting doing their job, waiting for all Romanians to get down seriously to work. It never occurs to any of them that they can start doing their job one after another. They say: 'we should all start working at once.' But to start doing something in deed proves invariably more difficult than to start doing it in words. A teacher who's doing his job properly, a skilled craftsman, a hard working peasant have no time for patriotic feelings. But every loafer, who barely does anything but who makes a fuss of his patriotism, goes as a true patriot. When in a crowd, Romanians are willing to do anything. There's no initiative in front of which a Romanian would step back as long as he is in a group. Set up a school? Let's make two of them. Set up an organisation? Why not several? To help an institution function properly? Yes, of course. But when it comes to putting the decision into practice, each and everyone puts it off until the day after or simply vanishes. When the group is back together, they start accusing one another after which they start all over again making new decisions:

"It's a shame, gentlemen, we must get down to work. The country has its eyes set on us. Foreigners are watching us making fools of ourselves. Let's get down to work." The next day, brings the same indifference. In group, Romanians judge themselves harshly. In private they are all too lenient with themselves.'

Jon's Wand

'The man who is entirely focused on his work and values the virtues from which his work sprouts, expects very little from politics', says Constantin Rădulescu-Motru. 'But where energies are not channeled into a personal activity, and where the conscience of the value of the individual soul is lacking, there is only natural for politics to

reign supreme. That's why Romanians have a passion for politics. For them, politics is a magic wand which can perform all kinds of tricks. It can bring general and personal happiness. If I ruled the country, if I made the law, you would see how things would straighten up. Nobody is able to do their own job properly, but they all want to lay down the law for everybody. They are all waiting to be redeemed by the action of the whole people: Here is what we, Romanians, should do. Here is what's best for our nation. But they never say: Here is what I, Ion or Gheorghe, must do. Here is what's best for me. When Romanians take a step back from the group and regard themselves as individuals, they are always consumers. They have never the courage to do that as producers. As consumers, they are individualists. As producers, they always wait and see what the others do to start doing something on their own. If no one does anything, then, they do nothing in their turn. The Romanian capitalist never trusts his own forces. Instead he joins the poorest of his fellow citizens in waiting for the protection of the state. Romanians feel most attracted to the professions that do not keep them away from the crowds. They love joining the crowd, talking to other people and being sustained by the crowd. Taking advantage of nature through industry and trade is an activity they resort to in the worst situations, that is, when they can't be public servants, lawyers, or politicians. In the latter case, they prove inexhaustible energies. The most obscure Mr. Nobody, once he has become a politician, is a great man overnight. And because all Romanians ardently wish to help their country and to guide their people, the country is snowed under with great men. Nobody knows anymore whom to follow. Ion is a great man, Gheorghe is a great man and Petre is a great man, too. The whole nation is at a loss because it has too many great men.'

If we compare this psychological portrait of the Romanians made sixty years ago, with the present-day reality, we cannot but admit that Rădulescu-Motru is in the right. Present-day opinion polls monitor the trends in the behavior of the Romanian people on a monthly basis. What is frightening me about the portrait sketched by Radulescu-Motru is its eternal validity. In the sixty decades that have elapsed since this portrait was made, the Romanian people has experienced a constitutional monarchy, a royal dictatorship, Antonescu's dictatorship, the second world war, the communist dictatorship, a revolution and democracy. Nothing seems to have changed it. What can we expect from a four year mandate? What can we hope for the decades to come?

The Map on the Wall of History

March 1970, the Mineralogy Department of the Bucharest University.

The news that our librarian had disappeared without a trace broke into our peaceful department. Several months after that, I received a summons issued by the Military Tribunal to appear in court as witness. With a weird feeling I entered the massive building on a street where nowadays there is the huge unfinished building of the Radio House. A young gentleman who introduced himself as being the lawyer of our librarian told me I was there to say that the accused was a decent man, who had never posed any problem to our department. But the judge asked me if it was true that maps of Greater Romania were hanging on the walls of the library and if those maps were commented by students. I told him it was true. They were geological and pedological maps drawn for the World Congress of Pedology which was held in Bucharest. There was also a geological map of Romania in 1936. It was only natural for it to be there because the study of geology ignores conventional state borders. Geological formations transcend borders and that map featured the activity of the Romanian geologists in those areas. Those maps were useful to our courses and laboratories and we commented on them in geological terms. The judge cut me off saying the librarian was not there to be awarded a medal or a prize, but because he was accused of carrying out activities that were hostile to the communist regime. He also told me that I was there only to discuss extenuating circumstances.

RESORT TO DESTINY

Decision and Loyalty

6-9 May 2001, New York, Washington

I'm back in New York, feeling much more comfortable than on previous occasions. I'm here to participate in the annual meeting of the East-West Institute in whose board of directors I was elected together with co-chairman Martti Ahtisaari, ex-president of Finland. At the end of the meeting, a car of the Romanian embassy takes me to Washington where I was invited by a group of American senators and congressmen and some old friends, to discuss the situation in the Balkans, in Europe and in the world. I'm meeting the newly elected president of the Foreign Policy Committee of the US Congress, ex-president of the Juridical Commission, a well-known figure during the televised debates on president Clinton's impeachment, and the vice-president of the Juridical Commission, Christopher Smith, whose experience in European and Romanian affairs is broad. The issue tackled from the very beginning of the meeting was Romania's role during the conflict in Kosovo.

To the appreciative remarks of my interlocutors regarding the stand of the Romanian president on the Kosovo crisis, I answer that the stand of a president means nothing if it is not backed by Parliament, by the army, by foreign policy makers and by the people, like it happened during the crisis in Yugoslavia. The fundamental stance of the Romanian people on the reconciliation with Hungary, the signing of a treaty of good neighbor relations with Ukraine and the fact that these treaties are observed is a historic accomplishment. I want to underline that these stands have passed the test of electoral campaigns when all the weak points of a political or social agreement regarding problems of national interest usually emerge.

Arguing for Romania's integration with NATO in 2002, an issue that has topped the agenda of my mandate, I have emphasized the shift in the way in which the Romanian people is perceiving its own destiny. I have reminded my interlocutors that in the case of the Kosovo

crisis, the Romanians gave up their historical habit of waiting to see how things develop before taking action, an understandable attitude to a small country in a region in which the interests of the big powers have prevailed for centuries. This time, Romania took and maintained a firm stand until the end of the crisis, to the solving of which Romania had a decisive contribution.

In the evening Vladimir Tismăneanu and Andrei Brezianu invited me to a small Greek restaurant on a peaceful street in Washington. While having dinner I shared with them my thoughts on the change in the way Romanians have been perceiving problems of national interest, despite the elections in 2000 which, to a certain extent, can be regarded as a punishment inflicted on the former government, a kind of pay-off for a reform the full brunt of which was borne by the people. My friends seemed rather skeptical. I don't think I was very convincing. Before parting, Andrei Brezianu handed me a copy of an article published by Timothy Kenny in the *Central Europe Review*. I told him I knew the review and the author. 'Then please read it,' he answered with an enigmatic smile.

An American in Bucharest

November 1991, Sinaia

As prorector of the Bucharest University, I'm also in charge of the Journalism Faculty, which is back under the administration of the University after Ceausescu had transplanted it to the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Institute of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. It's very hard to refashion a faculty of journalism, whose single purpose had been to turn the young generations of students into communist activists ready to work in the print media. I talked to the cultural attaché at the American Embassy in Bucharest and I asked for the help of several American congressmen to send, through the Fulbright programme, an experienced American journalist to teach Romanian students and to share his experience with Romanian professors. Soon after that, in early 1991, Timothy Kenny arrived in Romania.

December 2000, Arlington

Here is how Timothy Kenny begins the account of his Romanian experience: "It was during a seminar organised by the students of the Bucharest Faculty of Journalism when I first began to understand the ironical constraints fate has bestowed on Romania. I was asked to tell

the Romanian students participating in the seminar about my life as an American newsman. I was surprised by the question of a young man: "What's the role played by fate in the United States?" "Fate, I answered, what do you mean? Fate plays no role in the United States. Americans do not believe in fate. They believe in work and money. They believe they control their own fate. This is an important thing about Americans."

Not only that the young man did not believe me, but he seemed disgusted with me trying to sell him and his colleagues such an obvious lie. Maybe he had never been in the US, but, certainly, he was no idiot. To him fate was fate and nothing I could tell him or anybody else in that hall could budge him from believing that fate was important in the life of Romania or of any other country. I was moved by the discussion and later I brought out the subject in my discussions with students and professors at the faculty. All of them told me it was a good question to ask and, just like the student, they thought my answer did not sound very true. This happened in 1991. Now we are in 2000. It's very difficult for Romania to become a good citizen of the world if the most important things are never discussed. The role played by fate in Romania, and the implicit role it plays in understanding the psychology of Romania continues to be ignored by the public or private discourse. The refusal to accept the role of fate, which is more important than that any other factor, maintains Romania in a political, social and economic mire. Fate is the unrecognised God of Romania, a country with 25.5 million people who seem to believe that the future is lead by an unseen hand, which cannot be influenced by the citizens. A Romanian friend once told me that "When something goes right, a Romanian would say: of course, I knew it, I made it happen; when something goes wrong he would look up to the sky and say: who could have known? It was fate." This lack of personal responsibility, which can be found in so many aspects of Romanian life, and which makes it so different from western democracies, will always have its roots here. Above politics and above any notion of civil society hovers the airy hand of fate. Until the role played by fate is not drastically dwindled, Romania will never be able to catch up with the western countries as Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary did. Romania is a deeply superstitious country where intrigues and conspiracies are taken for granted by everybody, from illiterate peasants to high officials. And thus, while the role played by fate continues to prevail in Roma-

nia, in a manner beyond understanding for western countries, Romania continues to suffer, often by its own hand. It deserves more.'

I met Timothy Kenny when I visited the famous Press Museum in Arlington, Virginia, in 1999. He was head of the History of the Press Research Department. He was still interested in Romania.

Double Complex

January 2001, Kisseleff Blvd.

In the long walks I used to take while a student, I would often stop in front of the bust of Ovid, to which Medrea had given a disconcerting asymmetry of the face. Looking at it from the opposite sides, you could think there were two different profiles: one of a relaxed man, the other of a very sad man. Now, against the leafless trees and the white snow the outline of the bust emerges more clearly, and it seems to me that I discern one Ovid singing the joys of Rome, and another one, the author of the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (*Letters from the Black Sea*).

Will we be able, after thousands of years, to make up for the dramatic burden of this exile?

Man Has a Say

4 March 2002, 6 Popa Petre Str.

In the room opening to the backyard of Caltia's old house we're having a chat over a glass of red wine. I am with Mihai Mănuțiu, Adrian Vasilescu and Zemleny Csabo. We're talking about the world, life, art. Zemleny Csabo is now a famous painter in New York. He also has a studio in Budapest. He says he comes to Bucharest every year because here, together with his old friends, he feels really alive and he is happy we're not changed too much.

'What's changing and what is not? What have you got to win and what have you got to lose?', Adrian Vasilescu recalls Toynbee. I agree with him. I was also impressed by Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*, in which he expresses his firm belief that 'man has a say in his fate'. 'Nature permanently subjects man to new, unexpected challenges. If people do not react to the first challenges, they are left out of history and they are not able to harness their destiny to the coach of history. If they do respond to the first challenges but they are not able to cope with them, they become fossils of history. If a civilisation gives the correct answers, if people respond correctly to these challenges, they will build a civilisation that can live forever.'

THE CHRONICLE OF A COLLAPSE THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE***The First Day, the First Crisis***

29 November 1996, The Cotroceni Palace

My first day as president of Romania at the Cotroceni Palace. On my desk I found a pile of newspapers arranged in an order telling of the ex-president's preferences. But on top of it, the daily *România Liberă* stood out ostentatiously, headlining: "The Iliescu regime has come to an end." What it cost Romania, I was to find out in the very moments in which people across the country were reading that article.

The first thing I did was to make a phone call. I asked the chief assistant of my predecessor to put me through to the governor of the National Bank of Romania, Mugur Isarescu. When he answered, I told him in the most direct way: Mr. Governor, both before and during the electoral campaign I have received information according to which in the last months money has been issued without backing, and an emergency ordinance has been passed forging the figures for the budget deficit and the consolidated deficit. I have heard that the deficit is not 3% but twice as high, or even higher. That puts Romania in a difficult financial situation. I'd like to know if all this is true. I would also like to know what is the exact gold reserve of the National Bank of Romania, what is the foreign debt and its scheduling over the next years. A moment of silence followed, after which I heard governor Isarescu clear his throat to tell me that by ten o'clock the next morning I would receive a report answering all those questions. The next day, at ten o'clock sharp, I had the report. After reading it I was left completely shocked. Figures clearly showed that Romania was on the brink of financial and economic collapse. I had received many similar figures during the electoral campaign, but I had never used them. Although I had obtained them from reliable sources, I was tempted to think that the former government couldn't have gone that far. Besides that, those figures presented such a grim situation that I preferred not to use them against my political enemies in the electoral campaign. I couldn't jeopardise the security of the financial and banking system of Romania to

obtain electoral gains. Now it was clear to me that the out-going ruling party had not desisted from sacrificing Romania's future for the sake of keeping power. The first phone-call I made from Cotroceni on my first day as president faced me with one of the big crises from the long row lying ahead of me in my four-year time in office.

The Time Bomb

30 November 1996, the Cotroceni Palace

When I finished reading the report of the governor of the National Bank, the image of the exuberance with which the ex-president had handed over the power and the responsibility going with it, flashed through my mind. I thought that his unbelievably genuine gladness to step down was due, either to the feeling of relief given by throwing off a burden, or to the cynicism with which he was bequeathing a disastrous situation. I begin to seriously doubt that his serenity was that of a person who stays dignified in losing and who parts with power with a smile on his face. I was holding a time bomb in my hands. Time was running out and I had to do something quickly to prevent a serious crisis with incalculable consequences for Romania. I told the chief assistant to call a meeting, that very afternoon, with interim prime minister Nicolae Văcăroiu, minister of finance Florin Georgescu and secretary general with the government Viorel Hrebenciuc. Two hours later, they were at the Cotroceni Palace. I received them at the round table where the Supreme Council for Defence usually gathers. We were standing on opposite sides of the table. I told them: I have here a report signed by the governor of the National Bank of Romania, according to which the current situation is as follows... When I finished reading I raised my eyes from the paper and I was struck by Nicolae Văcăroiu's gloating smirk, Florin Georgescu's grin and Viorel Hrebenciuc's unctuous smile. They all looked very pleased. The prime minister began: "Don't worry Mr. President, it's just an emergency ordinance. You've won the elections, you have the parliamentary majority, and you can revoke it in the first parliament session so it no longer takes effect." Florin Georgescu butted in: "Of course, Mr. President, in that case you'll have a problem. Without this emergency ordinance in force, in December you won't be able to pay the salaries of the army, the Interior Ministry, the Intelligence Service and," he made a short pause, "of your ex-colleagues in education..."

We all know the state of mind which grips Romanians when winter holidays are drawing near. The well-known caricaturist Mihai Stănescu was getting ready to wrap up the government building as a Christmas present. A government that was not formed yet, a coalition government that had to be very carefully balanced, according to a difficult algorithm. On my way to Cotroceni I had noticed the persisting exuberance of the people. No matter if they had voted or not for me, or for the Romanian Democratic Convention (the turnout was lower in the first round of elections), they all took it as a victory and they were expecting something better. The next day I had to go to Alba Iulia to participate in the Great Assembly of the People on Romania's National Day. I was hoping to use that more relaxed day to launch a new call for a religious, ethnic and perhaps even a political reconciliation. From Alba Iulia I was to fly to Lisbon to attend the OSCE Conference, where I had to respond to the hopes the western democracies were pinning on Romania, as a pillar of democracy and stability in central and southeastern Europe.

What was I supposed to do? Who could give me a good advice? I had to make a very clear choice. On the one hand there was the newly revealed financial situation; on the other, there was the real situation of the main state banks like Bancorex and the Agriculture Bank and several private banks with debts bringing them on the brink of bankruptcy and, with them, all the savings of the people.

December 1996, Cotroceni

I was very familiar with the situation in Bulgaria. While I was in the opposition I had talks with the ex-president of the Bulgarian parliament, with the prime minister in the democratic government between October 1991- December 1992 Philip Dimitrov and with other democrat leaders and friends. The Videnov socialist and neo-communist government between 1995 and 1997 blocked the reform so that in 1996 the inflation rate reached 311%. Against that background Peter Stoyanov was elected president. He represented the Democratic Forces of the right. The international financial institutions had blocked all credits to Bulgaria. That led to a hyper-inflation of 1000%. The economy collapsed and the revolt of the population led to the toppling of the government and to early elections. In 1996 the Christian Democratic center-right forces won the parliamentary elections. The result was a govern-

ment that accepted to be financially monitored by Germany, through a very strict Financial Monitoring Council that took over all decision making. Presidential elections were to come, forecasting a victory of the same center-right liberal Christian Democratic forces.

In Romania that victory had already occurred. But Romania's political situation was completely different. The center-right had won without that brutal intervention. Romanians had no idea what was in store for them and they could hardly believe the naked truth at the moment. An economic collapse renders the situation uncontrollable, especially with the Romanians, whose chaotic behaviour is unpredictable in such moments. I had no real control of any of the institutions of the state. I had to gain it and, for that, I needed time. After the first confidential information confirmed the disastrous situation of Bancorex and the Agriculture Bank, I decided to keep that information to myself and to take the risk of trying the impossible: to recover the economy step by step. I could rely on a single person whom I hadn't known and with whom I hadn't had any kind of relation up to that moment, but whose professionalism and discretion I was to discover on the road: Mugur Isărescu, the governor of the National Bank of Romania. And so, the emergency ordinance which was the brainchild of the ex-minister of finance Florin Georgescu and which had entered the government by the back door, was passed by the new parliament and Romanians could spend their Christmas Holidays in a more relaxed atmosphere. But difficult trials were looming large in 1997. Romanians had to support the highest inflation rate in my entire mandate plus the due foreign debt.

Issuing money without backing and siphoning off foreign loans into electoral campaigns was no novelty to post-communist Romania. The Iliescu regime did it in 1992. The result was an even higher inflation rate in 1993 than that in 1997, although the value of the banknotes issued without backing and the foreign debt were much higher in 1996. The biggest hike in consumer goods prices (by 356.1%) and the highest monthly inflation rate (12.1%) was recorded in 1993. The effects of the financial and economic disaster in 1997 were mitigated by quick measures meant to make up for the electoral expenses of Ion Iliescu and the Party of Social Democracy in Romania which could have led to a total financial and economic collapse. Unfortunately, most affected were the citizens of Romania who paid the price for the recklessness and cynicism of the former government, being forced to cover from their own pockets a budget deficit twice as high as the one re-

ported to the state budget. Last but not least, it was also a political price paid by the newly elected government.

Opinion polls show that I'm beginning to lose some of the popularity I had in the first months of my time in office. It's a small part. But it's only the beginning.

A Rope Bridge Over the Abyss

December 2001, 4 Pictor Mirea Str.

I keep wondering, just like in December 1996, when at Cotroceni Palace I met a defeated but smiling president, how much of it was sincerity and how much was mockery or a dirty political trick, meant to cover up a trap or, better said, an abyss which was to swallow the newly elected government in 1996 and, with it, the whole country. I think I'll keep asking myself this question for a long time. Anyway, I'll never forget that day. I understood then that the Iliescu regime had come to end just for a while, but at the end of a series of irresponsible and sneering manoeuvres which had brought Romania on the verge of the abyss. The consequences are paid by all of us to this day. In just a few hours, the satisfaction of having won the elections left room to a huge responsibility weighing heavily on my shoulders. I decided to keep quiet and do what I could. But I think these things must be brought to light. The pressure I came under in the very first moments of my mandate, after I became aware of the real situation in which Romania found itself, determined me to confess some of the things I experienced as president and I can say that what has become now this book has its roots in the first day I spent at the Cotroceni Palace.

I had been warned that 'politics is a tragic problem without solution'. It remained to be seen how true this was in the following years.

THOSE TRICKSTERS AND THEIR FLYING CANNONS

Old Film Series, New Film Series

American movies in the 30s used to have a favorite topic: a poor young man finds a 50-cent coin on the sidewalk. He invests it, he works hard, he endures misery but he eventually manages to build a big company, which he bequeaths to his son. If his son proves not able to run the company, he leaves it to a young man just as poor and hard-working as he was.

Romanian post-communist films are different. A middle-aged man whose name can be found in a special phone-book (that of the nomenclature) and guarded by stars (not those in the sky, but those on his epaulettes) finds under his mattress one million dollars, just like that. He registers as many Ltd. companies as he can, (a wonderful name they gave them: companies with limited responsibility), he buys villas, luxury cars, lands, newspapers, TV stations, politicians, women, and policemen and he leaves to his son money and connections along with undeclared bankruptcies, and eternally postponed trials.

In the 80s, American TV stations bringing thousands of dollars to the budget, broadcast the series *Rich Man, Poor Man*. In 2000, the 'rich man's' TV station in Romania, which has a debt of hundreds of billions of lei to the budget, is broadcasting daily the series 'poor man', featuring millions of Romanians and the soap opera *Opulence and Depravity*, starring several hundreds of VIPs flaunting their cars, dresses, stupidity and insolence.

In 1999, when the Parliament decided to raise MPs' salaries by passing the law on the state budget, I decided, together with the presidential collaborators, to donate the indexed sum we were supposed to receive to an account known as "Honor" for helping people in need. The account was open to every Romanian official who wanted to help those people. It's useless to say that I've never heard of any of those who shed tears on TV screens, at radio microphones, or in writing, to have given a penny to those for whom they voice out loudly their sympathy.

The Money Hoover: Instructions Manual

In the film *Those Wonderful People and Their Flying Machines*, pioneer aviators soared into the skies driven by their talent and courage. In the film *Those Rich People and Their Bankrupt Businesses*, financial engineerings keep people's savings grounded and hide them in the pit of theft and indifference.

It's not difficult to understand the mechanism of the huge vacuum cleaner into which money and goods disappeared without a trace between 1990 and 1997. The businesses that seemed bankrupt were, actually, causing bankruptcy because they never risked their own money, but the money of the people. They started by appropriating the money Ceausescu had stolen from the people. Then they continued with the controlled bankruptcy of the industrial giants. In 1992, a big factory sued me for having revealed on TV how it was being looted by a series of companies belonging to the directors of that plant who were getting rich buying the raw materials and selling the products.

Then they brought to bankruptcy the big state-owned banks by obtaining loans with insignificant interests and with inexistent businesses as collateral. With the stolen money they set up private banks which they bankrupted after they had transferred their money into other banks, also belonging to them. And so they were never forced to pay damages to the people they had robbed.

EXTREME RISK

The Crack in the Wall

September 2000, New York

I had an informal meeting with the editors-in-chief of some important American newspapers, and its main subject was the problems of the post-communist transition; I spoke about the Romanian experience, and then, Istvan Gyarmaty, a well-known Hungarian anti-communist dissident and former minister in the Antal Government, insisted upon the importance that the people and the civic organisations in postcommunist countries should attach to the strengthening of the democratic institutions' authority.

The issue of the state institutions' authority has been urgent, to a smaller or greater extent, in all former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe while a new democracy was being built. That task was easier to solve in those countries where the communist leaders had allowed the party to make a step back in front of state institutions and of the law, as it happened in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and even in Poland, where the law was more rigorously observed than in Romania, despite the nature of General Jaruzelski's military regime.

I remember that once, a couple of years after December 1989, when I was in a taxi-cab, I heard Mugur Isărescu in a radio interview saying that after the Revolution he believed the Party would be removed and the State would remain neat as a button. Yet, when the Romanian Communist Party was disposed of, nothing was left in its stead.

In Romania, in the postcommunist age, especially after 1996, the blows against the state authority came from two directions. There were, on the one hand, the organised actions of those who had held power in the former regime; on the other hand, the civil society did not give its full support to the new state institutions. This was because their leaders failed to understand that after a democratic regime has been installed, the main goal is strengthening the institutions, not resuming dissident activities, or exhibiting a rebellious attitude, which had an important role in the time of dictatorship, but which many people have been practising only now, as they were unable to do it when it was badly needed.

Beginning with 1998, when the Albanian state's institutions had dramatically fallen apart and an unprecedented situation had appeared in post WW II Europe, and when the Kosovo conflict was building up dangerously, in Romania a violent campaign against the state institutions was launched in newspapers and on television. In its vulgar and most dangerous form, it consisted in attributing any errors and crimes committed by individuals to the institutions in which they belonged. If a military man caused a traffic accident with human casualties (one of the tens of accidents that occur weekly), the titles ran: The Army kills people on the roads of the country; if a policeman broke the law, it was the Police that did it; if a judge was proved corrupt, the judicial system was blamed. The Church and other institutions of the state were treated in a similar manner.

The Fallen Fence in Tirana

March 1997, Bucharest-Tirana

According to the news broadcast on the radio, in Tirana, during an upheaval caused by the collapse of an Albanian "Caritas", the crowds have occupied the streets, the army and the police have disappeared and have abandoned the arms and the barracks. The reports I receive from the External Information Service confirm the dissolution of all authorities. With the Americans' assistance I find a telephone number where President Berisha can be contacted. I recognise his hoarse voice. He thanks for the call and says he is now in the Northern mountain region, his fief. Sounds pretty calm. The Americans and the Europeans, afraid that Bosnia-like events may occur again, take steps quickly.

25 July 1997, Bucharest

I receive the report of the Romanian battalion which participated in the "Alba" operation. Although they acted in a difficult area in Southern Albania, they carried out their task quite well.

The socialists supported a university professor for president – a chemist who is well-known in the Western academic world; the two prime ministers of the new government were, in turn, two young men, who had had no connection with the Enver Hodja regime.

Yet, how was everything possible? In a book that Ismail Kadare published in the West, *The Albanian People at the Border of the Third Millennium*, wrote about how dangerous the dismemberment of the state is, which eventually leads to the dismemberment of the nation.

He opines that in Albania this was partially brought about by the century-long cohabitation with the Ottoman Empire in a state which was never regarded as belonging to the Albanians; then there was a short period of independence as a republic and a kingdom, and during the harsh communist regime the concept of “state” was deformed again under the weight of an alien thing, the Communist Party, which deprived it of any national colour. “The communist dictatorship”, says Kadare, “dealt the most treacherous blow at the Albanian state. No matter how authoritarian, how grim, how left oriented a state might be, for the Albanians it still would have been preferable to that wet, formless mollusc which was communist Albania. The Communist Party, under the obsession of not sharing the power with anybody, was envious even of its own state. The slogan ‘The Party above anything else’ was repeated day in, day out, as in a nightmare. They made it clear in all possible ways that state institutions, Parliament, the ministers, even the Constitution and the laws were worth nothing in front of the Party. The words ‘state’, ‘nation’ were always replaced by the word ‘people’. Thus we had a ‘popular’ army, not a national one, a ‘popular meeting’, a ‘popular theatre’”. These phrases sound quite familiar to us, Romanians, because in our country people have similarly been taught not to respect the state, its institutions and symbols, to preserve all their devotion, respect and fear for the Party. Kadare says: “The Albanians would have gladly preferred the Albanian police to be a real police force, with all its characteristics, including severity or the rubber stick, rather than have that pitiable police with half unbuttoned uniforms, of which no one was afraid. The Albanians knew too well that behind the father figure of the police and the idyll of the people-police relationships there lurked another frightening and disastrous reality – the real communist terror inflicted by Sigurimi. If the Party had deprived the Albanian state of its authority, the same had been done to the police by the Security. And the same happened with all state institutions without which a country cannot exist: Justice, the Army, Finances. This steady dissolution of the state authority accounts to a certain extent for the collapse, like a rotten fence, of the state institutions, the Army and the Police in March 1997.”

Ismail Kadare's essay is an anamnesis and at the same time a diagnosis of the Albanian state during the postcommunist transition, after the communist dictatorship was suddenly replaced by a centre-right government.

Brown-Red

In 1999, a book entitled *Red-Brown, the Evil of the Century*, came out in Paris, and now it can also be read in a Romanian translation, thanks to the efforts of Romulus Rusan and The Civic Academy Foundation. The author of the book, Thierry Wolton, a reporter at *Libération* and *Le Point*, has published several important political essays. His latest one discusses the complementary character of the two deviations which have injured the face of the 20th century, communism and Nazism. "Red-brown does not represent", Wolton, says, "a mixture of antagonistic ideological genres, and even less a new type of fascism. The phrase only expresses the slide of communism into fascism, and its use is fully justified by what has happened in the former socialist countries, where the former communists have replaced internationalism with a narrow-minded chauvinism, and egalitarianism with racism. Slobodan Miloševich, as well as the other protagonists of the Yugoslav drama perfectly illustrate this slide."

THE SHADE LIGHT

Meeting on the First Floor

25 November 1996, 6Dealul Mitropoliei

A colonel and a major from PPS have come to show me the organisation of the new guard unit for the chief of the state, at his residence and during his travels. I have not met them before, because during the electoral campaign I refused the protection and the car offered by PPS to the presidential runners. When it was only a few weeks up to the election and the polls began to show a top position for me, a supporter offered The Romanian Foundation for Democracy a flat on the first floor of an old house near the former Parliament building. I used it as a provisional seat for private meetings, which now, after the results have been made public by the Central Election Commission, have become somehow official.

I take this opportunity to convoke here, at the same time, the chiefs of the special services -- RIS, EIS, PPS, the Army information and counter-information services, the Internal Affairs information services.

Some press agencies, taken aback by my victory in the election, which they call "another velvet revolution", have begun to speak, in a rush for scoops, about a possible attempt at overthrowing the ballot through a coup organised by the structures which are loyal to the former government.

That allegation seems stupid to me not only because it fails to take into account the mentality of the Romanian military men, but also because the country and especially the capital are in such a state of enthusiasm and hopefulness (which will cause a lot of problems for me later on), that any attempt at opposing the vote would be annihilated on the spot. I feel confident also because the information services are actually in the best position to know this new reality.

Dorin Marian leads them, as soon as they arrive, into one of the three rooms of the flat, where the only pieces of furniture are a desk and six chairs. On the window sill there is a smoked wood sculpture, Saint George Killing the Dragon, which I received on 19 November.

At the appointed time I enter the room. Although not all of them are military men, they introduce themselves according to the military rules. I invite them to sit down and I seat myself behind the desk. In a few words I express my conviction that they will make their contribution to the country's democratic transformation and to ensuring the national stability and security. Trite phrases, yet adequate to that moment. I promptly receive the expected answer. After fifteen minutes I put an end to my first meeting with the representatives of the state authority.

A quarter of an hour for four difficult years.

Black Tea

June 1998, Cotroceni

In the agenda that I find every day on my desk, the personal secretary meticulously puts down all the details of every item (the institution, the position, who has asked, who accompanies). For the 60 minutes between 5 and 6 p.m. there is mentioned a single meeting. A file lies beside, with the note: after using it, we shall send it back.

The meetings with the chiefs of the foreign information services are not followed by photographs, statements or press releases. There is a different kind of communication, according to a custom frequent in the West: once a week, the president invites the chief of the external information service to tea. Sometimes a part (not a negligible one) of the country's image or attraction, the credibility of an administration depend on the colour or the fragrance of that tea. Years ago I read the memoir of the French information chief who had competently and faithfully served De Gaulle, and that made me expect the five o'clock meeting with lots of interest. His present-day successor, an intelligent, cultivated and distinguished person, presented to me at the end of the meeting a medal on whose reverse side it was written *Light Coming Out from the Shade*.

Whenever I look at my collection of medals, my eyes stop on the dark golden-tinged colour of that medal and on the inscription engraved on it. What light? From what shade? And, especially, what is there in the penumbra?

These are questions which, in a country dominated for decades by the SECURITATE (already an international term), were very urgent in 1989, are still asked today and will be asked for a long time from now on.

The Colour of Faith

September 2000, Sydney

The same as other state presidents, I have come for two days to the Olympic Games in Sydney, to be together with the national team. I choose to attend the rowing competition, though there are at the same time other more spectacular contests. Rowing draws my interest because it is a hard sport, practised by people who train for years on end, now on an almost frozen lake, now in stifling heat, without any supporters to admire them and raise their spirits. Two of the protection officers, who were Olympic champions in rowing, told me what it means to train in solitude up to the farthest limits of physical and psychic endurance. Through an impressive effort, the Romanian teams win three gold medals. While the winners are making for the podium I send them the national flag, which was taken off the mast in front of my residence in Bucharest. We sing Romania's anthem together and tears of joy run on the competitors' wind-burnt faces. The prime minister of Australia who is present in the stand shakes my hand and tells me he was impressed not only by the number of medals, but also by the earnestness with which all Romanians present sang the national anthem.

Does patriotism exist anymore? I believe that, unfortunately, after a real culture of patriotism was replaced for a long time by a national-communist demagogy, today it is often stifled by a cynically exhibited indolence.

I had to re-organise the information services on the fly, and I realised that, if we wanted to clearly delimit their activity, which creates so much fascination, fear and suspicion, we had better leave out the external picturesque aspects and begin with what ensures the cohesion and the force of these institutions: patriotism. Pooh! again pompous, empty words, some may say. As we needed a landmark, I started from the idea that the special services, as well as the Army, can become competent in carrying out their tasks only if they were inspired by a true patriotic education. Unlike many other citizens, for whom the homeland is a rather abstract notion, the military regard it as a concrete thing, which must be defended at the cost of one's life. They have to believe truly in what gives a rationale to their career and finally to the choice between life and death.

An example, or rather a counter-example, which I have found hard to comprehend, is the way in which the Soviet espionage has managed so often to be successful: not so much as they succeeded in buying

some top rank people in the Western services, administration or the press, but especially as they found French, British, German or American citizens who had a blind faith in communism and did not consider they were betraying their country; therefore they began to serve unconditionally a so-called new world order that was supposed to ensure everybody's happiness. Some recent research has demonstrated that many spies of the K.G.B. collaborated with the Soviets not only for money, which was rather some accessory. They did it for an idea. At the same time the Soviet information officers were educated towards an exalting spirit of patriotism which was ultimately ridiculous but proved efficient during the whole Cold War.

I doubt that this kind of fanatical adhesion can be revived in Europe, but it has to be replaced by the belief in a system of values for which it is worth fighting. On the other hand, if some authors have praised the acts of betrayal on behalf of communism, we must also accept and justify the actions of those who, like Mihai Pacepa or Liviu Turcu, abandoned Ceausescu's Securitate and defected to the Western democracies.

There are a lot of remarkable people who serve their country. They can also be found in the information services, where no one meets with public glory. Losing the agents abroad is not mentioned publicly. It happened that I advanced to the rank of general some officers whose names had to be published in Monitorul Oficial. Yet, it is not the real names that appeared there. For them and for their families it was enough that the President of the country knew who they were...

Early or Belated Congratulations?

March 1997, Bucharest

The first visit to RIS and the first contact with the people there at their work place. The director, Virgil Măgureanu, gives a salute and accompanies me into the meeting hall. The icy atmosphere in that room strikes me. The moment I step in all the participants rise to their feet in deadly silence and expect I tell them to sit down. After the director reads his account, the department chiefs ask in turn for permission to begin and to end their activity report. At one moment, during my rather stern speech I say the words I congratulate you, speaking about one of the actions which were mentioned as accomplished in the report. Suddenly, all of them rise to their feet at attention and utter in a single voice: I serve the homeland. The former words are uttered,

according to military tradition, when the chief of state ends his speech on solemn occasions, such as when the final results are reported. I put an end to my speech. From now on I shall utter them more carefully, at the right time.

I was blamed, especially by some of my supporters, that I did not accomplish a reform of those services. It is time to answer them now, I believe.

The changes in the Romanian Information Service after 1996 may not have been sufficient, yet they were substantial. Between 1 June 1997 and 1 May 2000, 910 officers were put in reserve; among them, 5 generals and 570 colonels and lieutenant colonels. 1130 new officers were hired in that interval, of whom 98 per cent were under 35 years of age. Also, 19 chiefs of central units, 24 chiefs of court sections, 66 substitutes of central and county sections chiefs, over 100 sector and bureau chiefs were changed. This is indeed a radical reshuffling of the RIS structures – as concerns both the members and the leadership. It amounts to more than 3100 positions, between 1 June 1997 and 1 May 2000. Some may say now that I am hiding behind figures. Yet, in what other way might you do a more accurate analysis? Over three thousand new people in three years means, I believe, quite a lot for an institution that does not have a very large personnel. Of course, besides these positive aspects there were many other things which should have been done but were not.

Those who think that in four years the secret services can be completely reformed are either fools or pharisees. Noica observed that, just as in mathematics, any solved problem is accompanied by a remainder. The fact that you have identified the remainder is a good starting point: you know what you were not able to do and what must be done in future.

Boys in Black

July 2000, Bucharest

I pay an official visit to the new underground training centre of the RIS anti-terrorist brigades. According to the schedule I shall make no speech: I shall shoot at a target which is placed in complete darkness, but is visible in the infrared. A day before I practised under general Degeratu's supervision, with the new pistol Glock, with which the anti-terrorist team has been endowed. The demonstration includes some well-known elements from action films. In the last episode life

beats the film: the team members shoot with war ammunition at a plate placed on their commander's chest. The commander is, of course, wearing a bullet-proof vest, but his head and hands are not protected in any way. The plate is turned to pieces by the team's accurate shots and I am positive that their full confidence in the commander and his confidence in them, apart from their professional training, account for the fact that the RIS anti-terrorist brigade is ranked among the most efficient ones in Europe and in the world. I may say that their achievements as a deterring force have been obvious. In the four years of my mandate, in Romania there have been, fortunately, no important terrorist attacks. When Ocalan was arrested, there occurred no serious riots in Romania, as in other European countries. This is due to the fact that from the very first attempt at law breaking, the response was hard and the message was clear: in Romania it is not good to engage yourself in terrorist activities. All the organisations with a terrorist bent received that message and the feed-back was not missing.

The Effect of Gamma Rays

The most important duty of the information officers' silent army is to defend state secrets. This thing should be carefully analysed, as during the communist regime defending the state secrets was a pretext for repressive actions. The range of the state secrets was very wide at that time: it was pushed on to include the expression of people's free speech, and this became, especially in the last years of communism, the main concern of the Securitate. The information officers' whole work was meant to prevent the people in the country and abroad from learning the truth about the life standard and the social-political reality in Romania.

I believe that nowadays we cannot speak anymore about secretmania, as long as there is a very narrow range of protected information. The objective of the information services is to defend the information of strategic interest for Romania. On the other hand, some spread the idea that everybody must know everything, which means that there should be no state secret anymore. These people say that in Romania there is nothing to hide, everything will finally be found out; this excessive transparency has been misinterpreted as a conquest of democracy. The draft of the State Secret Law has been attacked quite often, because some have preferred to see only the constraints in it.

They overlook the fact that the European Union and NATO will not accept us and will not cooperate with us in a normal way as long as we are unable to control our state secrets and thus do not prove we can protect the secrets of our future strategic allies.

People usually have a false perception about this sensitive subject, owing to the lack of proper information. In 2000, in accordance with the provisions in the European Union integration documents, an Information Agency came into being within the Ministry of External Affairs. Such an agency exists in all countries which expect integration into the European Union, and it has nothing to do with information gathering, which is moreover forbidden through its own statute. Some made a great fuss about the creation of the tenth secret service in Romania. Let me say clearly that in this sensitive field we did not want to invent anything, because inventing is highly risky. Within the process of Euro-Atlantic integration we create, at an institutional and strategic level, exactly what the member countries already possess. This is valid also for the State Secret Law, an indispensable organic law. We did not manage to have it pass through Parliament and to promulgate it during my mandate because the draft had some flaws, which I pointed out in due time, and also because Parliament did not consider it to be a top priority.

Who Is Changed, Who Stays?

Most information services in the world tend to protect themselves, and one of their basic principles is: presidents go, the services stay. They gather information about everything and everybody. The amount of information stored is always much greater than what they supply to their official beneficiaries. Another fact is that in order to protect and store the really important information, they supply to the beneficiaries a great amount of insignificant items.

I must confess that for four years I was fed with a huge amount of unsorted and irrelevant information. The purpose is threefold: first, to show you that they do work very much (well or less well, anyhow it is an active structure); secondly, to suffocate you, so that after a while you do not read anything anymore, and send it to the aides, who get suffocated in their turn, and so on; last, and most serious, they manage to conceal things of utmost importance in the heap of trash.

The NIF case is a very good example in point. Whenever a crisis

occurs and the information services are blamed, they send over a justification report which claims that the state organs have been informed several times in that respect. So it happened in the summer of 2000 in the NIF case. RIS informed the public opinion that the Government, the National Bank, Parliament had been let know about NIF's situation. As a matter of fact, all the information about NIF had been slipped among other files containing trash information. That is not only incorrect, but also harmful practice.

I asked RIS to draw up periodically data syntheses, as well as sector analyses. During the last part of my mandate I noticed the quality of the analyses and of their style improved obviously, which is connected with the activity of the young officers, with modern education and conceptions.

In special cases, it is the obligation of the information service chief to inform the president on the significant issues. I have a feeling that between 1990 and 1996, President Iliescu was left in the dark several times. As far as I am concerned, I believe that up to the last day of my mandate the information services provided to me correct and impartial data, even when it was known who would take power afterwards.

**RESPECT FOR THE LAW AND JUSTICE:
THE STORY OF A FAILURE**

Aux portes de l'Orient

In the early 20th century, a famous French lawyer, Raymond Poincaré, who at the end of World War I was to become the President of France, arrived in Bucharest for a famous corruption trial. He came to know the Romanians' mentality on that occasion and uttered the well-known words: *Nous sommes aux portes de l'Orient, où tout est pris à la légère.*

I do not know whether the French people ever heard Poincaré's statement, and anyhow, if they learned it, they forgot it the next day. On the contrary, the Romanian intellectuals took it over, made it public and kept it for three quarters of the century, as they all considered it as emblematic for our way of thinking and acting.

After almost a century, in the spring of 2000, other French lawyers arrive in Bucharest. Now an affair which seems to belong to a detective novel or film becomes public in Paris and Bucharest.

The Paris Administrative Tribunal which tries the cases related to regaining money due to the French state, launches an investigation for regaining the unpaid taxes for some exports to Romania. A French citizen, the owner of the company, is arrested and during the house search the police gets hold of the original copies of the transportation documents which confirm the export to Romania, as well as his involvement in other affairs. The Tribunal requests the Romanian Public Ministry that a special commission made up of French prosecutors should pursue their investigation in Romania. The commission hears witnesses in Bucharest, reads documents and finally states that all is about the expedition of posters and electoral materials for the 1996 campaign of the then president: all these things have come into Romania without the payment of customs taxes, which means stealing from the pockets of those to whom the beautiful slogans on the posters were addressed.

The entry into Romania and the reception of the electoral materials were acknowledged by the man who signed for them, stored and used them – he is a high official, the chief of the Presidential Administration between 1992-1996 and the treasurer of the former party in power, which in 2000 was the main opposition party.

The beneficiary of the goods, the former president of the country, admits that the materials (posters, books) were received, but serenely declares it all is a matter of sponsorship. However, a law promulgated by the same man in 1995, when he was president, stipulated that any electoral sponsoring by a foreign citizen or other foreign source is illegal; this seems to impress no one, though a new electoral campaign is drawing near.

Things get more complicated when the hearings made by the French prosecutors in Bucharest and in the Constanta port bring into relief that the company which edited the posters was connected with other ones that imported and exported petrol fraudulently. A lot of illegal acts come to light: embezzlements, changing the goods destination, changing the names of the importers and exporters in documents, transfers of funds to various fiscal paradises. The French prosecutors insist in their job and a trial begins at the High Court in Paris: its objective is regaining over a million dollars, which represents the cost of the electoral materials delivered and not paid for in 1996.

More and more branches appear and a new investigation file is created by the prosecutors at the Romanian General Prosecutor's Office, in which there are put together the documents related to the smuggling of petrol into Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war in that region.

The inquest, which lasts for several years, shows that a huge amount of petrol is involved: tens of trains went from Romania into Yugoslavia through the Jimbolia station. To all this a new file is added, and that investigation shows the embargo was also broken in the same period by means of a pipe through which the petrol went to Yugoslavia directly from the Timisoara "Solventul" plant.

The sensational thing is, though, that all petrol delivery during the embargo, in 1993-1995, was organised and supervised by the Romanian Information Service.

The station master claims there was an order of the Ministry of Transport; the guards and the Customs refer to the orders of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The then chief of the Information Service admits that petrol trans-

ports were made, but claims superior orders. Checking the documents of the Country Defence Supreme Council, the only institution which could grant such authorisation, reveals that there is no such document.

Other documents come to light, yet, that is receipts and pay orders which point that RIS received money, over a million dollars, for the services of supervising the transports during the whole period. The chief of RIS at the time has become meanwhile the president of a political party and impudently declares that all the charges and the evidence are but the result of political scheming.

All the documents, testimonies, other evidence are convergent on one thing: lots of fraudulent transports were certainly made – tens of trains. The hundreds of waggons that made up those trains are even now in Yugoslavia, as the Ministry of Transport acknowledges. Yet, the investigators meet with an unexpected difficulty: how can those deeds be juridically qualified as smuggling. The crime of smuggling refers to the transports made through other places than the official customs and by persons who attempt to cheat the authorities. Well, this time the transport was made right through the customs place, with the perfectly co-ordinated co-operation of the Customs representatives and the Frontier Police, under the supervision of the Romanian Information Service, in accordance with the orders given by the Ministries of Transport and of Internal Affairs. This is a case which the legislative body could hardly have foreseen.

The investigators begin to panic when they learn from the documents and from the RIS officers' statements that the trains also included waggons which carried military materials.

In the meantime, the investigations carried out in France and the statements made by the company registered in that country reveal new information, of a political nature. One of the parties which had a quick rise in the opposition at the beginning of 2000 was actually made up in Paris, and then on Deauville beach. Its leaders admit that they benefited by costly trips at the expense of the French company. The documents also reveal that some important leaders of the main opposition party, the former party in power before 1996 that had much chance to win the 2000 election, enjoyed some stays at expensive hotels in Paris and other cities.

The Yugoslav officials keep utterly silent. Miloshevich is still in power, no one speaks. Instead, many persons from that country who were supposedly involved in the Jimbolia or the “Solventul” smug-

gling were assassinated or died in shady circumstances. There is no great echo in the West either. The Western press, which often fishes for scandals in Bucharest, has no significant reaction this time. Of course people talk about the involvement of some international organisations' high officials in this dirty story of the embargo breaking, but no one wants a serious discussion of that subject. The political leaders only tackle the topic fleetingly. This is an electoral year, it is the time of ploys, betrayals, negotiations, there are other priorities than the breaking of the law.

While I was the president of the state several European-type laws against organised crime were passed and promulgated: The Law for the Prevention and the Punishment of Corruption Activities, The Law for the Prevention and the Punishment of Dirty Money Washing, The Law of Bankruptcy. So there is a legislative basis, which incriminates all the investigated deeds, but this seems to impress no one.

On the other hand, the political opposition does not waste its time. In accordance with the medical principle that a bothering pain can be removed by a more violent pain in another part of the body, there suddenly occurs the collapse of a national investment fund, the victims are sent to the streets; they are surprisingly well organised and make use of the known tactics: demonstrations, blocking the roads, violence. The Government is accused that it does not return the money to the depositors, the latter set a car on fire in front of the Government building, and after the well-known scenario, that kind of news hits the headlines in the newspapers, on television, on the radio. The thinner and thinner news about the petrol smuggling is quickly forgotten.

I urgently require data about those who founded and managed the National Investment Fund at local and central levels. Surprise! In almost all counties the managers were former Securitate or information service members. Meanwhile the Fund's money went stealthily to some organisations connected with the main opposition party, which was in power right when the break of the petrol embargo took place.

Any attempt to talk about the danger and the range of the mafia system, which generated until 1996 the petrol mafia and all kinds of business in Romania (some of these cases were thoroughly investigated, and then punished by Justice), is countered with this answer: why do we discuss that only now, in an electoral year? As if justice or truth were dependent on the moment when the investigation takes place. As a matter of fact, they are, because according to the century-long his-

torical tradition of our country we always wait to see who is the strongest.

Another well-known objection: even if it is true, why should we spoil the image of the country? What will the other countries, EU or NATO say? As if they did not know the truth better than anybody else. Just as in the cuckold story, the Romanians are the only ones who do not know it. Fortunately, those countries and organisations are well aware that between 1997 and 2000 our pledges regarding the embargo were observed to the last detail.

All is not about the country's interest or image, but the interest and image of those people who were involved. They are helped along by the huge manipulation capacity of the mass media and the influence agents, but above all by the old practice of hiding the dust under the carpet, which has so deep roots in the collective mentality. This explains better than anything else why all my calls regarding the importance of justice, of observing the law, find only people with closed eyes, blocked ears and out of use brains.

The polls show that the former government party, now in opposition, rises steadily: the low people have to pay the damage. Finally things happened as expected. The opposition won. After the election, the prosecutors who were in charge of the investigation were soon removed or menaced; the General Prosecutor himself was replaced.

More than a year has passed since the new president and the new government took power. The former chief of the Administrative Service of Romania's Presidency, the main hero in the electoral posters story and the party treasurer all that time is again appointed at the President's Palace as chief of the administration. The files about the electoral materials, those about the Jimbolia petrol smuggling and in general all files are perfectly sealed. Nothing is said anymore about them, and a pardoning law is being prepared, from which many should benefit: the representatives of the bank mafia, petrol mafia, ship mafia, chemical fertilisers mafia, and in general all kinds of mafia, who were under investigation, were tried and condemned during the four years when I was president.

The Night of the Generals

Thus true history, too true to look real, whose actors have been top political persons, businessmen, secret service officers, diplomats, which unfolded in luxurious settings or in exotic provincial stations

and brought onto the stage smugglers, sex, weapons, crimes, trials, and so on, seems to have an obscure, indefinite ending.

A trite scenario, you will say. In fact such things occur everywhere in this world.

Yes, of course. Yet, really good films or books begin only at this moment, when usually a new character enters the stage. A lonely man, who believes in justice. He may be a policeman, a detective, a judge, often a newspaperman, or just an honest-minded person. In the far from reality films whose setting is between the Carpathians and the Danube everything can be negotiated, everything can be arranged. The local scenarios are similar to the rapes that end with financial agreements, when in extreme situations compromise and criminal association shake hands at the marriage between the rapist and the victim; if the investigations have gone too far, an abortion is arranged by the partner who wants to avoid a scandal.

In a film with great stars, *The Night of the Generals*, a prostitute is killed in Paris, and the suspects are four German generals, of whom one is Hitler's favourite. During the dramatic moments of the war ending, the Paris insurrection, repression and terror, a German prosecutor and a French policeman collaborate to find the criminal; the investigation proceeds despite the enmity between the two countries, and justice is finally done.

That story has a deep meaning. It is about the fundamental relationship between justice and power. It is about what those who serve justice and the political power understand by these notions.

He Swears He Does Not Steal

How was it possible? How is it still possible? I have to admit that the public opinion's failure to respond bewildered me. I have been searching for explanations for a year and suddenly things that passed unobserved by me acquire new meanings. The lack of respect for law and justice, for moral norms in general, is with the Romanians a historical evil, and we have, unfortunately, passed the boundary between communism and democracy, the boundary between the millenniums, holding it tight in our arms.

That lack of respect, as well as the proliferation of theft and dishonesty in general, cannot possibly be removed only by the President, the Government or Parliament. Nor by the police, tribunals, or pris-

ons. It has been proved that private property and democracy are not sufficient. That lack of respect is too deeply rooted in the collective mentality. Until family, school, the church, culture, the opinion of the street, of the village and the district do something, this disastrous reality will not be changed.

“A nation loves its laws, because laws are its customs”, said the author of *The Spirit of Laws* and he added that “*Mores* have a greater contribution to a people's happiness than laws”. What are these mores? They are mere everyday events which we pass over and do not care about. A friend told me what he once saw on a trolley bus. A young man tore away the handbag of an elderly woman who stood at the back of the bus and began to make his way forward quickly to get off at the next stop. Upon the desperate cries of the old woman, for whom the pension money meant her survival, a stout man caught hold of the thief, gave back the bag to the poor woman, and then kept seizing his arm in order to give him in to the Police at the first stop. Meanwhile the opinion of the passengers who had turned the bus into an ad hoc courthouse had changed: “It's all right now, the money has been given back to the old woman, let him alone. He's young, he's made a mistake, maybe he's starving, will you ruin him and give him in to the bastard policemen?” So many of us have heard such commentaries! A well-known film director pointed out that the first rhyme our children learn at home or at the kindergarten is “Curly-haired little dog/ Steals the duck from the coop/ Though he swore he never did it/ He was caught – duck in his mouth”. Somebody else mentioned that often a parent tenderly addresses his child as You, little thief. These examples from children's life lower our talk into derision, you may say. It is possible. Yet, where is the serious part of the education we provide for the new generation? Where is the mother's advice, “Be honest, my child”? Where is the priest's resounding voice, which utters the Biblical Commandment “Thou shalt not steal”? Where is the tale of honesty which the teacher should read aloud from the school book?

“It is a well-known fact”, said C. Rădulescu-Motru in 1936, “that in our country, laws, which are duties contracted through the representatives of the people's majority, are not observed. They are not observed by those who make them, nor by those for whom they are made. In principle, one may say this fact is due to an insufficient education of the people. Yet, in our case the reason is different. In our country laws are not observed as in this way our subjective individualism man-

ifests itself straightforwardly. For the Romanians, not observing the law is a title of glory and power.” Today, the criminals' names, written in a huge font, make the newspapers' headlines: Ion Popescu has killed in cold blood, Vasile Georgescu has mugged someone, Stefan Ionescu has committed a heinous rape, as if their outrageous deeds had brought them suddenly among the nation's VIPs. On the other hand, we read such incriminating titles as: the Romanians steal, policemen kill, pupils are drug-addicts, Moldavian women practise prostitution, as if the Romanian nation were made up only of criminals. A common feature is that all details are given about the crimes, almost nothing about the punishments. Who can sift the chaff from the wheat?

In 2000, when Romania was afflicted by a terrible drought, one of the worst in a century, I went out to the countryside to see the corn which was getting scorched because the irrigation system was out of use. We cannot do anything, the specialists said, shrugging their shoulders. Right after 1990, everything was stolen away, all copper, iron, lead pieces were taken out and carried away, everything that could be sold. Yet, these things did not happen in the dark of the night, in secret, but in daylight: the villagers did see that in their neighbour's yard there gathered metal pieces which could not have grown there, for no one had opened iron, copper and lead mines near their house. At the same time other people were zealously puncturing the petrol pipes and stealing huge amounts of that public asset, ruining the harvest and the environment, endangering the life of the people in the area and even their own lives. No one protested, no one filed any information, even when it was obvious that the thieves went hand in hand with the guardians and the police, because it is just kind of us to help one another, isn't it?

Shocked by the dimension of such deeds, I let my indignation burst out in a televised message about the generalised theft, but the echo of my words was insignificant, and the press found one more chance to blame the failure of the president's anti-corruption campaign. It was as if the president had had to guard every pipe, in every district and village, at every street corner or in every forest, in order to put an end to the hundreds of thousands of thefts, found out and not found out, which are perpetrated every day, in the context of the indifference of those whom I can hardly call “citizens”.

“True citizen zeal”, says Montesquieu, “means the wish to see that order prevails in the state, it means the observance of laws, the fair

administration of justice, the magistrates' efficiency. True citizen zeal means loving the laws, even if they contain provisions which are not favourable to us, it means thinking of the people's good they ensure, rather than of the individual harm they may cause to us sometimes."

In Romania, the law is something which is observed when it brings you some advantage; otherwise it is shunned, it is changed or ignored. The financial ploys which generated today's fortunes through the use of legislative gaps, the preposterous assimilation of the cigarettes' customs regime with that of the medicines for infants and old persons seem to me less dangerous than what is occurring now. For the lack of law is to be preferred to the breaking of the law. The confusing laws of the 1990-1996 period, as well as the political domination of Justice by the neo-communist structures yet opened the road for a future evolution of the legislative system and a superior organisation of the judicial one. Even the utter subordination of Justice under the terror of the communist regime may, paradoxically, seem preferable to the obedience and the corruption of some magistrates, who benefit by several privileges and are legally unremovable today. For at that time there still existed the possibility that dignity would be regained once, together with freedom, while now that hope is brought to ruin before our eyes.

When I analyse the legislative reform objectively I cannot help noticing, with bitter humour, that the lack of respect for the law had some positive side effects in Parliament. Indeed, it helped some good and necessary laws to get through, according to the widely accepted idea that anyhow they would not be observed and, if they caused some inconvenience, we would change them.

That is why the Romanians seem to have some difficulty in understanding that in this new century all countries will be ranked not according to their technology, their management or their creativity, but to the way in which human groups will manage to observe the law.

The Scales, the Sword, and the Scarb

Beginning with the latter half of the 19th century, the imposing Palaces of Justice which were built in the cities of France and other European countries had their façades decorated with sculptural images of Justice. She is represented as a Roman vestal holding a pair of scales whose handle is a sword (signifying the punishment of the

guilty); her eyes are covered by a scarf (which signifies that those that judge should see nothing but the law). *Dura lex, sed lex*.

Today, in Romania, that image seems to be changing: the sword in Justice's hand seems to hang above her head and a purse full of money is about to tip the scales. The people receive almost directly the message that provided you support the powerful ones your protection is ensured if need be, and you can get around the law with impunity. From this perspective, today's Romanian society tends to acquire a tribal character: the dominant tribe, which has got the power and the economic resources establishes the rules at will.

A few days before he passed away, Sorin Moisesescu, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice and a former university fellow of mine, told me, while on the hospital bed, what had happened on those crucial days for his career, when he was preparing to preside the nine judges' Supreme Court panel that would pass the definitive sentence in the case of Miron Cozma. The trial was to take place after the dramatic events at Bumbesti and Costesti, and he wished heartily I would not make a call, even in order to inquire about the date of the trial; he confessed he was so glad that call never came.

During my presidential mandate I strictly and deeply observed the judicial power's independence. I refrained from interfering, no matter what kind of situation we had to deal with, and this attracted the sharp criticism of a large part of the public opinion, including many democratic intellectuals: the latter considered that for a while at least, justice's independence should be suspended and a quick intervention for re-establishing the right condition was necessary in the situations when the law had been abused. Yet, they forgot that a single breaking of the principle of state powers separation opens the way for endless abuse.

I deeply respected justice and the judges. I paid homage to those who were correct, competent, honest. Now what remains to be done is that they respect themselves and those who still believe in justice.

A Manifesto for Rehabilitating Justice

The situation when individuals or entire communities have to choose between defending the prestige of the state or the army, and defending the prestige of justice is not new in history. The nations that chose justice are today powerful and prosperous, those which did not make that option are weak and vulnerable. This is but natural, because

justice is an eternal value, whereas the state and the army are institutions created to defend the fundamental values of human society.

One of the best-known cases when modern society was confronted with that dilemma is the Dreyfus affair. A French historian has pointed out an interesting aspect of that case: "Though the Jewish captain Alfred Dreyfus entered the stage as a central hero", Max Dimont says, "he withdrew to a secondary role when he began to plead only from the narrow standpoint of the wrong that had been done to him personally". The true heroes were an army colonel and a writer, good French Catholics who realised that the Dreyfus affair was a case of the state's conspiracy against the individual. They raised their protest not only against the wrong that had been done to Dreyfus, but also against the right of the state to consider itself above the law. The Dreyfus affair, brought before the judges, the subject of a vote, discussed in cafés and in the world press, tore France to pieces from a political point of view, but made it come out victorious, from a spiritual perspective.

Dreyfus's drama began in 1893, when the French counter-intelligence service got hold of a document containing military information that had been sold to the Germans. The French counter-intelligence officers suspected that the leak originated in their own General Staff, made up a file with charges of espionage against Alfred Dreyfus, and arrested him. Soon after his arrest, the General Staff found out that the guilty man was not Dreyfus, but major Ferdinand Esterhazy, a French aristocrat of Hungarian origin. Yet, they did not want the army's prestige to come out spoiled, so they decided to sacrifice captain Dreyfus and had him condemned to life imprisonment after he had publicly been disgraced and ousted from the army.

The case appeared closed, but it was re-opened owing to a career officer, colonel George Picquart, who became the chief of the intelligence service after Dreyfus had been condemned. By chance he found out that the document with the military information had been written not by Dreyfus, but by Esterhazy. When he reported to his superiors, they asked him to keep silent. Though he was aware of the risk he took, he thought justice was above his personal safety, and requested a re-trial of the case. The answer was that he was sent to the front against the Arab tribes where he would hopefully lose his life. France was divided into two camps – those who requested justice, and those who considered the former as traitors as they were asking for the army's *mea culpa*. The church, the state, the army and the press sided with the latter.

In the new trial, major Esterhazy was acquitted, and then colonel Picquart was arrested himself for he had dared accuse Esterhazy.

At this moment two persons, belonging to what we are calling to-day "the civil society", entered the stage: Émile Zola, a reputed novelist, and Georges Clemenceau, a journalist of L'Aurore. Through their actions, the case of Dreyfus was made public again. In January 1898, Zola's famous letter J'accuse was published as a column on the first page of Clemenceau's newspaper. In it Zola openly accused the government and the army for deliberately conspiring against Dreyfus, because they wanted to cover their infamy through fraud and the tainting of justice, which is a crime of high treason against mankind.

Upon the democratic intellectuals' insistence, the guilty group began to step back. Colonel Joseph Henry, who had contributed to the forging of the incriminating evidence against Dreyfus, committed suicide, and even major Esterhazy later confessed that it was he who had written the document and supplied the information. The new president of France ordered a re-trial of the case, and in 1906 the High Court of Appeal acquitted Dreyfus of all charges and set him free. He was advanced in rank and the state awarded him The Legion of Honour.

As in some epilogues of modern films, it is interesting to see what happened with the protagonists of that case later on. Colonel Picquart's career was brilliant. He was advanced to the rank of general, and then became Minister of War; Émile Zola was unanimously acclaimed for his courage to have challenged injustice, and his attitude was emblematic for the engagement of a great humanist writer; Clemenceau became Prime Minister of the French republic and the chief of the French delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference. On the other hand, one of the most famous anti-Dreyfus militants, Philippe Pétain, was the Prime Minister of the collaborationist Vichy government after France was occupied by the Germans in World War II; in 1945 he was tried for high treason and condemned to death; later on the sentence was commuted into life imprisonment.

The Worm and the Boot

More than four decades ago, in 1957, when communist repression and political trials were in full swing and Justice was trampled on, I was a student in the second year at the Law Faculty in Bucharest. The professor who taught Scientific Materialism (S. G.), required that we

should choose a research topic for the scientific circle. I chose Law and Morals. The bibliography was well-known: Marx, Engels, Stalin, and a few Soviet authors who had written about the disappearance of the state in communism and the replacement of law with communist morals. In my little attic I had a few old, tattered books of law and philosophy which I had bought from Talcioac, a second-hand fair at the edge of Bucharest, paying with the money I had gathered by selling my ration card. I wrote a naive and clumsy paper, in which I stated that it was hard to believe the disappearance of private property and the triumph of communist morals will cause the absence of theft and crimes (at least passion murders); it began with a motto from Kant: "If you stoop to considering yourself a worm, you cannot complain in case someone tramples on you".

The professor of materialism had recently come to the faculty; he was a man with a very good political position. I was surprised he invited me to his place to comment on my paper. He opened a bottle of red wine, filled a glass for me, then another. "Read it in the seminar as you have written it", he said.

Though it had no particular effect, I continued to be concerned with that topic and again chose law and morals as the theme of my degree paper. I suspect that the chair of the Theory of the State and Law department, an old man and a former illegality communist, never read it. As I had got high marks in the previous years, he marked it with eight; I tried to get higher grades in the speciality disciplines.

Justitia fundamentum regnorum

At the Law Faculty courses were delivered every year in a different auditorium; on walls, above the desk, there were written apothegms in Latin. On the exterior walls of the building others were carved. Under the dark communist repression, the aphorisms of Justinian, Cicero, Horace appeared to me similar to the Bucovina monasteries frescoes in which the Middle Ages yeomen could see written the precepts of the Holy Bible. I managed to understand them little by little, with the help of the Roman Law assistant professor, a distinguished and cultivated lady: *Ius est ars boni et aequi*; *Iuris praecepta sunt haec: honeste, vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique*; *Iudicis est semper in causis verum sequi*; *Iura civem nosse oportet* gave me a deep sense of people's social organisation.

While I was having my first adolescence experiences, I also understood that the Roman Law made up a unitary system of civil, criminal and administrative norms which ensured a stable framework for everyday human relationships, the certitude of the rights' preservation in future, and, through the principles of the tried case authority and the laws' non-retroactivity, the certitude about the rights which had been gained in the past. Outside all this, there is abuse, uncertainty, chaos, boundless terror.

That is why the Roman Law has been and is one of the pillars of European civilisation, accepted by all educated people in this world.

As for us, Romanians, we have preserved from our Roman ancestors, under the Empire's ashes, the inheritance of the Latin language, the traces of old roads, the ruins of some strongholds, stores of vases and coins hidden in the country's earth, and maybe the melancholy of a great exiled poet, kept in a boundlessly rich lyrical vein.

Yet, we have preserved very little of the respect for the law, the rigour of justice, the organisation of the Roman administration, which have been the landmarks of European spirit and which more recent peoples, coming from the vastness of the Far East, have adopted more thoroughly and earnestly.

In a dialogue with Antonia Constantinescu, published in the *Lupta* review, no. 87, in October 1987, that is twelve years before the fall of communism in Romania, Mihai Botez stated that the Romanians have a long tradition of living outside the law; they have never taken it seriously, and Romania, to the best of his knowledge, is the only country where laws are passed, and then decrees are passed for the laws to be applied, and then indications are given for the decrees to come into action.

Twelve years after 1989, things do not seem to have changed. On the contrary, after the 2000 election, they appear to have worsened considerably. The Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase's statement that the solution in the justice files to which I referred above has been given by the popular vote at the November 2000 election is a blatant invitation to justice obstruction. An even more serious fact is that the indication has been obeyed and nothing has been heard of those files anymore.

It is this attitude towards laws and justice which keeps us outside Europe, at the gates of the Orient, where everything is taken easily, where the law is good only when it offers you some advantage.

Above the entrance to the Vienna palace of emperor Franz Josef, Cicero's maxim is written: *Justitia fundamentum regnorum*. "Justice,

the pillar of states” is the principle which traces the boundary between the stable Western societies and the labile Eastern countries, which can return any moment to the regime of arbitrary leadership. We are still outside that gate and it is not the exemption of passport visas that will help us to get through.

A Saxophone in an Empty Room

In Francis Ford Coppola's film, *The Conversation*, the hero, acted by Gene Hackmann, learns by chance about a crime and then comes across the tentacles of a mafia network. Following the creed of those who fight for the American dream of justice, he defies the omnipotent network and re-establishes the truth. The end of the film shows him alone, playing the saxophone in an empty room.

My father, son of Oltenian peasants, came to Bucharest in order to read Law and become a judge, to administer justice. He finished up reading and practising agronomy, which was nearer to his peasant tradition and his material resources, but he conveyed to me his desire that I graduate from the Law faculty and become a magistrate.

My maternal grandfather, who left his Transylvanian shepherd village and became a rich man in the capital, gave me his first name and his library. He wanted to leave me also the flute which had helped him to earn his living, playing at the Romanian Atheneum and on the radio, after the communists had confiscated everything he had gathered. Yet, I refused him, because the flute required long hours of practice.

I have never regretted that I obeyed my father's wish to read Law and that I shared his faith in justice. Grandfather's library has been highly useful in my life, but now I think, with melancholy, that in a society in which justice sounds hollow, the flute would have been of great use to me.

THE FELT DICTATORSHIP

The Legislative Way of Living

June 2001, Balaton

At the beginning of the 2001 summer, during a meeting near Balaton with the President of Hungary, Ferenc Madl, he told me about his book, *The Postcommunist Change through Legislation*, for which he had worked many years in the West and in his country.

As I benefit from the experience of the recent years, it is clear to me now that progress and welfare do not depend on the gross domestic product, the inflation ratio, the payment balance deficit, but on the way in which human societies will manage to respect the law.

I remember that in 1991-1992, when I was a visiting professor at Duke University, in the U.S.A., my colleagues there were speaking with a lot of consideration about a Duke professor, John Hallowell, the author of the book *The Moral Basis of Democracy*.

The fundamental idea in the book is that the democratic way of living can be ensured by the society's relationship with the law. The most important thing is the belief in reasoning and the debate as the exemplary means to find the best policy, within a framework of shared principles and objectives.

To this we must add the sense of civic responsibility, so often ignored. "If politics are dirty, it could very well be the fault of those refusing to accept responsibilities incumbent from the fact that they are citizens. They seem to think about politicians: let them compromise their conscience in your place, and, meanwhile, look aside. You can cultivate your ideals in intimacy, while politicians undermine them in public".

If you do this for a long time, you will probably find out (as we did, who lived under the communist dictatorship), that there is too little comfort in some ideals which can never be uttered except in one's privacy that excludes even one's children.

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest

In order to emphasise his ideas, Hallowell contrasts them with the opinions he found in Arnold's book, *Symbol of Government*: its author outlines a cynical philosophy for the so-called humanitarian politicians. "From a humanitarian point of view, – says he – the best governance is that in a madhouse. In the case of such a governance, the doctors do not classify the ideas of the madmen into different sciences, such as law, economy or sociology, and they do not initiate them into the labyrinth of these sciences. They do not discuss with the madmen about the relevance or non-relevance of their ideas; their purpose is to make the institutionalized feel comfortable and ensure a good functioning – to be read as peace. It is obvious that when we succeed to see all citizens as patients needing a psychiatric therapy, only then we will be able to achieve a real progress in solutioning economic and social problems.

Yet, a few legitimate questions arise: How will we tell the psychiatrists of the society from the patients-citizens? Who will be the patients and who will be their supervisors? And if reason is of no use in separating just from unjust principles, or true from false theories, then on what basis will we separate the mass of the ill population from the sound minority? Probably, those being psychiatrists will be the first pretending they are healthy. We, the rest, will have to patiently give into their concern of making us feel as comfortable as can be.

If we should apply a political label – says Hallowell – for qualifying the administrative organization of such a madhouse, I believe we could call it benevolent despotism".

We remember that in Romania the theory of the enlightened despot was launched in 1992, in a famous speech at Oltenita, made by the then president of the state. The experiment had already been made in 1990, when the intellectuals who did not understand how the hospital had to be managed and disagreed with the applied treatment were quickly taught their place by the paramedics looking like police force and the nurses looking like miners, so that everybody might live in bliss and peace.

The Tyranny of Masses

Montesquieu said that "the superiority of a free people consists in every one's certitude that the whim of a single person is not enough to take away one's fortune or life".

If this positive force, which originates in people's consciousness, does not exist, it is no longer necessary to impose dictatorship by force. For the goals of dictatorship are accomplished through the agreement of the oppressed. The people give up power willingly and accept to be beaten, lied to, robbed, both as members of the community and as individuals. This is what I should call the thick felt dictatorship, which sets in and lasts when it benefits by popular acceptance. Today's Romania would be a good case study in this respect.

One of the reasons why a democratic government must be constitutional, relying on laws, is, as the authors of the American constitution stated, the necessity to block the way of absolute will, no matter if it is the will of one person, several or many persons. The unrestrained rule of the majority may lead, as John Adams and the other founding fathers of American democracy realised, directly to the tyranny of masses. If democracy meant nothing but giving the rulers everything they desire, then would it not become hard to distinguish from fascism or communism?

As a form of government, democracy relies on the support of those who are governed. The same applies to the act of justice in the states governed by law. True consent is a positive force which originates in an inner conviction. It differs from mere passive acceptance. That consent, Hallowell says, is the basis of government only with those nations which have a community of values and interests, in which some fundamental values, shared by all individuals and groups, are positively affirmed.

Going back to the relationship between democracy and the state based on laws and justice, a minority will agree with the temporary rule of the majority not only because they hope one day they will become the majority in their turn, but also because some common interests are above partisan interests. Democracy collapses when that community of values and interests falls apart, when there is no more common understanding of the fundamental principles and goals, when the participants no longer attempt to integrate themselves into the state, but try to become the state itself.

Some disappointed liberal intellectuals tend to believe that if principles are wrongly translated into practice, they are a mere trap. They seem to find no more a middle way between an excessive optimism and an equally excessive pessimism. If they cannot be idealistic anymore, they become cynical, and the bitterness of cynicism betrays the

depth of their disappointment.

It was fashionable amidst intellectuals to insist that Law is only an arbitrary convention, that only force can actually solve the conflicts among our preferences. If it is illusory to believe that there is a forum of reason and consciousness which is able to pass judgment on the differences among us, then there is no alternative but to submit to the use of force. In this fight, it is not the wisest reason that wins, but the strongest fist.

So what? For the time being this does not touch me and it is not my problem, most people think. More and more often I remember the verse of a little German song from the time when in that country Nazism set in: “When a neighbour was arrested, I said nothing for he was a Jew./ When another neighbour was arrested, I said nothing for he was a social-democrat or a liberal./ When I was arrested, there was no one to say anything”.

ROAD MAP***Make up****19 November, 1999, Istanbul*

The break for the final statement of the OSCE summit is longer than expected. Negotiated yesterday, the statement needs a clear agreement of the Russian Federation to withdraw the troops from Transnistria. At the huge round table, by alphabetical chance, I sit between Russia and Portugal. I exchanged smiles with a rather absent-minded Eltsin and talked a few very cordial minutes with prime-minister Guterres. Eltsin spoke among the first. Zoe, who sits right behind me, next to the Russian president's suite, has not noticed that on the huge screen that shows to the hall the show all televisions transmit live and will repeat all day long, she appears, because of the filming angle, right behind Eltsin; while he is speaking, she bent down to pick up her pen out of her bag, she put down something, added a touch to her hair. Without turning my head, I write her a note that she is on CNN live and I can see on the screen how she is struck dumb.

On the steps warmed by the sun, we laugh at the incident and exchange impressions. During the conference, Eltsin got very angry because of some sentences uttered by Clinton. The American president, gifted performer of speeches conforming to the great tradition of America's democrat presidents since Roosevelt, has prepared a show. When he reached the topic of Chechnya, he stared Boris Nikolayevich in the eye and ejaculated pathetically: "In 1993, when, on the tank in the Red Square, you faced death in the name of freedom, we were wholeheartedly by your side; we would like to do the same now, in the name of freedom." Listening to the translation, Eltsin sweated profusely, took a paper napkin, wiped his face, crumpled it and threw it forcefully on to the table, wherefrom it reached me. The white napkin was now an intense pink from the make up that camouflaged the pale face of the president. He no longer needed the make up now. He was

red with anger. He tried to stand up and leave the hall ostentatiously. The seven Russian diplomats behind him, as if especially chosen to be short, started begging him not to leave in the middle of Clinton's speech. Like a mad bear, he started mumbling that the hosts had offended him, that he had been told to speak only five minutes, that the American spoke more (not true), why didn't they silence him, why did they let him? The ambassadors, the counsellors, specialists in his delegation soothed him down, promised they would object, till Clinton stopped at last and nobody could keep Eltsin any more; he stood up and went heavily to the exit, followed by a swarm of short, panicky courtiers.

We were now waiting for the result of negotiations in view of the final statement. The ambassador Liviu Bota, firm and competent, had already let me know that there had been no objection to Romania's candidacy as OSCE president in 2001, which had been accepted by all delegations, so we could wait calmly, enjoying the autumn golden morning.

Between Scylla and Charibdis

I met Romano Prodi for a last conversation before Helsinki, where we both hoped Romania would be included in the beginning negotiations. I was looking forward to that meeting. Ever since I had met him in Dublin, as president of the Italian Council of Ministers, Prodi had been a direct, warm and sincere interlocutor. Like an academic to another, he had told me with disarming sincerity: "Caro presidente, Italy loves Romania, but do not be duped, we plead in favour of your integration not because of that love, but because it is in Italy's interest to consolidate the south part of NATO and the eastern border of the European Community, so you can rest assured we shall not change our mind."

I ask Zoe Petre if she remembers whether in my electoral campaign, carried away maybe, I have ever talked about starting negotiations with the EC during this term. She confirms I have not, our internal estimations do not see such a possibility before 2005. It seems they may start in 2000. It must be a political decision of the EC. Economically we have to go a long way. But the EC is a large political body, after all, which the economy has followed and served.

Romania behaved as a partner of the Alliance against Milošević and this is a first result. The OSCE presidency means we are recog-

nized as a mature democracy, and the EC will open its gates. It is up to us to step in.

When it comes to my mind how many times I have passed through Scylla and Charibdis during the last year, how many times we could have been shipwrecked, the sun of Bosphorus is no longer so warm. I closed last year with the feeling that I had a few essential goals for this present year and a lot more for many following years. I had reached the conclusion that we would have to fight hard to keep on a good track and defeat all opposition to our victory.

Looking back it seems obvious that 1999, drawing to an end now, was a year of crises. The most violent was the first one, when in January the miners assaulted Bucharest again, in a nightmare that had happened before. If I had not had the force to appeal to the army, if the army had not supported me, if president Iliescu had not stopped his men at the last minute from supporting this coup d'état, if the civil society had not become efficiently active, if the allied leaders had not supported me...

Romanian society ought to appreciate better the fact that on two important occasions – the miners in winter and the NATO offensive in spring – the leaders of these parties, who seemed to know nothing but argue and serve themselves, forgot all argument and showed an exemplary behaviour, serving their country at all risks. They went back to their own petty games afterwards, but that is another matter. It was just like the time when Dej had thrown in jail people who had never seen eye to eye – liberals and peasant-party members, Greek-Catholics and Orthodox, intellectuals and soldiers – and these people found it in them to stick together and be more dignified than some of them would have been under better circumstances.

After the miners' failure, my political opponents tried other weapons. As early as the miners' revolt, PDSR – represented by the arrogant, melodious voice of Adrian Nastase – connected their approval of rejecting the miners' attack with a public announcement of anticipatory elections in the autumn of 1999; he even insolently tried to prove the impossible, namely that such an announcement would have been a sign of stability and political maturity to large financial institutions, NATO and the EC. After the failure of the motion in November 1998, after the miners' failure in January and February, parliamentary offensive started again, alongside with important social movements, announced by PDSR since the previous spring and rather

menacing. The miners had spent their golden handshake money and our hope to make them act responsibly proved to have been an illusion. The situation was also menacing in Brasov. The risk of bankruptcy in Galati was high. Against this shaky background, there was political inciting all the time.

There came more and more signals: the opposition leaders made aggressive declarations, PDSR was preparing to commemorate 70 years since the Lupeni strikes (which occasioned lectures about the crimes of the peasant party government in 1922), Miron Mitrea – ex trade-union leader, now PSDR leader – was in touch with those who had led for almost 10 years the trade-unions (in 2000 they would also become members of parliament or PDSR ministers). When the trade-unions announced a general strike for April 23, the day of the Washington NATO Summit, it had become obvious that it was all a political maneuvered. Zoe Petre announced me about this declaration and did not know how to react: April 23, the day of the general strike, was a Sunday. Several days later, the opposition noticed the calendar and announced the same strike one day further.

At the same time, PDSR called the opposition to go on parliament strike. The Businessmen's Association led by Dan Voiculescu, whose media trust had pleaded for solidarity with Miloševic, asked me to disband the government and hand the country over to them, as they were prosperous businessmen, had proved good managers, which was what Romania needed. I tried in vain to explain to them didactically that governments were elected and could not be replaced by wise men's councils which had not been voted for by anyone. That is the rule. No one was willing to understand it, though. They got very angry and announced they would go on financial strike on the same day, April 23rd. We were paying our external debts and the country's billionaires were paralyzing the system.

Yet we made it. The coalition did not yield to this shock. We called to Cotroceni representatives of the government, parliament parties (except PRM, which was denied some trifling matter and refused to show up in consequence), trade-unions, employers – a very important institution, after a European model, was active at the time (The Social and Economic Council, the first organization for three-sided dialogue: government, trade-unions and employers), economic and political analysts. I had met most of them beforehand and I knew that no matter how critical they might be, they did not approve of parliament strike

or anticipatory elections. Most of them understood that what mattered was Romania's position in Washington and joined us. During the conference of both government and opposition no decision was reached concerning all kinds of strikes and even more, I managed to focus on Romania's essential issue, the law of private property, which became the priority of the President, Parliament and Government.

In spite of that decision, in spite of the following talks, the message addressed to the Parliament, more talks with parliament parties in September, we could hardly move a little bit the law for repossession of rural property; nothing as far as buildings were concerned.

We managed however to avoid the political and economic general standstill that had menaced us. The Washington final declaration mentioned Romania again on the first place among the candidates to preparations for NATO adhesion by means of Membership Action Plan.

Recovery of the weak patient

Talks with Larry Summers, at the Treasury – the American equivalent of the Ministry of Finances -- , with IMF and World Bank, ended on August 5th in a press release which congratulated Romanian authorities on their effort to improve the economy, long-existing structural weaknesses, and the stand-by agreement was signed, followed by 73 million dollars.

The World Bank approved of the PSAL I programme to reorganize industry, thus correcting those long-existing structural weaknesses, which were mere figures for the foreign institutions but which were daily life to me, lives of miners, workers and engineers who worked in vain in institutions they had once respected and which had now become chronic weaknesses. The PDSR encouraged their anger and aimed it at us, who were not lying - as they had been lied to before – but telling them the truth.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Finance – honest, strong, energetic Remes, whom I had not appreciated enough before – and Mugur Isarescu – excellent in his profession, thinking of the National Bank as the main support of the Romanian State – worked day and night for an equally important victory – paying the external debt in time. It was a miracle that we managed that too. Romania proved to be reliable and beginning with next year reimbursement becomes bearable.

The devotion, intelligence and energy of people like Remes and

Isarescu is what I call patriotism. It gave them the strength, courage and passion to carry out their plans well. I am astonished that so few are like those two, or like many anonymous beings whom I value for both their work and their discretion. What can urge those who under false pretences bring about miners' revolts, civil war possibly, inability to pay, poverty and humiliation?

The Priest's Dream

The crises in 1999 might have led to disaster. If the miners had reached the capital and Vadim Tudor had proclaimed the revolutionary council – which was his dream but not his alone, since at the public television microphones had been brought out into the yard so that Miron Cozma might address the nation live -- , Romania would have been swallowed for God knows how long by civil war. I would not have given up the power invested in me by the elections, the government would not have given in either, civil society was determined to put up a fight; I wonder about the Police. The Army had been firm in its reaction but for how long? Foreign ambassadors were packing already. Bosnia was a step away.

We may well wonder what NATO's reaction would have been. Risky action was on its way only a short distance away and we would have been a second front, before the first had been started. We may well wonder how Hungary would have reacted if a PRM government had menaced the Hungarians in Romania. What would Hungary have done, with a young, energetic prime-minister, fresh out of the elections that supported his radical nationalism? And Ukraine? Bulgaria? I know from recent experience that no ally is certain, a common vision is necessary. Who would have shared the vision of a miners' Romania?

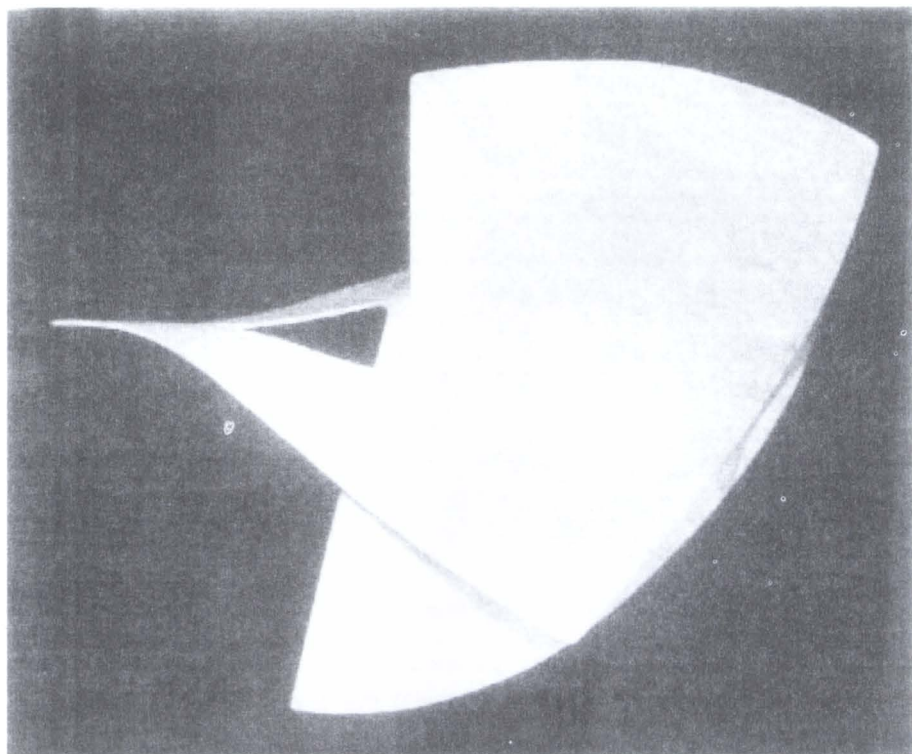
Fortunately, the miners' failure were the end of coup d'états in Romania. State institutions passed that test, with difficulty but for good.

What would have happened, I wonder, if, avoiding civil war, we would have slipped into strikes and a standstill of the parliament? Had the two been successful? We would have failed to pay our external debt, which would have disqualified us in international financial life. Mugur Isarescu once told me: 'Bankers never forget.' No NATO and no EC negotiations for decades to come. We would have become a marginal country, torn apart from Europe, a victim prey to fury or paralysis.

We won, though. To quote Clinton, we kept afloat, and even made progress. The price does not matter now, and not many paid it.

I remember the fable of the priest praised by his flock for his holiness, rewarded by God. As the priest was as poor as a church mouse and his village just the same, a passer by asked what his reward had been. He was told one night the priest had dreamt the church had fallen down. He woke up and prayed and prayed, and the church is still standing to this day.

The Constantinople palace is in the sun, we are waiting to hear Romania's becoming OSCE president confirmed. A trip down memory lane, and an opportunity for self-irony. I am 60 today.



SMOKE STAIRCASE WITH IRON STEPS

NOAH'S ARK

Leaves on the Snow

Dan Pavel tells me he has made up his mind to write a book about the Romanian Democratic Convention. He will use the researcher's tools, will take into account not his own prejudices, feelings and spite, but facts, documents and the testimony of the personalities who played a role in founding CDR and supporting its activity.

As I am preoccupied with my own books about the history of transition in Romania, I hesitate when he asks me to answer a good deal of questions and to supply to him the documents I have gathered in my personal archive fund. First I suggest answering the questions in writing, but he insists on a direct interview, in which the interviewer's role of probing the participants' memory is extremely important. He was right. I owe to Pavel's probing capacity the retrieval in my memory of lots of episodes I had forgotten about, and the time we spent together was for me a good opportunity to clarify some things on which I had had not enough time to ponder when I was caught in action.

I am looking forward to the publication of his book, a very useful confrontation between the information in various documents and people's opinions, and I do recommend it to all those who desire to know the recent history better. I am not going to engage in a scholarly analysis of CDR here. Its place is not in this book, which is rather a mixture of memories and reflections. However, I would like to make some remarks as clearly as possible.

In politics, as in life, the really important things are pretty simple. They can be reduced to an alternative which sometimes brings into relief the primacy of one option. Things become complicated at lower levels. People use a huge amount of intelligence and energy in minor combinations, which are put in the service of individual vanity and interests. CDR was a major political project, having a decisive influence upon Romania's history at the end of the century.

It was a political experience which took place between November

1991 and December 2000, that is for nine years. From the last CDR protocol (December 2000) almost two years have passed. I have read the political commentaries very attentively and have waited all this time for the political analysts and the historians to assess objectively this phenomenon which brought about a lot of political, economic and social changes, which were good or less good, but anyhow radical as compared to the situation in the half a century that preceded the CDR's existence.

CDR appeared and developed vigorously in Romania owing to three factors. First there was Doina Cornea's initiative to found the Romanian Antitotalitarian Forum and then to transform it into CDR. Secondly, there was Corneliu Coposu's vision regarding the need of a united opposition, and his wise idea of looking outside the existing parties for a standard-bearing personality for the presidential elections and for the executive leadership of the Alliance. Thirdly – because no one has said that, I will do it – there was my ability of ensuring for a long term the political unity of a heterogeneous structure, its juridical representation, its own voice on the stage of political confrontation, and the necessary logistics; owing to the last factor there exist now its archives containing the documents related to its activity. Above all this, I led CDR to victory in the 1996 local, presidential and Parliament elections, despite the almost unanimous predictions of a failure, and I managed to keep in power the Alliance of CDR, the Social Democratic Union and the Democratic Union of the Magyars in Romania, during my presidential mandate.

The violent criticism levelled against CDR all along its existence, since it was founded until 2000, both from outside and from inside it, was due to a misunderstanding of its nature. One cannot analyse a phenomenon if one does not refer to its essential characteristics. You cannot accuse a ship that it does not go in the air with supersonic speed or it does not turn out corn or computers.

CDR was conceived from the very beginning as an electoral alliance with definite goals: winning the local elections in Bucharest and other large cities in November 1991; obtaining a high percentage in the presidential and Parliament elections in June 1992; winning the local elections at a national level, the presidential and Parliament elections in February 1996.

I took part directly in drawing up and adopting the protocols which mentioned the nature and the goals of the Alliance, from November 1991 up to 1996. It is quite easy to notice, no matter how biased the analysis might be, that all the goals in the protocol were achieved. I am referring here to the realistic goals, not to the fictitious ones, because, for instance, no one would have imagined that in 1992 we could win the presidential elections. Therefore the fact that I reached the second round in the confrontation with the then president and I got 4,641,207 votes, that is 38.56 per cent, was an unexpected success as compared with the results in 1990.

Play-off

27 June 1992, 9 Demetru I. Dobrescu (formerly Onesti) Str.

Corneliu Coposu, President of CDR, goes downstairs briskly from the room on the first floor where the 67 electors, representing 17 political parties and civic associations belonging to CDR, have deliberated and voted in three rounds. He announces the voting result: the winner is Emil Constantinescu, who is now the single CDR candidate for president. He hugs me with irrepressible joy (for which Ion Ratiu will never forgive him). All the other candidates congratulate me with perfect fair play. The flashes blind me. The journalists, who have been waiting there for eleven hours, are crowding on me from all sides with the mikes reaching out for the first "hot" statement. A superstition has made not prepare any statement in advance. Anyhow, I was the only one who considered I had a chance to win. I thank the CDR electors, who are exhausted, too. The participation in the preliminary contest of some well-known personalities proves CDR's capacity to offer real values to voters. I will try to contribute to the cohesion of CDR and thank the Civic Alliance, the University Solidarity and the parties which have honoured me with their confidence. That will be all. The salvo of questions continues. I am immune against pressure and blackmail. My campaign will be a constructive one. Much to my surprise, a reporter from the Romanian Television invites me to the evening news. I will have for the first time the opportunity to address the Romanian nation, and, furthermore, live, in prime time. I had already had the chance to speak in front of large gatherings: on 29 April 1990, in the University Square, where there were tens of thousands of people, then on 15 November in the Revolution Square – more than a hundred thousand people were in that place. Even if I could not make out their

faces (sometimes all I could see in the dark were the torches), I knew that the participants were there because they confided in us or hoped to find something different from what they had been offered before. Now, on the opposite side of the screen there are also the indifferent ones and those who already hate me only because I will compete against the man they support.

Arriving at the Television building I enter animated by a strange feeling. I had got used to considering the (so-called Free) RTV as something deeply noxious, had participated in demonstrations and gatherings against manipulation and censorship and spent long evenings in front of the barbed wire that isolated the Television premises from those who had come to die defending it in December 1989. I am met by Cornelius Rosianu and remember his presence there in December 1989. Before and after. My presence in the studio still seems unreal to me. I refuse to be made up. It would be a sign of frivolity. I am astonished by the outspoken sympathy of the cameramen who wave to me from behind their machines. They might be the men in Iuga's trade-union, I say to myself. I know that the few words I am going to say will be widely broadcast and will become the subject of much debate. Try to jot down some ideas on a scrap of paper, but give it up. I'll use as a starting point one of Havel's phrases which had fascinated me back in 1990: "the power of the powerless". "We'll fight". I say, "not to reach power, but to reach that point where the only power will be the power of law and the only will - the will of the nation." They show me I have one minute more. "I am here before you to mark the beginning of a road on which I'll have to go on behalf of those who want our society to change radically. On our side is exasperation in front of lies and suspicion, sorrow in front of disunion, and revolt in front of corruption. On our side is the solidarity in front of the provocations to intolerance and hatred; it isn't only the Romanian people who want this solidarity, but also the international public opinion, who desires to see Romania as a part of Europe." Just when I had warmed up, the director tells me the interview is finished, and I hardly have time to give a contracted smile. Enters the well-known Rodica Becleanu: "I've come to meet you, even if my heart belongs to President Iliescu" she tells me self-importantly, meaning she is doing me a great favour.

The several minutes' interview is over. Cornelius Rosianu and Rodica Becleanu see me off to the lift ceremoniously. On the corridor

some editors pop their heads out to greet me, while others look at me with reserved curiosity. I take my leave and get in my old Dacia car. From now on, at least for a few months, I will not belong to myself anymore. I have become the standard bearer of a cause in which many people believe, for which many, too many, people have died, which some have been waiting for and others hate without even wanting to know it. I'll have to go all the way. Start the car. There is no way back now.

28 June 1992

In *Cotidianul*, on the first page, a cartoon. Corneliu Coposu, dressed as a juggler, takes a puppet with my face out of a silk hat. Luminita Petrescu, a reporter sent by the newspaper to cover the Convention elections and to write the article about Ion Ratiu's triumph, submits her resignation because her article was entirely changed by the editors. Ion Ratiu sends me word that he will campaign for me in Transylvania. Which he will do. So will Nicolae Manolescu.

7 November 1996

Considering that for a good cohabitation with Hungarian minority and for eliminating all inter-ethnic tensions, an intense collaboration should be set between Romanian and Magyar democratic parties, Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) concluded today a protocol of collaboration with Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)*. The parties of CDR have engaged in collaborating, after the elections in 17 November 1996, with UDMR in the future Parliament and in setting up a governmental coalition so that the UDMR representatives to be members of the Government and to participate to the drawing up of a common program of governing.

It was a historical decision which benefic effects would be visible during the four years of Constantinescu's Administration (1997-2000).

* Original document, pg. 254.

MINUTĂ


Prin prezenta partidele componente din Convenția Democrată Română (C.D.R.) se angajează să colaboreze cu Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România (U.D.M.R.) în cadrul viitorului Parlament, cât și să ofere U.D.M.R.-ului o participare în viitorul guvern al României, precum și în structurile aferente, conform ponderii acestei formațiuni, negocierea trinității să aibă loc după data de 17 noiembrie 1996.

U.D.M.R. va participa împreună cu celelalte formațiuni din viitorul coalition guvernamentală la elaborarea programului comun de guvernare.

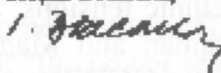
Prezenta coloană a fost întocmită la București în data de 7 noiembrie 1996, având caracter confidențial și constituind baza unui acord de colaborare parlamentară și guvernamentală.

Din partea C.D.R.:

Președinte C.D.R.,
Emil Constantinescu



Partidul Național Țărănesc - Creștin Democrat,
Ion Iliescu



Partidul Național Liberal,
Mircea Ionescu Quilincus



Partidul Național Liberal - Convenția Democrată,
Nicolae Corvonei

Partidul Alternativă României,

Adrian Iorgulescu



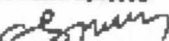
Partidul Ecologist Român,

Otto Weber



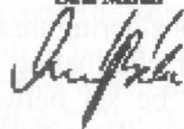
Federația Ecologistă Română,

Alexandra Ionescu



Din partea U.D.M.R.:

Președinte U.D.M.R.,
Béla Markó



USER'S MANUAL FOR VERTICAL TAKEOFF

The Spring and the Waterfall

July 2002, Cumpăna Chalet

A pouring rain makes us take refuge onto the terrace of the chalet. After leaving our backpacks down, one of my students asks me:

“Professor, when you were our age, have you ever imagined that you would become president? That you would take decisions that would affect the destiny of people you do not know? Have you ever thought that you would be able to meet people who decide the fate of our world?”

Idyllic confessions: “somewhere deep inside of me, I have nourished since childhood the idea that I would become president of the country some day” do not become me. Nobody around me, not even I myself had ever thought of such a thing; not even during the first two years after the Revolution, when many of the ideals so far prohibited, had begun to defy the censorship of old constraints.

Going through the tens and hundreds of leaders of short-lived parties, that have disappeared as quickly as they have appeared, is witness to the fact that political life after 1989 has been populated by numerous imaginary projections.

If with artists it is the case that their calling is obvious since their first years of life, people that come to play a certain part in their country's politics discover their calling relatively later on. In Romania, as in the other countries freed from communism in 1989, many of today's politicians have been pushed forth into the arena of public life by the turn of events. The huge void of *political labour force*, partially filled with – both quantitatively as well as qualitatively – by former RCP activists, has imposed more often than not in a random way, the entrance in the political life of Romania, of some intellectuals who had never dreamed and who maybe had never wished for such a career.

How Come ?

May 2001, Eminescu Bookshop

I saw the book by Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Graduation Paper?* In the window of a bookshop, and eager to have it as quickly as

possible on my shelf, I asked someone to buy it for me. Looking through it, I am somewhat disappointed not to find in the book the echo of a metaphor, but the very thing announced in the honest title – a guide for young people who are writing their graduation papers. My son-in-law, being concerned with his Ph.D. thesis in medicine, sees the book and asks it from me and after a while tells me delighted that reading it served him a lot and that he regrets that there are not any other books of this kind in Romania to help those who complete their scientific and research training overcome the difficulties of that period.

It was at Cotroceni that I realized the difficulties that those who would like to practise or at least understand politics and administration are faced with. It is a field in which specialized works are not missing, but on the contrary I would say, exceeding. There are many books that approach the concepts and there are as many American-type guides dedicated to practical aspects. And yet, why don't they enjoy the interest they deserve, except for a limited number of specialists?

When I was young, when I was keen on getting knowledge in philosophy, and natural science...?

Discourse on Method

February 1957, Pictor Andreescu 17

My grandfather's library, used as vitamin and antibiotic, has helped me not to become the cultural disabled person that the ten-class high-school of the communist reform would have trained, however each new contact shows me the "gaps" I still have. I was ambitious, extremely proud and eager to find out new things in philosophy, literature and natural sciences, so I drew up a list of fundamental works. Dealing by myself with the authors that were among the first on my list led to a half failure. The temptation to give it up was close. After the first winter session at "Law", I realized that the faculty gave me enough spare time to come to the lectures of the Faculty of Philosophy, but the course on the history of philosophy delivered by professor Banu does not impress me and does not help me much either. My colleague Florin Mărculescu, who is by far ahead of me as far as information and knowledge, recommends me reading René Descartes *Discourse on Method*. It is a book – he tells me – that laid at the basis of the development of rationalism, and had an important influence on European philosophy, science and civilization over the last 365 years. After my previous mostly failed experiences, I expect a big treaty whose deciphering would be impossible

without the use of dictionaries or helping materials. I believe that most people who know Descartes by his famous dictum *Cogito, ergo sum*, and people who have not read yet the original paper, think the same. When I first came to have it, I was surprised to see a book of reduced size, written in a charming and fluent manner, which in spite of the deep ideas stated is easily read and enjoyed.

What is the secret? The secret is revealed by Descartes himself in the first part of the book: "I do not propose this writing as a story in which apart from a few examples to be followed, there will certainly be many others that many people would not follow. I hope that it will prove useful to some, without being damaging to anyone and that anyway, everyone will appreciate my honesty. My plan is not to impose here the method that has to be used by everyone in order to better guide their reason, but it is only to show in what way I forced myself to guide mine. I know how exposed we are to delude ourselves by judgement we pass about ourselves and how unreliable must be the judgement of our friends when that is favourable to us. I will be very pleased to show in this discourse which are the paths I follow and to present here my life as if in a picture (*they will be grateful for my honesty*), so that everyone could judge for themselves and that, by finding from people what they think about it, it would serve me as a new instrument of study, that I would add to those I usually use."

Discourse on Method, written when the author was forty-one, when he had knowledge of almost all important works that philosophy, science and literature had created until then, is truly what the author declares in the very beginning: "a method to form your rational thinking, to find the truth in science and in life", written as *a story of his own life*.

The Paper Walking-Stick

September 1992, Splaiul Unirii 5

I prepare the Programmer for foreign policy of the presidential campaign together with Zoe Petre in the new headquarters of the Support Committee. I am not *qualified* for such an activity and even less for the domain of foreign policy. It is also true that I do not carry in my bag the marshal's truncheon but the so called *luggage of knowledge* – my studies of law, old readings in history and the theory of international relations, of geopolitics, and especially a keen inclination to Romania's fate in the history of the world.

If I am to think which of the readings before 1989 are useful subsequently as sources of inspiration for clarifying the vision on the way in which Romania should promote its interests as far as foreign policy is concerned, I have to stop at two books. The first *Nicolae Titulescu. Diplomatic Documents*, published in 1967, offers despite the selection imposed by the communist censorship, a suggestive image of the big problems our country had to face during the period between the two world wars, as well as an image of Nicolae Titulescu's ability, while he was the head of the Romanian diplomacy to make his voice heard especially in European problems. The second book, which was still kept in the *secret fond* of the library of the University of Bucharest even after I had completed my studies, available only upon *approval*, (which, *as it was the case with us*, it need not have been official) contains a collection of public lectures organized by the Romanian Social Institute between 1923-1924, entitled *Romania's Foreign Policy*. I urge any public or private person, interested in the foreign policy of our country and in its history, to read this exceptional work published under the aegis of the "Cultura Națională" Publishing House. Among those 19 who had delivered lectures or speeches there were great politicians of the time as Iuliu Maniu and Vintilă Brătianu, academic people that have combined academic and political life such as Nicolae Iorga and Virgil Madgearu, or renowned professors such as Dimitrie Gusti, Grigore Antipa, George Marinescu, Dem. Negulescu (member of the Permanent Court of International Justice in the Hague) and last but not least Emil Pangratti (president of the Romanian Association of the Nations Society, rector of the University of Bucharest and senator).

Listing my sources of information regarding foreign policy would be unjust if I would not mention the magazine "Lumea" ("The World"). Under the leadership of such people as George Ivașcu, not only did it break the grey colour of communist press with information about countries, events and people outside the Iron Curtain, but following for decades the information about the electoral process in Western democratic countries, we were able to take democracy *second hand*, by virtual voting in the parliamentary elections in France, the USA, Germany or Great Britain over the period 1990-1996.

The Pangratti

May 1998, Emil Pangratti 20

I have moved to the residence meant for the President of Romania for five months now. When the address was announced for the first

time, everyone found it familiar due to the numerous ads calling for the public at the “Pangratti”. The adjutants announce, for every departure to the residence, in their walkie-talkies: “Target Pangratti”. The severe face of the former rector comes to my mind from the gallery of portraits at the University and I am amused when asking several personalities with claims about the culture of foreign policy if they know who the man that had given his name to the street was. I have never got any answers. I could find out indirectly that they were not familiar with the book or with the issue either; I have the proof directly if it is still necessary that the way to posterity is linked to the name of a street rather than to the value of a work.

My activities with the university and what life brutally taught me not only when I first ran for president but also afterwards, complemented the survival kit I set off with in exercising the foreign policy prerogatives of my position as president.

Go West

May 1992, Carol I Blvd. 34

In his office at the PNPCD headquarters, Corneliu Coposu tells me he has been thinking that in my new quality as the presidential candidate of the democratic opposition, it might be useful for me to keep a higher profile within the western political and diplomatic circles. There are only three weeks left until the official start of the election campaign. I have strong contacts with the western academic circles but I am virtually unknown to the European politicians. This is most important because, as far as the presidents in exercise are concerned, the great western capitals are still being reticent. The itinerary we proposed includes five important European capitals: Brussels, The Hague, Paris, London, and Bonn. I'll be accompanied, alongside Corneliu Coposu, by the *Dreptatea* editor-in-chief Ilie Păunescu – a playwright who returned from Germany – and by the film director Sorin Ilieșiu, who will film and take photographs of every event, since our immediate goal is – to use a currently accepted term – mass-media promotion.

If it's Tuesday, it's Belgium

27 July 1992, Brussels

The days are elapsing in a daze of meetings, reminding me of the movie *If it's Tuesday, it's Belgium time*. All interlocutors know all too

well that this is not a *diplomatic investment*, because I have scanty chances to become president. There are only three weeks left till the start of the election campaign, and the president in exercise won the previous elections with approx. 85%. Although they must have been warned by their counsellors that it is virtually impossible for a completely unknown person to win the elections, the politicians I meet do seem interested. The only plausible explanation, in my opinion, is their wish to verify if there is more to the political potential in Romania than the one they already know about.

The debates concerning international politics and bilateral relations between our two states are following a general trend. In exchange, the background of the meetings is as ceremonious and official as can be, and the first-rank western press is never-failing. I am given the opportunity to see what professional party politics and the relation with the press really mean. Although my international credibility is almost nil, many TV stations are conscientiously filming the meetings, broadcasting them and giving me the tapes to use them in my electoral video-clips.

In Belgium I am received by the Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, who has only been head of the government for a few months, by Christian Nothomb, the president of the Belgian Parliament – who is just going to have a book published in Romania – and by the leaders of the Flemish and the Walloon Christian-Democrat parties. *Le Soir*, which did not even record the latest visit of the Romanian president in exercise, announces its wish to interview me. I am having it taped at the editing office, which has been sending a photographer to *immortalise* all my official meetings. The very next day in the morning I find the newspaper folded on the breakfast tray.

Heavy Weight

19 July 1992, The Hague

In Holland the level of all meetings is equally high. I am being received by the President of the Parliament and the Prime Minister, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, – who has been holding this position for the past 9 years.

The meeting with the Prime Minister, which took place at the headquarters of the Dutch government, is rather funny. I enter the room accompanied by Corneliu Coposu. We all sit around the table and wait for a few minutes. The head of the governmental protocol service informs us that the entire meeting is supposed to last for half an hour.

This is not a simple handshake meeting – it is now time for serious occasions (as I was going to find out for myself later, once I had joined in the endless series of presidential meetings). I am asking myself: what are we going to talk about in this half-hour? I do not have any experts with me, I do not have any files prepped by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Intelligence Service. On the other hand, for over a decade, my interlocutor has been the Prime Minister of a country renowned for its impeccable diplomatic activity in the European Union, NATO, European Council, OSCE, as well as in organizations of a more universal scope; he was a *heavyweight* of international politics. My nervousness wanes away as, after the door of the salon closes and the journalists all retire, the Dutch Prime Minister sits in an armchair, leans comfortably back and stretches his legs on a chair nearby. Suddenly, the atmosphere relaxes and becomes friendly. While admiring the palace, we start talking about the old and new history of our countries. Time flows by. He is asking me about my chances in the elections, about the democratic parties in Romania, about the general situation in the country, and the discussion ends as cordially as it began. We leave and we make statements for newspapers, radio and television. The Dutch television interviews me on a bridge overlooking a canal that reflects the walls of the Palace. The interview is slotted in the evening on national television, including the Prime Minister's welcome message; after that, the interview is sent to me. It got to Romania before I did.

Outside the Film Studio

The first stages of this comprehensive tour allow me to witness *first-hand* the impact of personal prestige and I realize how impressed professional politicians are (politicians educated by post-war politics) with a man who was locked away in communist prisons for 17 years, no stranger to torture and suffering. Towards him they behave with a certain respectful shyness, which breaks up their pre-learned responses. These people, used by the rules of the diplomatic game to hiding their feelings deep, are suddenly unable to check their emotions, and do not perceive him as a competitor, but rather as a person who, despite being straight and simple, is awe-inspiring. He is not one of their world, he comes from elsewhere, having faced something unimaginable to them, having pulled through a nightmare with dignity.

With impressive simplicity, Coposu achieves something nearing the unbelievable – he transfers his prestige unto me. He transfers unto me, a near-nobody, his prestige and credibility, while he takes a step into the background. Despite the fact that he masterminds the entire tour, he behaves as if I am the acting president of Romania and he – a humble counselor. I respect him profoundly and I am always shocked when he steps back in order to allow me to enter a room first. During talks, he tries to be, literally as well as in abstract, somewhere in the background. When the topic concerns him and his prodigious experience, he always succeeds in redirecting all attention towards me and prevents any *misdirection* outside the *battle-plan*. In Belgium or Holland, after having used this *protocol approach* continually, he continued it even after having left the governmental palace, even though the company was exclusively Romanian at that time. I stopped and said to him: ‘Mister president (for he was the president of the Romanian Democratic Convention), the play is over. I can fully understand we both have been actors in a movie written and directed by you. I accept that game but now we do not need to play it.’ He could not be moved. He was completely living his part because of his innate respect towards the presidential institution. He saw me, or wanted to see me, as the virtual holder of a fundamental position in Romania. and Coposu, with his well-grounded Transylvanian education and his pre-communist academic training, was incapable of hypocrisy.

Lessons and Reflections

30 July 1992, Palais de Luxembourg

Meeting with the President of the Senate, Alain Poher, the parliamentary representative of the UFD – the party of the former French President Giscard d’Estaing. Unlike my honourable interlocutors from Belgium and Holland, the great French Politician visited Romania, knew Ceausescu very well and published several books in our country. Therefore, the possibilities of a dialogue better connected to the realities of Romania are auspicious. When I enter his office I notice a large glass sideboard displaying minerals. He informs me he is a mining engineer and his hobby is collecting minerals.

After the meeting there is a press conference. Owing to the importance of the position of President of the French Senate, audiences at this level enjoy the interest of the great press agencies (*France Press, Reuters*) present.

It is time to learn two important lessons. The first lesson comes from Radu Câmpeanu. I know very well now that it was not by accident that the then president of the National Liberal Party – whom myself and other naïve intellectuals had thought to be the hope of Romanian democracy, since we had no knowledge of the dark sides of his past – had chosen the very day I was in Paris to announce the candidature for President, from the part of the NLP (which had just left the Democratic Convention), of ... King Michael. Such a bombshell had undoubtedly increased the usually tepid interest of the press. Suddenly, the person who was being presented in Western Europe as the democratic candidate for the Romanian elections had as an opponent, proposed by a democratic parliamentary party, none other than the former monarch of his country.

Having been informed of this from Romania, Corneliu Coposu telephoned His Majesty at Versoix in my presence. The King told him that he would not accept the proposal, so that he was ready to set things straight.

The second lesson was my *duel* with the press. A reporter from an influential Parisian journal asked me a question about the “atrocities against the Hungarian minority in Romania”. I believe it was the first time when I realized that a press conference was not a pleasure chat, that there were trick questions and one had to be well prepared, morally as well, so as not to be caught. I remember asking the reporter his name, under the pretext that I had not caught it. In fact, he had not given it. The moment he told his name, – which sounded Hungarian – I smiled slightly and replied: “Thank you for the question. I am surprised however that our Hungarian friends have not informed you that the party of the Hungarian minority in Romania is among those who support my candidature most decisively, and according to the statements of its leaders, the entire Hungarian minority will vote for me.” It was no longer necessary to answer the question he had really asked. The chairman of the press conference gave the floor to another reporter, whose question was about other atrocities, this time against the Russian minority from in the Dniester area, as well as about the imperialist policy of the Romanian state. I think under X-ray his forehead would have said KGB in large letters. I answered that I was born in Tighina, on the Dniester shore, that as rector of the University of Bucharest I had often visited my colleagues in Kishinev and I could give him first-hand information, if he was interested in how things re-

ally were. It was a useful lesson, even if one-sided, which revealed a few advantages of quick and informal answers, appreciated by the Western press. It was fortunately completed by informal meetings – much more useful – with editors – in-chief truly interested in Romanian politics, which subsequently took place in hotel lounges or at newspaper headquarters.

Body Language

1 August 1992, London

A warm day, even hot, no clouds in the sky. The visit to Great Britain was organised by Maurice Macmillan, member of the board of the Union of Right-Wing European Parties, son of Harold Macmillan, former leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of Great Britain between 1957 and 1963. The schedule includes a meeting at the headquarters of the Conservative Party, in which all the vice-presidents of the then governing party took part, as well as a visit to the Foreign Office, where I was to be received by the State Secretary of the Foreign Office, Douglas Hurd.

After the close of the meeting at the Conservative Party, Corneliu Coposu stays behind for a discussion with the vice-presidents, while Macmillan and I get in one of the famous London cabs – small, black and tall to make room for top hats – and head to the Foreign Office. Since it was rather early, Macmillan invites me to a small pub, where we have a sandwich, after which we set off on foot, discretely escorted by two agents, for the Foreign Office. The plate at the entrance reads the full name: Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I was not, therefore, entering an ordinary ministry of external affairs, but an institution which managed the very special relationships, still extant, between the former metropolis of an empire large as the world and most of its former colonies, many of which are now important states on the world map. I had read two years before that the Foreign Office was created at the end of the 18th century, and the construction of the main buildings which now hold the Foreign and Commonwealth Office generated in the second half of the century a *battle of styles*. The building I was entering, finished in 1868, 125 years after the start of the construction, is a testimony in stone of the victory of the classic over the gothic style, and paradoxically, over the Byzantine style, which was also proposed at one time.

After crossing the threshold I was impressed by the sumptuous interior, so unlike the traditional British simplicity. Walking up the steps of the monumental staircase leading to the Secretary's office with Macmillan by my side, with whom I had had a pleasant chat, I found myself lowering my voice, as though I were reluctant to disturb the echo of the footsteps of those who had climbed these stairs coming from the remotest corners of the immense Commonwealth. Great people from New Zealand, Australia, the great countries of Asia, North or South America have been climbing these steps for over a century. I said to myself that the lavishness of the ornaments was deliberate, so that those who used to come from the far-off colonies should be overwhelmed from the very start by the greatness of the British empire. Every step I climbed, I straightened by back the more, because, at that moment more than during any other meeting I had had, I realized that, though only a candidate, I was running for a fundamental institution of the state which represents the Romanian people. When we were greeted by Secretary Hurd, I found myself shaking his hand in a solemn manner, a little too solemn for the informality of the occasion.

We sat down. The discussion was rather uneasy at first. I would meet Douglas Hurd again later and realize that he was a refined intellectual, author of some charming *novels* and very genial. But then, seated in his chair in his office as head of the Commonwealth, he looked very stiff. I unwittingly adopted a similar attitude. He brought up the Romanian revolution. Speaking of it with the abrupt sincerity of one who had taken part in the event and had not read certain things, I noticed that my interlocutor becomes more and more interested. When I was leaving, he shook my hand very warmly at the door, which is very rare for a British diplomat. Body language is very important in diplomacy; I learned to decipher it gradually. Gestures often show you better than words where you stand, what your position is in a tacit hierarchy, what your personal position is – below or next to that of your country in a given moment – and how you can best serve your country.

Deutsche Verband

3 August 1992, Bonn

In Germany Christian Democracy has been governing for 45 years. Our interlocutors treat us like colleagues, in a remarkable frank and friendly manner. We feel at home in their offices. I feel as on a field trip in an unknown area, but with a well-trained team. I can easily i-

Imagine them on mountain tracks, in Bavarian shorts, wearing green hats with a cock's feather. We have lunch at the Parliament restaurant so as not to waste time. I am more known in these political circles. In 1991 I took part in the international annual conference held in Munich by the Hanns Seidel Foundation and I visited the seat of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. I was glad to see Manfred Woerner, the federal minister of Defence, whom I had met in Munich a year before. A wonderful man. I also met Theo Weigel, federal minister of Finances, and the leader of the parliamentary majority in Bundestag.

Capital and Dividends

January 1997, Brussels

I am preparing with Zoe Petre and Adrian Severin the high level meetings agenda for the year 1997. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is sending an enormous *dusty* documentation. Official invitations, letters of intention, mostly unanswered for the past ten years. I am thinking of the 1992 tour in Germany, France, Great Britain, Holland, Belgium.

Now, when I am beginning to understand the difficulty of organising a diplomatic visit, how busy those who occupy important positions are, I can hardly imagine how the project could have been carried out – a tour at this level, prepared within a week, is an unattainable performance.

This impressive performance has demonstrated the respect Corneliu Coposu enjoyed in countries then run by Christian democratic or conservative parties and the importance of being supported by political families.

All in all, the 1992 tour went beyond a technical initiation. Although I would not win the 1992 elections, the idea that a democratic and credible opposition was possible in Romania gained ground, and this changed Romania's image of a neo-communist country with no perspective of change.

My initiation into external politics thus took place from top to bottom and not the other way round, uncommon for someone in the opposition. The relationships forged at that time would last long. When the Dutch and Belgian prime ministers made official visits to Romania the following years, they requested a meeting with a leader of the opposition whom they knew. These requests, common in countries with long democratic traditions, were however unusual in Romania. But they could not be refused and this brought us closer to the style of western democracies.

When Manfred Woerner was elected Secretary General of NATO, he received me as leader of the opposition in Brussels, and similar examples can be quoted with all those I had met in 1992.

The conclusions of those sudden visits to the five great European capitals helped me prepare, with my colleagues from that time, impressive files on foreign policy issues. The talks I had with high-level officials during the following four years in the opposition were more substantial and accurate because of my apprenticeship in 1992. Owing to having carefully maintained the relationships, – through small but meaningful gestures – I am not unknown in the decision zones of power in many western countries, which will help me gain precious time in the difficult period to come.

But above all I had the opportunity of an initiation journey and a master. Which is not anyone's privilege.

WAR IN THE KITCHEN***The Classics Cinema****June 2001, Elefterie 44*

Mugur Isărescu, on a friendly afternoon call. I offer him English tea, made of Ceylon tea leaves from Harrod's. It's ruby-red and strong and keeps one awake till dawn. He brings me a present for my birthday, which happened to be some seven months ago. It's just that neither of us could find the time for a nice peaceful meeting. Now it's here. The present is an old Dutch engraving. A flag ship, sails blown full by the wind, leading the fleet towards victory, Mugur says. Which victory, I wonder? As for now we talk with the relaxation of people speaking about the storm after they have landed in a harbour, about the former government; not about its achievements, but about its style. Costache Teleagă state counselor with the President's Office and the coordinator of its relationship with the Executive, who attended all Government meetings, would draw a report of the debates after each meeting. It was a very special kind of report, just as he was a very special kind of man. We were group-mates at the Law School and I know him rather well. He's got a BA-degree in Legal Science and Spanish Language and Literature, an MA-degree in Political Science obtained in Holland and France. As for his dreams, they have forever been dedicated to something else, to becoming an actor or a writer. Thus, his reports are a kind of one-act plays. If he's ever to publish them (which seems to be the fashion at the moment) we're in for a good read. A Trilogy of government under the Constantinescu Administration, featuring three completely different characters, each of which, however, in his own way, was the man of the day, above the water, below the water, resting on the shore...

I ask Mugur how he managed to chair the Government meetings. He says that he prepared himself by reading the shorthand reports of the meetings of the previous two Governments. Some kind of literature! He says that when reading the 1997 reports he was astounded by the obscenities Bănescu told Ciorbea and by the fact that none of

the PNT ministers stood up for him, while the PD ministers kept him under permanent fire, while the Vasile Cabinet was led by Băsescu, and Radu Vasile was down on PNT ministers.

He brings me to an idea. I, too, ask Mugur Ciuvică for copies of agendas and shorthand reports of meetings, phone calls and letters. When linked together they reveal unexpected, sometimes even most amazing connections. It's just like in an old movie from the Classics Cinema. When you know the end you can see better the setting and the actors in the middle ground and all those details which you have overlooked upon the first watching.

It is an interesting exercise for those who only go to the premieres.

The Flare

27 December 1997, Cotroceni

On my desk I find *Evenimentul Zilei* newspaper on the top of the folder with papers to be signed. It must be something important since Mihaela has taken it out from the newspaper pile. It is indeed, for in it I read a long interview by the Minister of Transport, Traian Băsescu who launches a violent attack against the Prime Minister who, he says, chairs long inefficient Government meetings, is incapable to make decisions, as well as against PNTCD – an obsolete party in the Romanian political environment, he says. Hence reform stagnation is *their* fault.

Monday, 29 December 1997

Let's rumble! In the middle of the Government meeting Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea demands of Băsescu either to resign or to take back his statements in the interview published by *Evenimentul Zilei*. Premier Victor Ciorbea announces his agreement with the resignation of the Minister of Transport. Break.

Saturday, 3 January 1998, Sinaia

I have to interrupt my vacation and come back to Bucharest for a TV show on the feuds within the Government.

The truth is that as long as the governing coalition is made up of three coalitions – CDR, comprising several parties; USD, made up of Petre Roman's party and Cunescu's Social-Democrats and the much more disciplined but in fact politically highly heteroclitic, since it has been set up exclusively on ethnic grounds, UDMR, it is quite natural

that feuds should arise. The public opinion, which had been used for decades to the "unanimity" of the communists and the "unity of the whole people" proclaimed by them, and then to the PDSR monolithic administration which followed, was overreacting to the feuds. If you add to all this some histrionic characters who loved to think they were television stars, at the expense of denigrating their colleagues, the situation could appear to be serious before growing tiring and most unpleasant.

The Government had determinedly moved on to the most difficult part of their program painful and likely to encounter obstacles. Even since the winter of 1997 the total convertibility of our currency had entailed a skyrocketing inflation which had been immediately brought under control, but by then it had already affected the purchase power of the Romanians. In August massive redundancies in the mining branch and all kinds of rather unorthodox manoeuvres as to the famous state-owned companies which were about to become bankrupt, had triggered violent reactions. Considerable economic interests began to clash. The two mediating bodies COCPO and COCOPA, set up ad-hoc, their acronyms looking as if especially created by the *Academia Catavencu* magazine to be as ridiculous as possible, only managed to make one laugh, without succeeding to mediate real negotiations.

On the other hand Victor Ciorbea was acting rather inconsistently. He genuinely believed in the necessity of reform-making and knew exactly what he had to do. His honesty and rigidity didn't make him a good negotiator. He would work like a slave, he had learnt a great deal but he would take too long to make a decision, maybe also because of the fact that he overworked. Indeed, the Government meetings seemed to be everlasting with the premier hoping that a consensus would be reached, which was as much necessary as it was impossible.

Two apparently minor incidents served to make the situation worse. On the one hand, as a suggestion of the Civic Alliance, Valerian Stan was appointed Head of the Control Department of the Prime Minister. He was the kind of person who seemed to be determined to do justice, but who had his own interests to follow with the Government. He began to openly make use of his position more and more in order to break the already fragile cohesion within the coalition. He systematically re-opened cases through which the Văcăroiu Cabinet had tried to compromise the leaders of the Democratic Party, despite the fact that these cases had been closed by the Public Prosecution Department even before the elections. He organized press-conferences

whenever he thought fit, in which he exposed the Democratic ministers of the Ciorbea Cabinet for living in houses with so many rooms or in apartments to which they weren't entitled, and so on and so forth. This enthusiasm to do justice would have been admirable, had it really been an attempt to general cleansing. But as it was, it only seemed – and in many cases it even was – mere political teasing, with no other outcome but dissent.

A certain justice mythology was created around the Civic Alliance to which even I had immediately fallen prey. Starting from the correct assumption that civicism means self-sacrifice not privilege, I refused any exterior mark of public office. Not only had I promised not to move to Cotroceni (I had meanwhile learned that Iliescu before me hadn't lived there either) but Caramitru was trying to persuade me to move the Ministry of Culture into the Presidential residence. After the elections I consulted a team of experts and when I found out how many billion Lei the whole operation would cost I abandoned the idea. Other people did not.

I didn't have a flash-light attached to my car – it's true, though, that nobody congratulated me for it – and I think that only the drivers bored by waiting at the traffic-lights suddenly realized that I was the bearded man on the other lane, waiting just as patiently as they were for the traffic-lights to turn green. But I didn't compel my ministers to travel by bus either. I would also often walk to my office, because I wanted to see people too, not just councilors and folders. I don't suppose I would have raised anything but irony if I had traveled to a summit on my own, second class, on an airliner. I couldn't afford being an "original" President. I had to prove that I was the normal representative of a normal country. Travelling to Lisbon on an Antonov military aircraft or on TAROM planes would have made Romania look ridiculous.

Valerian Stan was pushing to the extreme the proletcultist rhetoric of some of the leading members of the Civic Alliance, which he was handling with great dexterity, thus succeeding to worsen the already bad relationships inside the Government. Victor Ciorbea had asked his subordinate in front of all his ministers not to call any press conference without his consent, which was a very legitimate thing to ask, since Stan was the head of the Control Department subordinated to the Premier. Immediately after that Stan called for a press conference in which he openly revealed attempts to "cover" the corrupt elements within the PD. Exasperated, Victor Ciorbea dismissed the new Robe-

spierre, and then phoned to inform me of his decision and ask for my support. In order to avoid having to face the anger of the Civic Alliance he subsequently made a public statement saying that I had imposed it on him, to take this measure. As it was what we had decided upon from the beginning, I didn't contradict him but it really hurt me to see that all ministers, including the leaders of the Civic Alliance, who had watched the ultimatum presented by the PD and Ciorbea's give-in, didn't take a public stand against it.

Leaving aside these sad, even if humanly understandable minor instances of cowardice, the "I-didn't-want-to-do-it-but-the-President-made-me-do-it" idea, which was far from being Victor Ciorbea's monopoly during the four-year term of the Constantinescu administration, is still a matter which grieves and irritates me because it is childishly untrue. What do they mean "the President made me do it"? My closest collaborators would contradict me ten times a day; they would bring their arguments, I would bring mine if I had the time, and if I didn't – well, that was it. Sometimes they were right, some other times I was right. It also happened that they didn't convince me and then I asked them to do as I had decided. I knew it and they knew it that if our disagreement was a serious one, we would simply go our separate ways. They could resign and go back to their own business, probably with regrets on both sides. But they were my team. Others – the prime minister, heads of the political parties, MPs, or ministers – weren't answerable directly to me. If I succeeded in convincing them of the rightfulness of my point of view it was all right. If not, then things would go on as they had been so far. Each of us had his own freedom of opinion, freedom of action, responsibility. I could go wrong, they could go wrong but that didn't mean that I could either constitutionally or by my own nature punish them for not thinking like me. Thus, that excuse of a school-boy caught cheating has never seemed worthy of adult people, to me. On the other hand Ciorbea was not considered an authentic member of the PNCTD by many of the fellow leaders of the PNTCD. As he had but recently joined the party he was often treated like an intruder, and not only by Radu Vasile, who had a bitter grudge against him on account of his rapid ascension within the party. Some well-meaning voices had suggested Radu Vasile to appoint him head of a District Organization in Bucharest, which seemed to me below the former PM of Romania. Then I asked President Diaconescu to help him become vice-president of the PNTCD. He understood, even if he

was somewhat reluctant about it, and so it was done. This appointment has endangered even more envy, and Victor Ciorbea thought it necessary to show even more devotion to the PNTCD. Its effect upon the Government was strange: the Democratic ministers teased him for his exaggerated dedicatedness to the PNTCD, while the PNTCD never sided with him, because they were angry at having been overtaken by him in the party hierarchy. Somewhere between them, the Liberals had their own interests to mind. Ciorbea had made public his decision to demand the resignation of any member of the Cabinet who would criticize publicly the activity of the Government. Fuming with anger Basescu gave the insulting interview which triggered the reaction. On the same day Ciorbea told him to step down instantly and this is how the crisis started.

Wednesday, 7 January 1998

Thunderbolt: The National Permanent Committee of the PD has decided to request keeping in office the resigning Minister of Transport.

Thursday, 8 January 1998

On Wednesday, 14 January the PD is calling a meeting of the Council for National Co-ordination, made up of over 400 people, who will probably adopt the most radical solution.

During their visit in Hungary, when things had begun to take a serious turn for the worse, Victor Ciorbea said in front of Remus Opris and the Minister for Minorities, Gyorgy Tokay, that the PD had planned a scandal, and “later on, some time in April or May” even their withdrawal from the Government, but that Basescu had speeded up the events.

The truth is that the PD had received a larger number of seats in the Government than their electoral percentage. Their strategy was a very clever one. Either they renegotiated their share with the other coalition parties and got even more than what they already had or, as a last-ditch movement, withdrew from the Government at a time when unpopular indispensable urgent measures would seriously have damaged their popularity.

May 2002

(I don't believe it now, as I didn't believe it then, that they really wanted to withdraw from the Government. Looking back without

anger I wonder what did part the friendship between Radu Vasile and Traian Băsescu, now both members of the same party, play in that sketch. All in all, at the end of the crisis which caused us much more damage compared with its altogether minor importance, what the PD leaders had to gain were not only some more quite significant seats, but moreover, a PM they trusted and who was to support first of all the Minister of Transport beyond every possible expectation.)

Tuesday, 13 January 1998

I meet the delegation of the Union of Romanian-Hungarian Friendship Association Union.

I decide to write a letter to the Co-ordination Council of the PD which meets tomorrow. I make it my duty to do so because I have accepted the task of being the warrant of a global reform of the Romanian economy and society, which the long conflicting debates within the coalition or even a break-up of the coalition might compromise. Reform-making, consolidating democracy and its institutions, European and Euro-Atlantic integration, all this united us a year ago. These top priorities for our national interest haven't changed as our will to serve it has not changed. When you play in a team what you see best and hurts most are the mistakes of your team-mates. I believe that it's exactly in these situations that we have to stick together. If this crisis within the coalition helps us analyze with courage and friendship its term of office, it could end in a mutual commitment capable to prevent malfunctions.

Wednesday, 14 January 1998

With 444 votes in favour, 15 against and 6 abstentions the Council for Co-ordination of the PD adopts an ultimatum which demands the coalition partners to negotiate the formation of a new Government until 31 March. Otherwise, beginning with that date the PD will withdraw from the Government. The PD does not give up but puts it off. In two months and a half there is a possibility that things may take a turn for the better.

Sunday, 18 January 1998

I call for a meeting with the leaders of the coalition parties at Scroviștea. After long debates we decide that the Government should assume the responsibility in front of the Parliament for the Act on accel-

erating privatization. Thus the Parliament, the only body entitled by the Constitution to decide whether what we have is a Government crisis or not, becomes the main actor in accordance with the powers vested in it by the law.

But few of the witnesses or even of the participants in this conflicting situation have proved that they understand it from a constitutional point of view. The newspapers keep writing CRISIS in capital letters and nobody wonders anymore if the term is appropriate. A Government crisis would have been the situation in which the Cabinet lost its support from the Parliament. Whereas what we're currently facing is just a conflict inside the Government. Passing a law under governmental responsibility only means two things: if the law is adopted it means that the Government has the required majority and can continue their term of office; if it is rejected the Government automatically steps down and negotiations begin to form a new Cabinet. Further on, if the Parliament rejects by ballot at least two ministerial proposals, then early elections must be called for.

Monday, 19 January 1998

I send a letter to premier Victor Ciorbea. I announce him that in my message to the Parliament, I have called for the meeting of the two Chambers in an extraordinary session to speed up the process of passing the laws on acceleration of economic reform-making, and suggested that the debates be resumed on Wednesday, 21 January. Analyzing the situation brought about by the growing disputes within the coalition regarding the slow rhythm of reform-making, I consider it fit for the Government, in accordance with Paragraph 13 of the Constitution, to take responsibility in front of the Parliament for an important piece of legislation regarding the acceleration of economic reform-making. I also ask the Government to hand in to the Parliament more quickly the bill on establishing salaries in the state-owned sector in accordance with the average gross income, so that it be read together with the second reading of the bill on indemnities for the high officials. This bill had been adopted in both Chambers, but they refused to pass it. I didn't consider it right to make raising the indemnities for the high officials the priority, without considering raising the salaries of the people working in the budget sector, too. I let it be known I disagreed with the quantum for raising the indemnities, including that of the President.

The bill was returned to the Parliament. I want to see how many MPs will vote in favour of revising the bill which favours them directly.

Wednesday, 21 January 1998

The Ciorbea Cabinet assumes responsibility in front of the Parliament, assembled in extraordinary session in order to vote the bill of approval of the decree on accelerating the privatization of companies.

I consider early elections would have been ill-timed at that moment: reform-making had started but it would have stopped if the position of our country in international negotiations had collapsed even if only temporarily. The economy was still extremely fragile, so that the risks were too big. But I considered it necessary for the Ciorbea Cabinet to get a vote of confidence (or to fail) by the will of the Parliament.

Unfortunately either of the two happened. Paradoxically enough, even if they have made all kinds of warlike statements, the members of the PD vote enthusiastically in favour of the bill. But nobody, not even the PNTCD sees it as a vote of confidence in the Government. The next day the scandal breaks out again, this time even more violently.

The PDSR too brings its subtle contribution to the breaking up of the coalition. Through Ion Iliescu's voice they promise prospective support to a minority Ciorbea Cabinet, provided that the Government and the ruling majority make a commitment not to give back any property to its owner.

Saturday, 24 January 1998

Adrian Nastase tells Răsvan Popescu on the phone that the PDSR could support a minority Ciorbea Cabinet if the idea of returning property is given up.

Monday, 26 January 1998

The same idea is reiterated by the President of the PDSR, Ion Iliescu in a TV program: supporting a minority Ciorbea Cabinet is possible but with a firm commitment – no kind of *restitutio*, either partial or, so much the least *in integrum*.

Tuesday, 27 January 1998

The Political Council of the PD decides that the ministers and their

aids should withdraw from the Government, and hand in their resignations at the beginning of the Cabinet meeting. The leaders of the party decide that the PD should stay in the coalition and give the Government parliamentary support.

Wednesday, 28 January 1998

9 a.m. I have invited Victor Ciorbea at my place, on Pangratti str. The atmosphere is now calmer and friendlier. He needs encouraging. It's been over a month since Băsescu's interview and the situation hasn't become any clearer, on the contrary, it becomes more and more complicated: the Democrat ministers have announced their resignation but still participate in the Government's meetings; the PNL declares its formal support to the Ciorbea Cabinet but more and more leaders make public their doubts as to the sustainability of the current Government; within the PNTCD Radu Vasile and his supporters openly display their satisfaction, while the UDMR are worried about the fact that the laws directly regarding the Hungarian community (amending the Law on education and the Law on enlarging local autonomy) will no longer be read and passed by the Parliament.

We decide together, Ciorbea and I, to take the bull by the horns. I will call the parties for negotiations at Cotroceni tonight. If the PD won't revise their position until tomorrow, their ministers will be replaced.

8 p.m. Meeting with the leaders of the PD in the Ambassador's Hall. Roman's absence, he is in Strasbourg, the delegation made up of Victor Babiuc, Bogdan Niculescu Duvăz, Alexandru Sassu, Sorin Frunză Verde, Bogdan Bujor Teodoroiu (who has an amazing capacity of speaking aggressively for hours on end getting on everybody's nerves) is led by Băsescu himself.

I watch Băsescu and I see him fretting. Finally, it's the scandal he likes. I let him use up his ammunition. He fires away complaining about poorly prepared tedious Government meetings; inefficiency; desperate last-moment measures; lack of coherence; Ciorbea's inability to deal with the disputes within his own party; his behaviour as if the Cabinet were made up of members from a single party, lack of mutual trust among the members of the coalition. He also comes up with three suggestions: Government shuffle as a starting point to re-launch the economy; Government restructuring; Home Office restructuring (I wonder why Dejeu has upset them so much). They are right to some

extent but I draw their attention upon the fact that this crisis does a lot of damage to Romania. The people have had enough of this strife and it must come to an end.

In my statement to the press at the end of the meeting, I say that the situation must be solved quickly starting from the negative effects the prolonged Governmental crisis has upon the public opinion in Romania as well as upon Romania's interests in the international context, which are the European and Euro-Atlantic integration and the need to attract foreign investors. We shall see how quickly that will happen.

11.25 p.m. Meeting with the leaders of the PNTCD, PD, PNL, UDMR, and PSDR.

Thursday, 29 January 1998

Resigning ministers from the PD come to the Government meeting.

So far the resignations have only been announced, none of them has handed in a written one.

Fog Rises at Noon

Davos, Sunday, 1 February 1998

At the World Economic Forum in Davos the business and financial elite of the world, managers of companies whose turnover is higher than the GDP of many countries are gathered. If you're in Davos, you're either at the top, or interesting for those at the top. During the meetings with the business tycoons I resume the presentation of arguments in favour of investing in Romania, which I began here a year ago and have continued in the meantime on a number of different occasions.

The newspaper reporters who accompany me in Davos are much more interested in the conflicts in Bucharest and, after a serious talk in which we consider political stability in Romania as a guarantee for foreign investment I tell them I am disgusted by the way these political disputes damage the interests of my country. Mediafax takes over the news correctly, but the newspapers cut it as they wish and the following phrase is broadcast in Romania: "Constantinescu – disgusted by politics".

Monday, 2 February 1998

3 a.m. Otopeni airport. I return from Davos. The waiting hall adjacent to the official lobby is filled to the brim with TV cameras and journalists. Much fuss has been made about my spontaneous phrase in

Davos. "How do you explain your statement in Davos?" "I regret the wording but I confirm the cause of the statement on political crisis."

12 p.m. Cotroceni, the Ambassadors' Hall. I meet a PDSR delegation, headed by Vice-President Adrian Năstase. The PDSR is the cock on the walk. Speaking smoothly as usual Năstase is acting like the tough guy imposing numberless conditions on initiating a political dialogue with the governing parties.

2 p.m. Victor Ciorbea phones to tell me that the five PD ministers have presented their resignations, and to ask me what to do next.

Bogdan Duvăz makes a ten-point statement to the press in which he gives his reasons. At least things are a little bit clearer now. The same evening I have a long talk with Ion Diaconescu and a meeting with the PNL leaders.

Replacement of the resigning ministers is decided. The only one left from the old team is Andrei Plesu, in charge with the Foreign Office. I had asked him and Victor Babiuc, the Minister for National Defense to agree to stay in the Government for the continuity of our Euro-Atlantic integration. Babiuc, the vice-President of the Democratic Party, will not be able to stay, even if he wishes to. Plesu, having fewer political obligations, will be in the shuffled Government, too.

Monday, 9 February 1998

9 p.m. Lake 2 Villa. More than five hours' meeting with the members of the Permanent Board of the PNL. Even if officially the PNL still supports the Ciorbea Cabinet, several Liberal leaders express their mistrust as to the chances of survival of the current Cabinet.

Tuesday, 10 February 1998

315 votes "in favour" and 121 "against". The Parliament validate the panel of new ministers replacing the Democrat ones.

I'm really quite realistic about the cohesion of the new Government. They will have to face the supreme test of any Executive – The Budget Law. Without the support of all the parties in the coalition, this law can't pass through. I attempt the impossible. I call for a meeting of the Budget – Finance Commission at Cotroceni, hoping to get support for getting the Budget Law through the Parliament.

Wednesday, 11 February 1998

8 a.m. Union Hall. The new ministers are sworn in. Constantin Dudu Ionescu goes to the Ministry for National Defense, Anton Iones-

cu – to the Ministry of Transport, Ioan Muresan is the new Minister for the Relationship with the Parliament, Horia Ene is the Research Minister, and Romica Tomescu – the Minister of the Environment. The last two ones are highly qualified experts whom I know well. Horia Ene, an outstanding mathematician, is the representative of the PAR party. Romica Tomescu, the Director of the Forestry Institute, is the most suitable person for a ministry with huge responsibilities in the time to come.

Thursday, 19 February, 1998

I promulgate the Law on speeding up the privatization of trade companies.

5 p.m. Meeting with the PNTCD leaders: Ion Diaconescu, Gabriel Tepelea and Ionescu Galbeni. President Diaconescu believes there are three possible variants: the Cabinet's resignation and setting up of a new government with the same majority; a national coalition Cabinet; or anticipated general elections.

We decide to test the Parliament's perception on the budget law: if it passes, the government stays; if it does not, the government will go. The same will stand in connection with the Reform Programme: if it passes, the government will stay in office, if not – a new government will be formed, with the same parties representation.

I am going to meet all the parliamentary groups and the members of the budget-finance commissions, so as to ask them to declare their position on the Budget Law.

23 February 1998

3 p.m. Union Hall Meeting with members of the Economic- and Budget-Finance Commissions, together with the respective Ministers. I ask them to express their position on the Budget Law Draft.

7 p.m. Union Hall. Following their request I meet the PNL parliamentary group, that ask for replacement of Premier Ciorbea. Traian Decebal Remes says that the liberals consider the premier's replacement to be an inevitable solution. He concludes passionately: "Mr. President, allow us to support a different government".

24 February 1998

8.30 p.m. Meeting with the PNTCD and the PNL leaders at "Lac 2" villa. The PNTCD members had started coming in separate groups.

Radu Vasile's group start an open discussion in favour of Ciorbea's dismissal. Diaconescu candidly tells me a story about his meeting with Ana Blandiana and Petre Mihai Băcanu who asked him to give up Ciorbea, while Ciorbea is facing everybody present. Blandiana proposed Marga as a Prime Minister, as he is an intellectual, Rector of the University of Cluj, but Diaconescu disagrees, on account of the fact that Marga has never been considered to be a member of the PNTCD, until his appointment as Minister of Education.

25 February 1998

5.30 p.m. I receive senator Radu Vasile, who acknowledges his faults *mea culpa* and asks me to appoint him presidential counsellor on economic issues, or, Prime-Minister. When leaving, he asks me to give him a bigger portrait, with my autograph, for his desk.

Monday, 2 March 1998

7 p.m Meeting with the parliamentary groups, PNTCD ministers and prefects.

There is tension in the air, whispers go on, Radu Vasile enters and exits from the room, either alone or with others. Boilă wants the PNTCD to withdraw from government.

I ask them not to quarrel among themselves or with allies in governance, to be careful about the public opinion's perception on the PNTCD, to build up a coherent policy for communication and image. I don't feel they take things seriously at all. They say they are going to vote for the budget.

Tuesday, 3 March 1998

7 p.m. The meeting with the UDMR parliamentary group makes a clear difference from the others: perfect discipline, no one is late, no mobile phone rings, no one goes out for a cigarette. Each speaker intervenes for exactly 3 minutes, seriously and competently, on a general issue linked to the budget law (2 minutes) and on one related to the Magyar minority (1 minute). They declare they will support the budget.

Friday, 6 March 1998

According to the CURS opinion polls made public last Wednesday, the CDR has gone down in the last three months by 14%, from 42 % to 27.9%, while the USD has increased by 10% (from 8% to

18%). The aggressive PD game bears fruit. Plus some slight exaggeration of the percentage, which – who knows? – may serve a bit.

2 p.m. Meeting with the PAR parliamentarians: although they are very critical about the PNTCD, they will support the budget.

7 p.m. The PD parliamentary group has been invited for talks. Only a few leaders appear, who denounce Victor Ciorbea's inefficiency and conflicts with the PNTCD. They announce they will not vote for the budget as long as Ciorbea is Prime-Minister.

Tuesday, 10 March 1998

7 p.m. Meeting with the PDSR parliamentary group, headed by Florin Georgescu, who is arrogant and preaches lessons every time he seizes the opportunity. They severely criticize the budget and they declare that in the present form, they will never vote for it.

9 p.m. Meeting with the UDMR representatives, dissatisfied with the ceaseless conflicts and with the appointment of Andrei Marga as Minister of Education. They had had several clashes while he was Rector of the of Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj. The blockade in the Education Commission of the Emergency Ordinance in the summer of 1997 on the issue of the Magyar University worried them extensively.

I must admit that throughout the four years of coalition rule, the UDMR has been a very tough negotiator, but a reasonable and very loyal partner. They did not cease fighting, with no concession, for their own claims, but they did not betray our cause. I do hope that they also consider me a loyal partner. I have always shared with them my point of view. As an academic, I made no secret from the fact that while I favoured the idea of an integrated, pluralist university that would observe the diversity of cultural identities, I constantly rejected a solution based on the other's exclusion, be they Hungarian, German, Romanian, Roma or anything else.

10 p.m. Meetings with the PUNR and the PRM groups have the same result: neither of them will vote for the budget.

Tuesday, 17 March 1998

The Senate rejected Ordinance 22, that provides extension of the local autonomy in the sense required by the Magyars (including bilingual boards). Beyond all confusions, the main artisan of this defeat is

PNTCD Senator George Pruteanu. This is an awkward history that I now regret: I myself had proposed him on the PNTCD lists, at the onset of the campaign in 1996, when he had charmed us all with his vivacity and fervour on the PRO TV talk shows that brought him tremendous popularity. An inborn actor, very witty, too. I had seen him with my own eyes in Universitatii Square, which he never ceased invoking as a confirmation of his political identity, sitting at a table waiting for people to sign for his candidature as an independent candidate. I knew he had no chance. It seemed inconceivable to me to see him humiliated to that extent, so I talked with the PNTCD leaders. The party would have gained some image if they had put Pruteanu on their list. Quite uncautiously, I ardently talked to them about his democratic beliefs, which seemed a certainty to me. I convinced him, in fact he let himself be convinced, not easily, as he was cunning enough to want to candidate for the Senate, but not in Giurgiu. Thus he came to be senator of Constantza.

Then I ought to be more suspicious about the fact that, after so long a time when he had been busy and unable to talk, now, all of a sudden, he found time for a four-hour discussion, when he only talked about money: how much money he would need for the campaign, for trips throughout the country, how desperate he was because Sârbu had not paid him for the April interviews (although he continued recordings of further PRO TV interviews). Instead, after the funding issues were solved quite favourably, he disappeared at the seaside and I hardly heard of him until the 17th of November. After the PNTCD show and demagogy that had been ordered to him, he came back to his real friends from the PRM and PDSR.

7 p.m. Meeting with the PDSR leaders. President Ion Iliescu denounced the "wild reform", praising Romanian (socialist) industry and calls for anticipated elections in the autumn of 1999.

Thursday, 19 March, 1998

5 p.m. Meeting with the ApR leaders. Melescanu is boosting af-
front: he proposes a minority cabinet with ApR support.

7 p.m. Meeting with Victor Ciorbea and the PNTCD leaders, in the Ambassadors' Haal. In brief terms I inform them about the outcome of consultations. Ciorbea repeats for the seventh time within about two hours that if it is necessary, he will resign, but he is not convinced about his own statements.

Saturday- Sunday, 21-22 March, 1998

Reunion of Radu Vasile's group in Poiana Brasov. Dissidence seems to turn into a separation. They draft a platform for reforming the party. "Considering the alarming state of the economy, the permanent political crisis that led to the isolation of the PNTCD, the deterioration of Romania's image abroad" and concluding that accountable for this situation, the PNTCD, in its capacity of main governing party, was incriminated by the signatories to "have neglected the national dimension of the party"; the signatories, by associating themselves to "our great leaders, Maniu, Mihalache and Coposu", call for an urgent and effective solution to this crisis, to the benefit of the party.

"In this context, a lucid and realistic analysis of the present state of the party is necessary to be made in the largest forum. We believe that the political solutions such as anticipated elections, a national union government, a cabinet made of independent politicians are all unacceptable in these very difficult conditions in the country". In simple words, they wanted an extraordinary congress meant to change the leadership and provide Radu Vasile with the political support he needed.

Tuesday, 24 March 1998

6 p.m. I receive senator Radu Vasile in the presidential cabinet. He reiterates loyalty vows and assures me that the good side of the PNTCD supports him, not Ciorbea.

Wednesday, 25 March 1998

Valeriu Stoica publishes a letter addressed to the PNL Congress, due to be held at the end of the week, where he asks his liberal colleagues to strive for the reorganization of the coalition by a rapid change of the Prime Minister.

Thursday, 26 March 1998

The next day, in cabinet meeting Ciorbea asks for Stoica's resignation. He asks the liberal ministers to choose, by Saturday, between PNL and Prime Minister's Cabinet membership. Obviously, all the liberal ministers declare their solidarity with Stoica.

Saturday, 28 March 1998

The PNL Extraordinary Congress approves Stoica's letter and requires resignation of the Cabinet before voting on the budget.

The PNTCD empowers president of the party Diaconescu to approve Ciorbea's dismissal, but only after voting the budget.

Ministers Dăniel Daianu, Ilie Șerbanescu and Andrei Plesu also publish an open letter, asking for an end to the crisis.

The stick and the flag

Monday, 30 March 1998

10 a.m. Harnagea promptly sends me a translated version of a long article dedicated to Romania that was published in the reputed daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, that day (when, on Earth, have they had the time to already translate it?) and that was to appear (naturally!) in all the papers throughout the country. It was a relevant analysis. I remember the journalist. He had interviewed me and made me a very good impression. The article makes a brief survey of the conflict, then it relates a statement of the Prime Minister, who, during a televised talk had rejected the PD offer conditioning parliamentary support for the budget on his resignation, and had asked the liberals to decide on their position within two days.

The German newspaper also asserted that the PNTCD Secretary General, Radu Vasile, announced that the party was considering the possibility of putting an end to the crisis by making a new Cabinet.

12 a.m. Cotroceni, Ambassadors' Hall. The meeting of the Advisory Economic Council. All debates are under the sign of two events worth drawing the public opinion's attention in the country, and, as we could see, abroad as well: the 1998 budget debates in Parliament and replacement of the Cabinet. All the Palace open rooms are replete with domestic and international press representatives. At the end of the meeting, under the journalists' pressure, I must reveal "Polichinelle's secret": today there will be several events probably leading to setting up a new Cabinet. On behalf of the PAR, Varujan Vozganian asks for the resignation of the present Cabinet and new governing formulas.

1 p.m. The news goes that PD will initiate a censorship motion for changing Ciorbea's Cabinet.

1.15 p.m. Telephones in Victoria Palace keep ringing. The news-reel announces that the Premier will resign.

6.30 p.m. Victoria Palace Cabinet in session, headed by Prime Minister Ciorbea. The announcement goes that at 8 p.m. the Premier will make a public statement.

7 p.m. Cotroceni Palace. On the meeting with leaders of the majority coalition, we analyse the situation. The CDR Council, summoned urgently, declares, contrary to the PNL proposal, that they maintain their previous position that the budget for 1998 should be submitted to the Parliament concomitantly with negotiations for setting in place a new Cabinet.

8 p.m. From Victoria Palace Victor Ciorbea announces his resignation, "in an attempt to solve the political crisis that encumbers the reform".

His resignation is followed by my statement, in which I explain the constitutional ways of designating a new Government and I announce the agenda of the consultations with all the parliamentary party representatives, as well as designation of the Minister of State, the Minister of Domestic Affairs Gabriel Dejeu as Prime Minister ad-interim.

I express my hopes that, after a long crisis, all the political forces will now understand the urgency of a sustainable solution of this crisis and will cooperate so as to ensure coherent, powerful, and effective rule for Romania.

Tuesday, 31 March, 1998

I resume consultations with the majority leaders and we make public the PD decision to come back to government. We agree upon the fact that the PNTCD has to nominate the Prime Minister and that we shall resume the talks on Thursday, immediately after designation of the Premier.

The Civic Alliance releases a press communique, being of the opinion that the CDR chances in the future elections have decreased dramatically because of the policy of "repeated giving in" and "capitulations devoid of political or moral justifications as against the PD claims with no coverage".

Bearing in mind that the current crisis turned into a cynical show that the political class performs in front of the entire nation which is at the end of strength and patience, the Civic Alliance will not guarantee political acts that waste both the populations's sacrifices and its age-long hopes".

6 p.m. Consultations with the PDSR, headed by Ion Iliescu. He insists on the issue of anticipated elections within this current year. I explain to him why I consider such a wide political unrest to be both inappropriate and unnecessary. He proposes to have anticipated elections next spring. Bored, I give him some answer, like "if we live and keep safe and sound, we shall talk about it again". Serve me right!

With his characteristic cunning, he steps out at the end of the consultations and declares emphatically that “President Constantinescu has acknowledged Romania’s most serious situation and estimates that there are no recovery chances, and that the social tensions will be so threatening that the Government will no longer be capable to continue working and anticipated elections will be required”.

I deny this allegation immediately and most powerfully: “The President of Romania does not believe that anticipated elections would be necessary or useful – so much the less-imminent – within the current political context, whereby the setting up of a new coalition government may give the country a new chance of stability and progress”. The evening papers have already published Iliescu’s statement, while my denial will only appear tomorrow.

Wednesday, 1 April 1998

The enlarged BCCC Committee *nominates* Radu Vasile in the position of Prime Minister, with 42 votes out of the total number of 72. His counter candidates were Sorin Oprescu and Mircea Ciumara, who got 11 and 14 votes respectively.

1 p.m. I receive a PUNR delegation, headed by Valeriu Tabără, who says that they will not support the future Cabinet, irrespective of the programme that the Cabinet will submit to Parliament for approval, since they do not agree to including the UDMR in the Executive body.

3 p.m. I receive the ApR representatives who notify the proposed solutions, but they do not commit themselves to back the new team.

6 p.m. I receive the delegation of ethnic minorities represented in Parliament. They will back the new Cabinet. Generally speaking, all throughout these four years I have had a very good relationship with the minorities representatives, together we were able to overcome difficult moments, even the crisis of 1999 – when the representatives of the Serbian and Croatian minorities were divided and wary. We always respected each other, they accompanied me whenever I made an official visit in the country the language and culture of which were also theirs, and I think that my mandate brought up more cordiality and a sense of support in favour of their linguistic and cultural identity.

2 April, 1998

9 a.m. Following a new talk, which was rather formal, with the coalition leaders, we take note of the PNTCD proposal on the nominalization of the future Prime Minister.

11 a.m. I make an official statement, designating Radu Vasile, Secretary General of the PNTCD, for the position of Prime Minister. I mention that by April 15, Radu Vasile must ask Parliament for a vote of confidence for the new Cabinet and for the governing programme that he is going to carry out. I announce the first measures set down by the candidate: to call on a commission at Victoria Palace with the task of drafting the governing programme and of a commission which will work out the Cabinet checklist. I congratulate the Prime Minister designate and express my confidence that he will manage to give Romania a stable and effective Cabinet.

12.15 a.m. I meet Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General. He congratulates us on solving up the crisis and on the active policy in the region, we talk about the sensitive areas. He is a most charming, intelligent interlocutor. As a Spaniard, he understands the difficulties of building up a democratic system after decades of dictatorship much better than other political leaders.

15 April 1998

The reunited chambers of the Parliament vote the new Cabinet, led by Radu Vasile. The investiture is supported by the coalition parties, ApR included, while the PDSR and the PRM vote against it. The government checklist and programme is voted for by 317 parliamentarians, while 124 voted against.

17 April 1998 (Good Friday)

7 p.m. Prime Minister Radu Vasile and the members of the Cabinet are sworn in. I look at everyone of them, at the way they solemnly approach the table, read out the text of the *Constitution*, most of them also make the sign of the cross, then they sign up. It is the third ceremony since the elections. Will there be more, who knows? In Poland, four cabinets succeeded within one mandate, when they made the same reforms that now with over 7-year delay, we finally dare to commit ourselves too. I deeply regret that Victor Ciorbea, who had started off within an immense wave of enthusiasm and hopeful wishes, could not prevail at the head of the government up to the end. He is more persistent than today's joyful winner. Will he be able to patiently pull himself together so as to cope with the enormous burden that he so serenely commits himself to – today? Ciorbea is young, honest and has a promising perspective ahead. His merits are well known and appreci-

ated in the West. Despite the fact that the long crisis affected him too, in less than a year, his image may be rising again quite high in the public opinion's eyes. It is not only revolutions, it is radical reforms that devour their sons too. However, the crucial difference is that Reform cannot be built up on a guillotine.

Tuesday, 26 May 1998

The draft budget for 1998 is submitted to vote in Parliament and is approved with 231 votes "in favour", 129 "against" and 3 abstentions; PDSR, PUNR, PRM and ApR voted against the project. It is a different government, but the same majority and, mostly, the same opposition.

During all this time I have been wondering about what would happen if Italy, where government crises are more frequent than the flu epidemics, had the same propensity for dramatizing on similar situations. We also have Latin roots, we have the same culture of ample, often histrionic gestures and a perpetual temptation for showing off; the difference is that in Italy, governments come and go while economy is running well, the same as are the institutions. Here, the least sign of disfunction paralyses a mechanism too novel and often immature.

Now I am wondering what everyone of us has learnt from this first political crisis that the coalition went through. I, for one, have learnt that public opinion is practically traumatized by political seisms. I have also learnt that public opinion that did not expect such an early perturbation of the coalition considers it even more fragile than it really is. I realized that any solution to a similar crisis must be fast, firm, and radical.

Unfortunately, I have learnt that for many parliamentarians or even political leaders, the spirit and the letter of the *Constitution* are not as important as I consider them to be and I may seem too pedantic to them when I quote the limits of the president's powers in the fundamental law. I cannot turn into the teacher of the constitutional text of some refractory class, but I feel bound to preach a political pedagogy that I did not expect to have to resort to. My concern to rigorously observe the Parliament's prerogatives was overlooked even by its members, a fact that increased a crisis of pride and personal interests that lasted more than four months of reciprocal turbulence that finally led to a real political crisis.

Maybe if I had put some more pressure for a speedier solution, I should have been blamed for trying to impose my own solution on oth-

ers. In this way I was blamed for not having done so. Ultimately, it is better for me to commit to this blame for what I am doing – and to really do it – rather than for not doing it and running the risk to leave it undone for ever.

I have also learnt something else. The Romanian Democratic Convention has come to the end of its existence. To my mind, as to the mind of many of its supporters, the Convention had the mission to govern Romania until the basic reforms in the name of which it had been set up had been carried out. It seems I was wrong. The Democratic Convention was meant to bring to power a new political formula, but it cannot be – nor is it meant to be so – *the* formula in itself. The parties have become more and more autonomous, the civic organisations withdrew with the pride of those who prefer critical contemplation to political action. “Only together can we overcome” is no longer the creed of every player.

Let us see what we can do without being together.

THE FLIGHT CORRIDOR

The Supper Before

June 26, 1999, Iasi

After taking me to see how things are going with the building of the new chapel of the Metropolitan Church of Iasi, the Metropolitan Daniel invited me for supper with him. The conversation – joined in by the erudite Metropolitan Bishop Daniel, his guest, the Metropolitan Bishop of Finland and General Mircea Chelaru – moves towards the drama of the man who is forced into loneliness and exile. I am impressed by the readings from Dostoyevsky of the general who, in good English, discusses the road towards exile from *The House of the Dead*. We reach the conclusion that one of the remedies for strengthening the ties between people could be the revival of pilgrimages, for which the last year of the Second Millennium would be a good occasion. A route going along Finland-Romania-Greece-the Holy Land – so many experiences to rediscover!

The Risk of Dignity

27 June 1999, Botosani

We are getting ready to leave for Botosani, in order to join the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia for the consecration of a new church in a village to the north of the county, when the Presidential Counselor for National Security, Dorin Marian informs me that the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Defence have been asked by the homologous ministries of the Russian Federation to grant the permission to fly over Romania to Russian planes transporting troops towards Yugoslavia in the wake of the NATO agreement. Considering that Romania has granted this permission to NATO flights, it is difficult to give too direct a refusal to the Russians. I ask them to contact the State Department, in order to make the demand known, and I charge general Degeratu to negotiate the overflight conditions just as thoroughly as he has negotiated the access conditions for the NATO planes. On our way to Botosani and back I order my aide several times to pull over to

allow the intelligence officers to install the satellite aerial that ensures our safe connection with the General Staff. I am not worried because all throughout the Yugoslavian conflict, as well as throughout my term there has been a perfect cooperation between Foreign Minister Andrei Plesu, the Minister for National Defence Victor Babiuc, the Chief of the General Staff Constantin Degeratu and the presidency, based on our identical points of view that have made too frequent consultations or detailed directions useless. I know they would make the right decisions. During our first connection I am reported the conditions established for the overflight of the Russian airplanes and the contents of the discussions with the NATO Commandment and the United States, considering that the Romanian space is already under NATO administration, according to the agreement previously approved by Parliament. During our second connection General Degeratu lets me know that the first Russian plane has already crossed the Romanian territory on time and on the appointed route, but that the second plane, which is on the Romanian border with Ukraine, will enter the country thirty minutes earlier than it has commonly been agreed.

Pacta sunt servanda. Which is good reason for us to withdraw our overflight permission for the next planes, since agreements must always be respected. I ask that the decision be communicated simultaneously through a notification of the Foreign Ministry and through the connection between the Romanian and Russian General Staffs. At the same time I give orders that the second Russian plane be escorted on Romanian territory by our Military Aviation planes. The operation, which is executed by the Mig Lancers from airports in Buzău and Craiova, takes place without any incidents, as the Russian plane strictly respects the flight corridor.

After returning to Iasi, I stop by the headquarters of the 10th Army Corps. After receiving the duty report I go up to the office of the commander, General Chelaru, in order to contact General Degeratu once more. There I receive the answer of the Russian Foreign Minister, who respects the overflight interdiction for the next Russian planes and presents his excuses. General Degeratu confirms the fact that the radars on the Ukrainian territory have not signalled any other Russian military planes on their way towards Romania. I hang up the phone with a feeling of relief. I sit still at the desk for a few minutes, my eyes fixed on the flag of the 10th Army Corps. When I look away, I see General Chelaru saluting, clearly moved.

'Mr. President, do you realize what historical significance this day has for us, Romanians? Today we commemorate 59 years since the Romanian troops withdrew from Basarabia, following the ultimatum of the Soviet Government in 1940. It is the first time in modern Romanian history when Russia obeys a Romanian ultimatum. As a soldier I feel proud I have lived to see this day.'

I hadn't realized that. Memorizing the dates of historical events has never been my forte. Their significance – yes! To the public opinion the Foreign Ministry gave a short dry statement. Considering the tense atmosphere that reigned in the region at that time, it would not have been a good time to touch any sore points.

In the military plane that was taking me from Iasi to Bucuresti I had the time to ponder – this time calmly – over the possible consequences of any dignified gesture in international politics. Any apparently banal incident could have unpredictable consequences, from a flying accident or error of the Romanian pilots to a counterstrike meant to intimidate. In all those cases the president would have had the obligation to answer for the decision he had taken.

If the public effect of moral victories is in most cases null, the consequences of your failures are never forgiven.

Straight on the Staircase

1-2 July 1999, Salzburg

Before leaving for the Conference of the State and Government Officials of East and Central Europe I receive the preliminary agenda in which they have also announced the presence of the Russian Prime Minister Serghei Stepashin. I ask the Foreign Minister to solicit a bilateral meeting. As soon as I reach Salzburg I am reported that the Russian Prime Minister has only accepted two meetings, one with the Polish President and the other with the Romanian President. The meeting will take place in the apartment of the hotel where I am lodged. The living-room of the apartment is large and elegant; the protocol staff set the room after the fashion of all official meetings, placing the chairs for the delegation members on the sides and leaving free room in front for the photographers and camera crews of different TV stations. At the appointed hour Prime Minister Serghei Stepashin comes. He does not use the elevator, he climbs to the first floor on the monumental staircase at a brisk pace, followed by his staff, camera crews and photographers. When he enters the apartment he gives me a firm

handshake, sits down without further ceremony and begins by saying: 'I came on foot from my hotel to meet in person President Constantinescu, of whom I have heard so much.' He passes with ease over a subject that I was not going to approach anyway, telling me he regrets the plane incident. 'And now let's get down to some serious business. Mr. President, here is an issue I've been meaning to discuss with you: why does Romania import 9% from Russia and at the same time only exports 1%? This is a disadvantage for you and here I am making a case for Romania's interests.' We decide to encourage economic exchange. For this we will each name a new representative in the commission which has not met for quite a while, and we will set a clear date for the first meeting of the commission; after that, as the commission begins to have a serious agenda, we will organize a high rank visit which will bring either the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation to Bucharest or the Prime Minister of Romania to Russia.

I knew that the previous position of the present-day Prime Minister had been that of the chief of the FSB. Despite that, nothing in his face showed the roughness you would have expected from the chief of one of the most feared secret services in the world. He looked nothing like his predecessor Primakov. He had an open face and I immediately sensed that I could get along very well with this man and that together we could do some good to both our countries. A few months later on the troubled internal political scene of the Russian Federation another change took place and a new Prime Minister began to lead the government of the Russian Federation.

Cloudless Sky

3 July 1999, Snagov

The Yugoslavian war had ended following the agreement of 9 June which stipulated sending over several peace-keeping troops to Kosovo. I saluted Russia's involvement in this process as a positive fact for keeping the peace in the Balkans. Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland and an old friend of Romania was appointed coordinator of the Peace Process in Kosovo. Through an effective surprise move several Russian planes containing troops and armament had landed on the airport in Pristina, taking NATO by surprise, since that had been an unexpected demonstration. The Foreign Minister and the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation had requested the permission to cross the Romanian space for planes transporting troops and armament

to Pristina for the date of 3 July. In the wake of the decision approved by Parliament according to which the Romanian space had been put entirely and unrestrictedly at NATO's disposal, we had decided to answer that we were not in a position to give an affirmative answer to their request.

Saturday. A blue sky, without the faintest trace of a cloud. A wonderful summer day for my daughter Norina's marriage. After the religious ceremony in the Church of the Theological Seminary, my family and close friends gather to celebrate in Snagov. Although this time I am the father of the bride, I have plenty of tasks. My son-in-law Cristi has lost his father and I have always considered him my own child; I feel in a way as both the father of the groom and the bride.

Every half-hour at a discreet sign from my aide I leave the room as discreetly as possible to go to the office where they have set up the safe connection with General Degeratu. The Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Army is on duty and the aviation in alert. I am trying to hide my nervousness and I keep checking with them whether Russia does respect the flying interdiction. And once again Russia has respected the flying interdiction and Romania's position. The planes carrying Russian troops and armament have nonetheless moved towards Pristina, but using a route which passes above the space of the new NATO members, Poland and Hungary.

Do ut des

August 2002, Bucharest-Prague

Telephone interview with Radu Călin Cristea, a reporter of Radio Free Europe, about Romania's integration into NATO. During the short broadcast discussion, I remind him that – during and after the conflict – I have many times asserted that, during the Yugoslavian war, Romania has acted as a NATO member. Today, this phrase has been taken over by the present-day Power as an argument for Romania's integration into NATO.

What was not really understood was that not only has Romania acted as a NATO member, but that NATO has also ensured the security and integrity of Romania as that of any country belonging to this organization.

Peace, freedom and safety are like health. You only value them when you lose them.

THE OIL LAMP

19 November 2000, The Unification Room

As has become the custom during the past years, several friends have gathered in the evening to wish me happy birthday in the huge white marble hall. Their arrival in as large numbers as always is the more moving since their affection is not necessarily based on a direct and constant personal relationship. There are some personal friends also, those with whom I have memories from my student's days or from earlier times. But most of them are people who have given me their trust and sympathy because they have understood that I could represent them and because we have been sharing a common vision of Romania. After July, when I broke the news that I was not going to run for a second term, I could have expected the numbers to drop. Not that I have ever suspected that they were coming to see me on my birthday on account of certain interests or flattered by the proximity of power. I have become skilled at recognizing fast enough the false smiles and the incidental flattery, so those who were drawn like bees to honey were asked to come at different times of the day. But I had not consulted my friends – actually, I had not consulted anybody – when I had let everyone know that I would not be running again, so it was possible that some of them had felt betrayed. Their mere presence was proof of friendship stronger than any disappointment, and it warmed my heart even more than at any other time.

Through the compact crowd I saw Alina Mungiu-Pippidi trying to make her way toward me. I came closer to her and – abruptly enough – she told me: *Happy birthday. I have brought you a present, while she brought out an old smoked oil lamp. Let me tell you the story of this oil lamp. Some day in '97 my father was at the market, in Iasi, and an old peasant from behind a counter beckoned him to come closer; pulled out the oil lamp from his bag, gave it to him and said: 'Doctor (I knew that Alina's father was a very respected doctor in Iasi), I have been keeping this ancient oil lamp at home. It has a gift, it lights your path to justice. I have been watching your daughter on TV, late*

at night, every Sunday, and I have seen how she has been striving to do justice for people, and I've been thinking that her desk would be the perfect place for my oil lamp.' I have kept it on my desk during every show, she continued, until I left the National Television. Now it occurred to me that your desk would be the perfect place for it.

I knew that, of all the news shows that had brought my interlocutor in the national television spotlight, her most cherished was 'The Ombudsman', and it seemed that the peasant with the oil lamp had thought so too. She had been angry and sad when – after she left – a very different show, broadcast by a very different person, had remorselessly stolen the title of her show.

Her gift moved me beyond words. Maybe only my imagination added to the subtext of this gesture, quite unexpectedly, the shadow of reproach. The truth was that my relationship with that briskly intelligent lady had not been one of the smoothest. I had first become acquainted with her articles from *Opinia leșeană*, as well as with the other ones – well-thought and written – from the magazine '22' and from other stimulating journals of the first years after the Revolution. I had found out she was a psychiatrist. A theater play she had written had been distinguished with a prestigious award. Then she had started publishing books in which she analyzed the political evolution of Romania, focusing on social psychology and political studies, a field in which she had specialized at Harvard, that Mecca of political science.

She was not a comfortable author, especially for us, those directly involved in the political battle, since she would judge us through the lenses of a spectacularly evolving science. Her analytical cool had been interpreted by many – and by myself more than once – as a subjective distancing not so much from us, as from the solutions that to us seemed the only possible ones: the Civic Alliance, the Democratic Convention, common election lists. Fundamentally she had always been on the right side of the battle, but the trenchant way in which she had formulated her objections and in which she had denounced the weaknesses, the defects and the errors of the 'opposition' between 1992 and 1996 had not inspired confidence.

After coming back from America she had tried to convince me that, in the electoral manifesto that we were preparing for the 1996 campaign, we could have got some inspiration from the greatly successful experience of the 'Contract with America'. We had not paid enough attention to her suggestion then, and she had been upset on that

account. And on good grounds. But she did not give it up, and she did convince the always enthusiastic Petrică Băcanu and thus was born the idea of the 'Contract with Romania', to which we owed in large part the victory of the Democratic Convention from 1996. The promises that gave concrete substance to those ideas were formulated by others – first and foremost by Nicolae Noica and by Băcanu – but the idea had belonged to Alina Mungiu, who had thus given us a completely disinterested – and hence the more precious – help.

I have talked and written about it before paradoxical fate of the 'Contract with Romania'. Our adversaries sensed immediately that it was a formidable electoral and political weapon. They started tearing it down with an insistence which in the end turned against them, because in doing so they made it more popular than we ever could have. Our supporters joined us enthusiastically, only that enthusiasm no longer had anything to do with the actual contents of the contract or its terms, so minutely and responsibly considered.

We could say that each person who voted for the Convention actually voted for his/her own variant of the Contract with Romania, in which he placed his/her most personal hopes and many illusions. That was exactly where the trap lay. It became completely unimportant that we had won by a relative and fragile majority, which imposed a government coalition. Nor was it important that during the first 200 days we had accomplished 16 of the 20 points of the Contract. What we were held accountable for was the other contract, the one with the expectations, the aspirations, even the illusions of each and every one of the voters. Obviously it was not Alina Mungiu's fault. It was nobody's fault, although we all felt guilty and frustrated.

However, what followed was the episode of the temporary leadership of the National Television, in which, once again, Alina Mungiu invested much more than she received. She was told by several people, some friendly, others less so, that I had not reacted too enthusiastically when Stere Gulea, who had been named an ad-interim director, proposed that Alina be charged with the coordination of the news department. This is how it happened, and an accumulated residual mistrust, never emptied by an open honest discussion, made me have my doubts. I was sorry because I knew she had felt offended, the more so since Răsvan Popescu, who had witnessed the discussion, was able to interpret my reaction as a wish of perpetrating the obedience of the TV station which I had allegedly – and hypocritically – denounced in

public only to yearn for it in my heart of hearts. That was not true either then or now. But it was indeed an unfair ignorance of the qualities of a person that I hurt, because I did not give the situation enough thought. Stere insisted and finally won. Together, Alina Mungiu and himself plunged into a real crusade in order to turn the state TV station into a real public television which was to inform, and not manipulate people as it had done in the past.

By working strenuously and competently both for a project of reforming the public television which would have brought it very close to the highest professional standards, as well as for bringing up to date the style and substance of informative shows, both of them – and especially she – carried on some heavy battles. I do not doubt that in this battle she had too little time for diplomacy and negotiations and, because of her fiery temperament, she made much more enemies than she deserved. I was never one of them. On the contrary. She made me respect her more and more for the firmness and intelligence with which she had managed to make of the Romanian Television a distinct civic voice. The tales about her connections with the team from Cotroceni are nothing but a collection of fairy-tales. Not only did I ostentatiously cut off the direct line connecting the television station and the presidency, but at the same time neither I nor my councillors ever dared offend our friends, Stere Gulea, Alina Mungiu, Anca Toader or Răsvan Popescu with any ‘directions’. The furthest we went was when we went to *them* for a piece of advice, and not the other way round.

But – at the end of this long race with too many obstacles – Alina Mungiu and Anca Toader were sold purely and simply during a negotiation where those very people who thought they would win actually lost. I have already written in another chapter of this book about how I found out straight from the horse’s mouth that their banishment from television had been the price to pay for naming Cristian Hadji Culea as a director. The way in which even the National Liberal Party, who had supported him – not to mention the other coalition partners – was repaid for that good deed is already history. To my distress, I did not know and I could not defend them as they deserved, each of them and as a team. Not that they would have depended upon staying in that adders’ den that the TV station was. Alina Mungiu is a university professor and Anca Toader was immediately hired by the BBC, which is undoubtedly the most respected radio station in Europe. The loss was not theirs, it belonged to the Romanian civic conscience.

And Alina Mungiu was now bringing me with open heart a gift full of symbols and responsibility. Even if this gesture was meant to challenge me to look deeper into my conscience, it was still a gesture of delicate friendship. Considering how direct she is, I suppose she did not even mean that. What she meant – at such a difficult time – was to show her solidarity in the name of those values we share beyond any accidents which may have happened along the way.

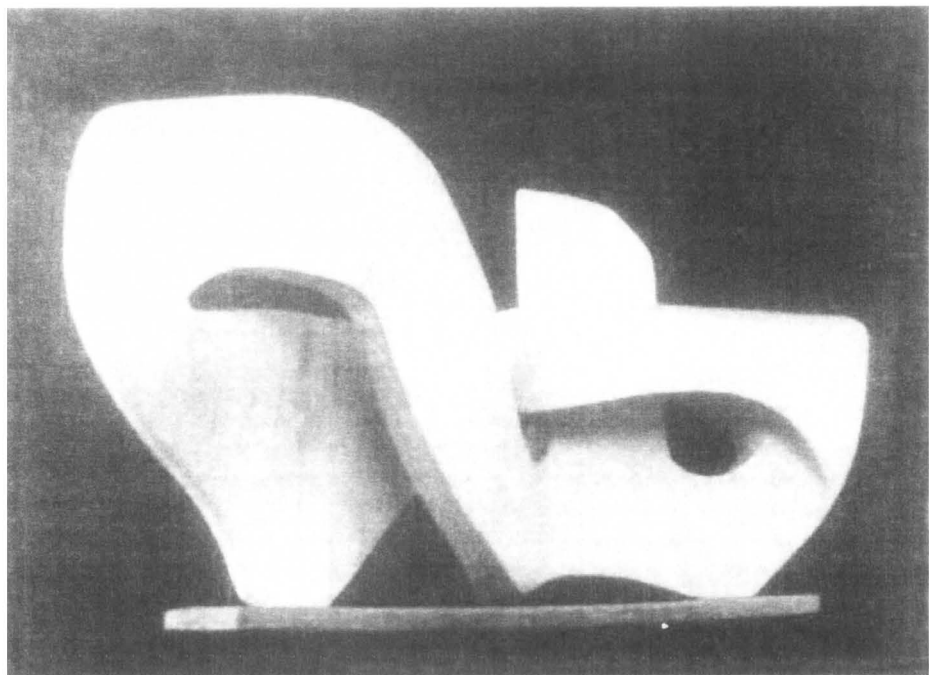
The oil lamp is now on my desk and I see it every time I lift my eyes from my writing, and it would not allow me to forget, even if I wanted to, the unwritten duty of being, in my own way, an ‘Ombudsman’.

THE TUNNEL

November 1999

In the year of the great crises that shook Romania, Doina Cornea, one of the few public personalities who have been supporting me unflinchingly, sent me her book of memoirs, *The Unseen Side of Things*. Doina Cornea ends the story of her memories from the communist period, when she was brutally chased by the Security and abandoned by almost all of those around her, with a metaphor which, taken over by a prime minister in '97, was to be demolished, with brutality and cheap humour by the democratic press: 'Our days were at that time our tunnel, whose end we could not make out. We only knew we had to traverse it or... go back, giving up our human dignity. But when people decide to traverse the tunnel they – and this was one of my discoveries – are the ones who trace the project of their becoming. This is their terrible chance, the chance of their freedom, because through it they create their becoming. If you give up in the face of hardships, you can miss this unique chance. In its most general sense – of existential itinerary – the metaphorical tunnel strengthens and enriches us if we embrace it no matter how horrible it might seem at times. In other words, we shall never find our way out of it if we let time go past us with its chaotic train of events and if we let ourselves be used by the life happening around us, instead of using the potential of our lives ourselves. I believe that, in the end, the real tunnel is inside our souls – which are often not prepared enough... It is a tunnel that we are building ourselves, hour by hour, without knowing it...

If we were to rethink our lives and rebuild it on different grounds the tunnel would grow brighter, it would melt away' – Doina Cornea ended, bringing to mind Monsignor Vladimir Ghika, a martyr killed in one of the communist prisons: 'It is not the tunnel that matters, but the way we choose to traverse it.'



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

THE MATCHING KEYS

Science, Art, Bargaining

What is diplomacy? The hundreds of definitions that diplomacy has been given in time can be ascribed to one of the three variants mentioned above: *science, art or trade*, and we each know quite a number of sallies that echo one of these perceptions.

Looking back on my experience, I am no longer inclined to give a univocal answer to this question. It seems to me that the formulation that does not impoverish the complexity of diplomatic action of any of its constitutive ingredients is, *a bit of all three*. Naturally, at certain moments, one facet or another may prevail. Generally speaking, the preparation of an action entails processes that I would say belong to the domain of science. One should resort to art particularly in the various stages of carrying out a foreign policy initiative. Trading is most frequently necessary in situations of bilateral or multilateral negotiations.

Diplomacy is a science as one cannot leave to a moment's inspiration the correct identification of the steps to be taken in order to establish the *hard kernel* of foreign policy that is the natural interest, to shelter it from drought and storms. The way in which it can be promoted and protected implies a long and clear-sighted musing over the dynamics and major tendencies of international relations, over the visible or hardly discernible interests of the main actors, so as to be able to place your country on the most favourable trajectory possible. The rational components of diplomacy, that is those that require a systematic effort of study and analysis, are not only numerous but also crucial for the success of any foreign interaction, irrespective of its nature and final aim.

Diplomacy as art is immediately related to the fact that a well and correctly defined line of action does not take hold by itself, by its mere public statement. It hardly has any chance of success unless you arouse the interest of other states in your ideas and proposals to such an extent as to determine them to feel it is their own interest to grant you

effective support. In order to do that you must step outside your own interest and into *the other's shoes*. Such a performance implies that imaginative effort and the right tone that an actor is supposed to discover in order to find the key to a character. But I would like to specify that, however impressive a person's artistic qualities may be, his ability to persuade will be nil unless he has thoroughly analysed and thought over the cannonade of arguments before stepping onto the stage.

As I have mentioned before trading is all-important in that concrete area of diplomacy generically called negotiations. They precede the conclusion of accords, treaties, and other international documents whereby the contracting parties assume political commitments or juridical obligations for long-term periods. That is why the drafts of these texts are the object of long debates. What and how much you give in, and what and how much you get obviously also depends on your art of negotiating, but particularly on the degree in which you have been able to anticipate the partner's/partners' possible objections and demands, and thus prepare optional variants of the text you have initially put forth. In this case it is clear that thorough preparation will mark the difference between success and failure.

The Door and the Keys

What should therefore be the diplomatic strategy adopted by relatively small countries whose weight in the international arena will not allow them to promote their interests by using the efficient means of persuasion represented by economic or military force? We need an answer because as George Kennan would say: "An entity does not live for foreign policy; it adopts a foreign policy in order to survive."

One of the exemplary moments of Romanian diplomacy, that we can never dwell too long upon as it represents an inexhaustible source of inspiration, is the period of negotiations that led to the system of the Versailles treaties. Undoubtedly, the huge number of human lives sacrificed in the Romanian trenches during World War I represented an essential material argument that the Allies of the Entente should honour the promises they had made us before our entering the war. But I dare say that without the great skills of all the diplomatic forces

Romania disposed of at the time, Romania's contribution to the fate of the war could have been minimized or even ignored. In spite of all adversities, our forefathers were successful. Because they had perfectly well prepared the documents for the negotiations comprising all the arguments weighing in favour of our cause, on the one hand. Because they knew what doors to knock on, possessed the keys to open them, and knew the springs they had to press, and just how much to press them, on the other hand.

To be able to live securely, Romania should practice a subtle and complex diplomacy. One of the essential preconditions of the success of this type of diplomacy resides in the perfect training therein of all those who are, or will be, called for working in the field of foreign policy.

The Boulder and the Interest: an Invitation to Realism

The art and technique of Russian diplomacy are frequently associated with the almost infallible method of *placing a boulder in the way*.

When this happens everything stops, the whole world is blocked, since the only person that can lift the boulder is the Russian giant. All the others can do is just cry out standing helplessly by it, until Ivan comes and pushes it an inch away. The enterprise is regarded as a great success, but the boulder is still there, in the way. It has been pushed just a little bit away, enough to make way for one person to squeeze by, but it can roll back in place any time. In order to put in practice this diplomacy of *niet* one has to be a state as powerful as Russia. The United States likewise, even before it became the only world superpower, never needed more than the argument of its own interest in order to trigger off an international action or to oppose one. Washington needs only to say, "the interest of the United States requires", or, conversely, "does not allow for, this to happen", and everybody will understand the message and respect it.

Can Romania do that? No, definitely not. If she ever tried to practise a diplomacy of the *niet* type, she would be crushed in no time, as she is situated between huge blocks that could slide and crush her under. If she placed a boulder in the way and thus irritated a great power, the latter could either remove the boulder altogether, or cut off another way, since it is not interested in the Romanian path.

Whether we like it or not, the world interests only crossed the Ro-

manian territory a few times in our history. And when that happened, the great powers acted over our heads. An illustrative example is the stake represented by the Romanian oil during World War II. What happened then? Romania's economy was actually colonized by Nazi Germany. Fighting in the other camp, the Americans and the British came and bombed Ploiesti so as to hit the German war machine. It was of no import to them if, besides oil derricks and refineries, human beings were blown up, Romanians that had willingly or unwillingly fallen under Germany's sphere of influence. Although on Romanian soil, the oil was the site of confrontation between the Americans and British on the one hand, and the Germans on the other. Nobody was interested in Romania's opinion about what was taking place on her territory.

Between Megalomania and Isolation

The first time I seriously wondered about what sort of diplomacy Romania should practise so as to promote her interests with success was when I first ran for the presidency in the autumn of 1992. My failure to win those elections was useful in a way as it enabled me to dwell longer on that question and find a pertinent answer. So I pondered less on the theory of international relations than on identifying the configuration of factors that determine the pattern of a country's international profile.

I had been a witness to Romania's foreign policy for a few decades. I had watched the sinuous strategies of the foreign policy practised by the Ceausescu regime for almost 25 years, from the moments of its glory in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, to the hopeless isolation of the last years of agonizing communism in Romania. Then, after 1990, in my discussions with Western European and U.S.A. interlocutors, I was struck by the distrust bred by the inconsistent elements of Romanian diplomacy after the Revolution.

In my dialogues with the high officials involved in the Romanian foreign policy before 1989 I perceived their nostalgia for the *great* foreign policy of Ceausescu's Romania. Stefan Andrei, for instance, thought that it should have been revived after 1990 and his strong argument was Romania's international successes and visibility in the '60s-'70s.

It would obviously be foolish to deny some successes of Romanian diplomacy after 1965 merely because Ceausescu was a dictator.

Most of them were in the domains of mediation and good offices. Romania was used as a channel for mediation between the Arabs and the Israelis as she had managed to maintain good relations with both parties. Romania was also useful, perhaps not to the same extent, in conveying messages between the U.S. and China, thanks to her excellent relations with China. At a certain moment there was an attempt to involve Romanian diplomacy in starting off the peace negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam. We cannot overlook those achievements. Those teams of diplomats that carried out actions of mediation and good offices deserve all our respect for their professionalism and devotion to the cause of Romania.

An elementary spirit of fair appreciation requires that we should estimate the degree in which they were the intrinsic merit of Romanian diplomacy or/and also the results of favourable circumstances. Did anybody speak of a role played by Romania in the peace process in the Near East after 1978, when Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Peace Accord? No, for once under American mediation, this process no longer needed Romania's offices, now irrelevant. The best proof that those successes were circumstantial and not only the result of *a wise policy*, as the officials used to assert, but also of this country's being shortly regarded as a useful pawn, is the very fact that in the 80's the rigid obstinacy of the Romanian regime, that rejected even the openings of Gorbachev's perestroika, had practically excluded this country from the international arena.

Costly Illusions

The fact that those successes were reversible, that they were mere separate bricks that did not, in the long run, manage to build an edifice beneficial to this country, clearly threw into relief the idea that the threads of world history do only accidentally intersect in Romania. Ceausescu could never understand it. He remained to the last a prisoner of the illusion that he could treat on an equal footing with the big powers of the world. A number of gestures he made in the years when he was totally marginalised did demonstrate that the border between sublimity and ridicule is very narrow indeed. Paroxysm of ridicule was reached in 1988 when Romania emphatically declared she unilaterally renounced the status of most favoured nation in her relations with the USA.

I then found out that most career diplomats of the former regime do not share Stefan Andrei's nostalgia, as Ceausescu subsequently greatly humiliated them. Whoever is curious enough to read the Romanian representatives' speeches at various international organisms, particularly in the latter half of the 80's, can perceive the constraints imposed to Romanian diplomats, whose statements were mere hymns to *the Great Leader*, given to an astounded and shocked audience of foreign diplomats.

The price that Romanian diplomacy had to pay for Ceausescu's megalomania certainly includes the loss of the previous contact channels with the world's great chancelleries that had become allergic to the substitution of the personal interests of the Ceausescu Clan for those of Romania.

The question arises, What and who benefited from the Romanian diplomacy's successes at that time? How many of those moments' opportunities were used to the benefit of this country, and how many simply served the abysmal cult of Ceausescu's personality?

Speaking about the costs of Ceausescu's megalomania sprung out of the temporary successes of the 60's – 70's, we cannot overlook that it severely burdened the state budget for a long number of years. I do not only refer to the translations, that nobody ever read, of the bulky works of "*The Comrade*" into practically all languages of the world, or to the one-issue foreign magazines and newspapers that sang dithyrambs to the "*Great Leader*". I also have in mind the many billions dollars used for credits and investments in those few countries that were still willing in the 80's to exchange high level visits with the "*Hero of Peace*".

The Risks of Isolation

Then, in December 1989, when Romania benefited from an unprecedented capital of sympathy and visibility, we had all expected that closer relations with what we used to call in communist times the *free world* would rapidly and naturally follow. But then there were the events of March 1990 in Târgu-Mures, that placed us again in the shaded cone of suspicion. Friendless and unable to give convincing answers to the question, "Who shot dead or wounded the victims of the Revolution?", this country found herself again on the brink of the

precipice. In those days Romania's situation was extremely risky in all respects, including her national sovereignty and integrity.

In March 1990 there occurred an uncontrolled discharge on the Hungarian side as well as on the Romanian one. The shocking images of a man hitting savagely a fellow being in the very centre of Europe went fast round the world carrying a message that misinformed on the identity of the guilty party. Was it an accidental slip, or a deliberate confusion? The Irish reporter who signed that message according to which the victim he had filmed – who in fact was a Romanian called Cofariu – was ostensibly a Hungarian, fallen “prey to the Romanian's savagery”, has never yet given an explanation for his “error”. The truth was late re-established in international press, in marginal notes that nobody ever reads, and never had the impact of the initial report of the events. Had the inter-ethnic confrontations gone on, it is difficult to say what Romania's fate might have been. We should like to note here the role played by President Iliescu, whose prompt intervention avoided the escalation of violence and defused the situation, as well as the part played by the immediate and exemplary actions of the civil society.

Using the method of counter-factual history, we can ask the query, “What could have happened ?” Let us connect things. Whereas Romania had no friends and no credibility, Hungary was already on its way to a rapprochement to Western Europe. France had already raised, in December 1989, the issue of a humanitarian intervention in Romania. We all saw what carrying that out meant in the 1999 intervention in Yugoslavia. The late French President François Mitterrand had spoken during his visit to Budapest in February 1990 about the “injustice” of the Trianon Treaty. In March 1990 nobody was willing to be on Romania's side. The USSR, still existing then, had no reason for that, and neither had the countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, whose dissolving had already been proposed. The Ukraine, still a Soviet state, was already sending hostile signals, and Hungary, so favourably perceived by the West, clearly showed its hostility. The situation could have ended in a disastrous loss for Romania.

It was this circumstance and others, less serious perhaps, but of equal concern, that determined me to try to put an end to Romania's isolation, and make that the main target of my mandate as President of Romania. The question I had to answer was, “What sort of foreign policy did Romania need in order to attain that objective?”

Like any Romanian I had felt frustrated in the early 1990s that, contrary to other states in the region that had broken free from Soviet domination, Romania seemed to attract only the peripheral interest of the US and the West European states. But the lively enthusiasm aroused by the Romanian Revolution in all the Western capitals was too fresh in my memory to let me accept the supposition of *a deliberate neglect*. I knew only too well the reasons for the cold shoulder that the Western Governments gave Bucharest, particularly *after the University Square was "cleansed"* in June 1990. I could have subscribed to the thesis upheld by many at the time—that this country was a victim of the West's indifference, or even, worse, of *an anti-Romanian plot*. But that was a path that could lead to no constructive building.

The Code of Conduct

The main reasons for the Council of Europe and UNO affiliated organisations monitoring Romania between 1990 and 1996 and for the difficult dialogue she had with the EU and NATO should be looked for within this country, not without. They lie in the internal and external conduct of the officials governing Romania at that time.

Making a closer examination of the ascending course of the relations of such neighbouring countries as the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary with the Western structures, I realised quite clearly two things. Firstly that their more rapid perception as *like-minded countries* was also due to the fact that they were better known in the West even before 1989. So I could lay the blame with the Ceausescu regime without any hesitation and in a voice with the officials of the first years of our period of transition. I could lay the blame with the systematic and ever severer policy of isolating Romania, which reached its climax in the 80's, and prevented our specialists from keeping pace with the corresponding specialists in other parts of the world.

But I realised that the reserve of the Western powers was not to be blamed only on the past, but was also to be accounted for by many question marks regarding the present. A number of foreign academics and politicians I talked with made comments that drove home this idea. Almost without exception they drew my attention that, far from mending things to the effect Romanians desired, the thesis of an alleged persecution of Romania did nothing but strengthen the sense that there was a

serious discrepancy of mentality between this country's rulers and their occidental counterparts. They also pointed out that the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary had a much higher credibility than Romania because they had expressed much sooner – some even in the first months of 1990 – their aspiration to integrate in the European Communities (the name of the European Union before 1993) and to become NATO members. They had thus stated quite unequivocally their new options of foreign policy. It is true that the Programme of the Government set up after the elections of September 1992 defined Romania's joining the Council of Europe, the European Communities, and NATO as priority objectives of foreign policy. But, as I was to find out during the contacts I had between 1992 and 1996 with Western politicians, there still was high doubt concerning the correspondence between Romania's official declarations and the actual conduct of the Romanian Administration.

The list of the attitudes and actions that bred the above-mentioned distrust is quite long. They are recorded both in the Romanian and the international media. They rightly became an object of debate in the electoral campaign of 1996, and their echoes and consequences still keep surfacing. If Romania is to get the place and play the part she deserves in the European arena, she must establish herself as a credible partner in the dialogue and co-operation with the Western states and organisms, as a partner between whose official declaration of principles and actual conduct there is no discrepancy. Using the idiom of international relations theory, I would define as *predictable* the conduct that does not contradict the official declarations of a given state but concords with them. I realised what great store the states with a long democratic tradition set by this characteristic from the insistent query that I was asked before November 1996: "Do you believe in the sincerity of the commitments of the present Romanian Government?"

I pledged myself that, whether I was going to become President or not, I would do after the elections of November 1996 all my best to dispel the suspicions about the authenticity of this country's option for her integration in NATO and UE.

The Virtuous Circle

A non-pragmatic foreign policy is a luxury no state in the world can afford. So much less a country like Romania, where the implementation of a functional market economy needs a substantial influx

of capital and expertise. Moreover, beyond their specific benefits – profit, economic modernisation, creation of new work places – the relations in the economic domain are the real soil for the development of a sound bilateral relation.

My conclusion was that the dialogue and political relations between states, irrespective of the level they are carried on, are devoid of substance as long as they are not doubled by the construction of a rich network of economic exchanges. They become the main site where complementary needs can be identified and turned to good account, where palpable mutual interests between states can be established, where groups of businessmen can appear in the two partner states, for whom it becomes an objective of major interest to continue and further the relations with the other state. For these economic agents the foreign country they act in, and have a chance of increasing their turnover, stops being an entity, more or less geographically remote, *whereof they know nothing*. It becomes, so to say, a second fatherland. Starting from their own interests, the firms doing business in another country come to act as a sort of lobby in its favour. Such a lobby expresses its arguments in the amount of the economic and social benefits for their own country and they become very convincing and taken into account by both political factors and the national public opinion. It thus becomes the most efficient vector in promoting the external image of a third country. Moreover, it creates a sort of virtuous circle of bilateral relations. Own interests of investment co-operation and export determine the firms present in the market of another country to follow and give an impetus to strengthening the bilateral legal framework, to support the development of political relations.

When foreign business is doing well, a possible risk for the security of the country it works in starts to be perceived as an own risk. Considering that, as a rule, strategic investors in the world come from developed democratic countries it is easy to understand why it is crucial that a country in Romania's position should enter into the area of their attention.

Another palpable advantage of attracting this type of investors results from the fact that they bring in the destination country both the capital it so badly needs in order to develop a modern economic infrastructure, and also the culture of a market economy that works strictly within the law, thus stimulating the emergence of a business climate similar to that in the Western countries.

The long series of visits, participation in international conferences, and many other diplomatic events that are on the agenda of a country's official representative may seem, regarded from a distance, mere occasions for elegant conversation, whose echoes die with the parting greetings. This may be the case. But I for one refused to regard in this light this compulsory, and most frequently very demanding component part of a President's mandate.

I had understood even at a time when it never crossed my mind that one day I would come to play an important role in shaping Romania's foreign policy that, in a world of an increasing interdependence, drawing room diplomacy is a species about to become extinct. Decades later I was going to judge diplomatic performance function of the opportunities of economic co-operation opened by a meeting or reception, a visit or the participation in an international conference. I would like to emphasise the word "opportunities" because, – as in all countries in the area we belong to, and where there is separation of powers and a decentralized economy – the extent to which these opportunities are turned to good account in Romania has not depended, and cannot depend, on the head of the state.

In the Cart

Summer 2002, Bucharest

I have been watching on TV the offensive of the former members of the CPEX. After 12 years it's their right. They have been the only ones to pay, one way or the other, for their political actions. They are relatively reasonable in the consistency with which they are defending their past. On screen the well-known figure of Stefan Andrei, former secretary of the Central Committee and foreign minister. His figure is sort of tense, and this tenseness is justified by the insistence of the reporter for obtaining a statement that would compromise president Iliescu, his former colleague in the Secretariat of the Central Committee. He firmly refuses to make any comments. A year ago a statement escaped him unawares: 'In the times when I used to drive the cart Iliescu would sit at the back.' Now he does not meet the challenge anymore and he brings the topic gradually to Ceausescu's foreign policy. Here he is on his territory and he praises it unreservedly, comparing it to the foreign policy after the revolution, which he considers servile and ridiculous. Although I cannot approve of his position, I can un-

derstand him. During talks with different western politicians who knew him before 1990 I have received the confirmation that he was regarded as a good foreign minister. He goes back to the theme of the great prestige of the Romanian foreign policy, creative and of large international influence. And the theme of Ceausescu's dignity.

A few days later it is Paul Niculescu-Mizil's turn. He also brings the discussion gradually to Ceausescu's foreign policy and, as in his memoirs, he gives numerous examples of the great political successes of Romania, and most of all of Ceausescu's independence.

Two years before, at Yalta, during a free discussion, the presidents of several countries of the former Soviet block and former members of the Political Bureau of the Soviet Union Communist Party had humorously told the story of how Brezhnev had made fun of 'Nicu's coming to Yalta, as he had been seen as a sort of a naysayer, and treated with amused superiority. What Stefan Andrei, Paul Niculescu-Mizil and other defenders of Ceausescu's foreign policy -- to which one cannot deny certain attitudes, initiatives and even accomplishments -- forgot to mention was that, after the fall of communism, it had brought Romania to the situation of not having any friends among either the western or eastern powers or the neighbouring countries. Also they forgot to talk about the humility of the Romanian diplomats of any rank during Ceausescu's last decade, which diplomats were forced to read during international conferences inept texts praising their mighty ruler, to the stupefaction of their interlocutors. And they also forgot the last years, when Ceausescu was no longer welcome anywhere and when he would squander the money gathered with difficulty at the expense of the suffering Romanian people in order to finance different autocratic leaders from the Third World just to get invited somewhere or to receive some visits to Bucharest.

If I can understand Stefan Andrei and Niculescu-Mizil, it is not with the same consideration that I can look at the second-hand people hiding in the Social Democratic Party or the scribes in second-hand party-affiliated newspapers who, during every pro-western construction of the Romanian policy and especially during the Kosovo NATO campaign, waved texts denouncing our servitude towards the Mighty Powers and other such things. I didn't throw the baby out with the bathwater and during my term Romania's relations with China, Russia and several pro-western countries from the Middle East have not deteriorated but on the contrary, they have improved. The truly new aspect

in the Romanian policy was dignity, a real dignity based on fidelity to the fundamental principles of democracy and international law, and not on circumstantial aspects or in the service of personal interests.

The Sign of the Eagle

June 1998, Washington

A reception given by Ambassador Mircea Geoană in honor of my official visit to the United States. High rank officials of the American Administration and Congress take part. Christopher Smith, an old friend, and representative of the US at the Geneva Human Rights Commission, the Chief of the US delegation at the OSCE and the President of the Helsinki Commission of the American Congress invited me to take a walk on the alleys of the garden of the ambassador's residence. 'I am counting on the support of the Romanian delegation for the resolution we have initiated' – he said straight. 'Chris – I answered in the same way – this is a situation in which Romania must keep an old external relationship, and which has a special political significance. I am not the one who has created it, but it is important for Romania that we maintain it. I need you to understand me.' He did not like it, but he understood.

A year later, a new resolution initiated by the United States at Geneva. It is the same Romanian political interest, so I ask Ambassador Maxim not to attend, and instead to ask for a meeting with the American ambassador one day before the meeting, in order to transmit our decision, which amounts to a vote against the American resolution. This time the interventions are stronger, Madeleine Albright calls Petre Roman, who is in Cairo, to ask for an explanation. The phone rings in Cotroceni also, for Zoe Petre. Exactly on the day of the Geneva vote Zoe Petre must take the plane to the United States, where the session of the mixed American-Romanian commission for the strategic partnership US–Romania is taking place. Petre Roman is honest and answers that according to the Romanian custom the president gives direct orders to the ambassadors regarding the position they must take and he has to confirm to those decisions out of solidarity for the administration to which he belongs. It is an answer formulated in a typically American manner, which they understand best. Although they do not like it, they respect that type of attitude. Two days later Zoe Petre calls me from Washington to inform me about the debates of the mixed Commission. She tells me that during the first day the members of the American delegation have looked pretty grim, but that

on the second day, during his speech, the chief of the American delegation had declared that actually in a real partnership what matters is that the interests of each party are respected.

Two months later, another Geneva session. Romania votes according to the proposals of the United States but also in accordance with its own principles and interests. A few days later I receive a letter from Jesse Holmes, the Republican eagle in Congress, who thanks me for the vote of the Romanian delegation. I cannot refrain from pointing out that, without the other two small sidesteps maybe the Romanian favorable vote to the other initiatives of the United States would have gone unnoticed.

THE BLACK BOX

Coffee Break

December 1996, Lisbon – December 2000, Nice.

The doors of the large conference rooms and those of the smaller rooms for bilateral meetings open suddenly and in rushes a noisy crowd of journalists: the *flashes* of cameras brighten up the dim-lit place. The red lights of video cameras criss-cross, the reporters gather up, useless notebooks in their hands.

The politicians work up forced smiles under the spotlights, they plaster wide, false smiles on their faces and pretend to have conversations, making commonplace remarks towards the avid tape recorders. Then guided discreetly by the press officers and nudged in by the security services, the journalists vanish into the rooms with mineral water and coffee. The doors close slowly, but firmly. They will reopen after a while so that the statesmen, businessmen and military leaders could make their usual statements to the press directly or through their spokespersons; or so that they could line up in perfect order on the platform, in front of pens filled with journalists to have their *family snapshots* taken.

What happens behind closed doors? What is being discussed during the countless *working breakfasts* and *lunches*, during the *black tie* dinners and especially during the summit *coffee breaks*? How about the *informal meetings*, what is happening at private talks or during the walks on the silent alleys of the well-guarded parks, surrounding official residences? How is it that they leave their mark upon the history, geography or economy of all countries, upon the life and death of dozens, hundreds and millions of people, upon the future of some nations? What really hides behind the faces of those people we see every night on television or in the newspaper photographs as they get off planes, as they get in or out of black limos, as they climb up and down palace stairs, as they talk from official desks, guarded by banners or as they sit around round, oval, rectangular or square tables?

What do we really know about the people who rule countries, who make decisions that affect large areas, continents or even worlds? What do they look like at close distance and especially what are they like in reality?

Input – Output*October 1973, The Geology Department*

The first lecture that I was supposed to give for the Geology Department is entitled, 'Physical Methods of Minerals Analysis'. It is assigned to me because no one else would have it, since it has been recently added to the curriculum and it involves knowledge of physics, mathematics and advanced chemistry along with top technology; moreover, laboratory work is required. In the 1970s there was a major technological breakthrough concerning physical methods of analysis. This started out with the great American Apollo project that culminated with man's first landing on the Moon. On this occasion, important geological samples were taken, for the analysis of which a new technology was implemented. This technology is still employed extensively nowadays. The new pieces of equipment that we see in brochures are all the same: small-sized, pearl-grey and always accompanied by a young blonde in the picture. When I began to see them in laboratories (without the blondes), I was able to notice the change more accurately. While the old equipment was still in use, its dimensions so big that they took up the entire space on laboratory tables, all the components and stages of the analysis could be seen and followed directly. With the new ones, everything is reduced to diagrams: input, black box and output. You can no longer follow what goes on between input and output. Everything you can see is a box where you put the sample to be analyzed and which gives you a record of the analysis result on transparencies or just some figures on the attached computer. It is much more difficult to explain to the students what goes on in the mysterious black box in order for them to be able to grasp the differences between the radiation types that have been employed, the orbital leaps, the alteration of the crystal chains and the errors which might occur.

October 1996, Brussels

After a year of experience accumulated in office, I realized that, in a way, keeping the same analogy, in modern foreign affairs, it is becoming more difficult to detect a general route of signals than it used to be a few decades ago. This state of affairs has led to a rise in the interest of the public opinion in the hidden and unreachable areas of international politics, that is in what actually goes on inside the black box.

Everybody can notice the input signals, initiatives, proposals, declarations of the state policies as well as the output signals, the out-

comes of negotiations, the texts of international documents, the success or failure of summits. Most people are having a hard time understanding why, quite often, the output signal no longer has the slightest connection with what seemed to be meant originally and, sometimes, even with events that triggered a certain diplomatic decision. The feeling is all the more frustrating as you appear to think that you witness all that is happening and know everything. Everything is shown on TV and your eyes and ears are permanently bombarded by a ceaseless flow of information, but, despite this, you no longer manage to understand precisely what is going on. The chaotic signals generated by this kind of information, which flashes at amazing speed and which is often contradictory, have actually become a source of confusion. Under the circumstances, it is not in the least surprising that people are becoming more and more interested in finding out what is going on, especially that, many times, things go on completely differently than expected.

August 1996, Athens

After having traveled across Greece from east to west, we made a short stop in the capital of Greece. In a café near the ruins of the Parthenon, a lady whose family had a prosperous business in Braila says to me obviously pleased with her find: "What an intriguing paradox we are witnessing in our countries: on the one hand we have Romania, a rich country with poor people and on the other there is Greece, a poor country with rich people." I think that the spirit of enterprise which has left its mark upon the psychology of the Greeks for two millennia would be an explanation for that. It's not that, I have got a better idea: I think that has to do with the connection between our peoples and communism in the last half of the century.

On the train coming from the University of Patras, by which Zoe Petre and I had been traveling, we had ridden in the same car with an elderly, well-dressed gentleman who chatted away in a confident manner; when he learned that we were Romanian, he was intent on gratifying us by talking about his admiration for the accomplishments of the Ceausescu regime and by severely criticizing the unbearable state of affairs in Greece. He proudly admitted to having been an old communist fighter. I asked if he had ever met any Romanian communist fighters. He answered he hadn't. As for myself, I have met Greek communists. After 1947, a few Greek communist refugees from the Civil War were housed in some blocks that had been built on the former es-

tate of the Bratianu family, in Florica. I went to school in Pitesti with their children.

What was it that decided the victory or the defeat of communism in the southeastern European countries at the end of the Second World War? Who did that? What did we know then and what do we know now?

There was a discrepancy between the documents that had been made public following all the summits of the leaders of the USSR, United States, Great Britain who had met in Tehran, in December 1943, in Yalta, in February 1947, in Potsdam, in July-August 1947, and what the world would only later learn, once Winston Churchill's memoirs had been published.

After ending his life as a politician, Churchill allows himself to be completely sincere in writing his Memoirs. Upon relating his meeting with Stalin, that had taken place in Moscow on November 2nd, 1944, he makes the following terse comment: "Our private conversations were much more clear and direct. It was the right moment for taking action, so I said to him: 'Let's get down to business and settle the matters in the Balkans. We have interests to protect there along with several operations and agents. Let us not reach conflicting conclusions for menial tasks. As for Russia and Great Britain, would it suit you to have 90% control in Romania, leaving us with 90% in Greece and settling for 50% in Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated, I wrote on a slip of paper: Romania-Russia, 90%, the others, 10%; Greece-Great Britain, in agreement with the United States, 90%; Russia, 10%; Yugoslavia, 50%-50%; Hungary, 50%-50%; Bulgaria-Russia, 75%, the others, 25%. I pushed this slip of paper towards Stalin who, meanwhile, had heard the translation. A short pause followed. Then he took his blue pencil and signed his approval. After that, he gave it back to me. Everything took as long as it had taken us to write it all down."

Needless to say, this story is common knowledge, the agreement was abided by for 45 years, especially as far as Romania and Greece are concerned; and this happened despite all the more or less belligerent statements made by both parties during that period of time.

Unknown Europe

I long concentrated, even before 1989, on making out the deep meaning of the famous phrase that Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister of Great Britain, 1937-1940) uttered before World War II, trying to explain in 1938 the position of his Cabinet concerning the Nazi aggression against Czechoslovakia: "It is a remote country that we know nothing about."

I wondered if such an ignorance could account for the fact that in spite of having her integrity guaranteed by France and Great Britain, the great Western democracies, Romania ended by being crushed between Germany and the Soviet Union, the two totalitarian colossi of the time.

Looking retrospectively at the picture of the political, military, economic, commercial, and cultural relations between this country and either of her above-mentioned allies, I have found out that the network of the economic and commercial ties was extremely fragile. I was interested to check how much the absence or the quasi-absence of a *humus economicus* proved responsible for Romania's destiny in the 1930s and 1940s. I spent some time reading historical works on the epoch.

A short time before the end of the war, the British historian Hugh Seton-Watson in commenting on Chamberlain's statement, pointed out that, although situated at only a few hundred miles' distance from Britain, the over one hundred million inhabitants of the countries extending between the Germany and Russia of that time – that is the Romanians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Bulgarians, etc – were *exotic* notions for the British. Whereas they were quite familiar with the Zulu, Malay, and Maori territories and customs, the British found the names of the peoples, the rivers, and mountains in the *unknown Europe* impossible to pronounce and coming from another world. This paradoxical situation was mostly due to the fact that the British companies' economic and commercial interests were quite palpable in Asia and Africa, but extremely fragile in Central Europe. That is why Seton-Watson appreciated that “when Mr Chamberlain said about the Czechs and Slovaks that they were *a people we know nothing about* he was telling the truth and spoke on behalf of the British people”.

Many other historical works emphasise the major role played by economic considerations in perfecting the decision of the Western powers, allied in their armed resistance against Nazi forces, and subsequently against the Red Army in various areas of Europe. Whether I liked it or not, I had to accept that no Allied Government could impose upon public opinion the blood sacrifice of their countries' young soldiers in defence of another country by exclusively invoking noble principles. If besides principles and political commitments the Paris and London Cabinets could have demonstrated that Romania's impending fall under the domination of Nazi Germany, or later, of Soviet Russia, was going to ruin major economic interests, then....

Even if the history of the 20 Century cannot be rewritten, we

should however retain that pragmatism is a pivot of foreign policy action, and that diplomacy, in its traditional meaning, risks remaining a form devoid of substance unless it is supported and rounded off by economic diplomacy.

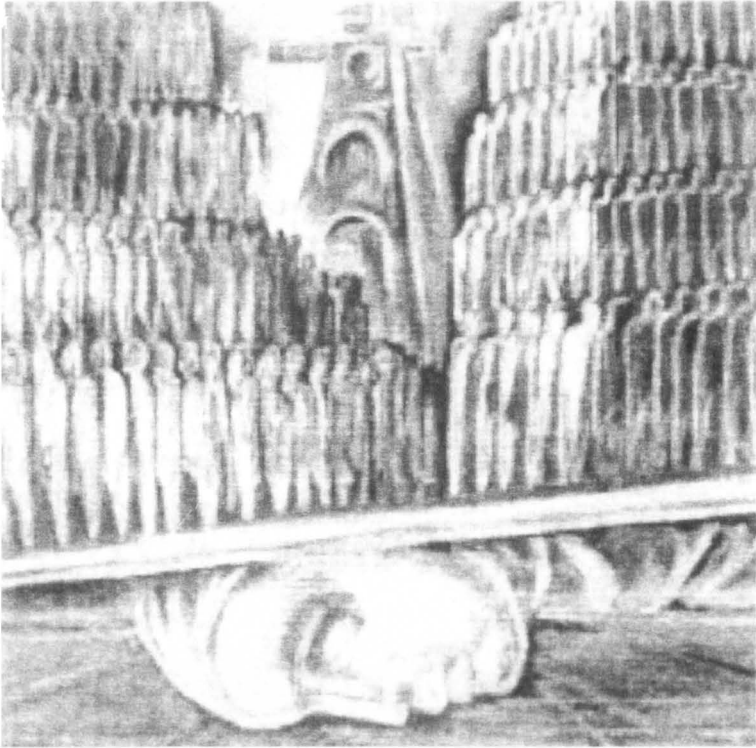
The Ball Book

5 September 1997, Vilnius

At the dinner offered by the host of the conference, the president of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, we all have in front of us a card with a symbolic pen drawing. The president of Poland, Kwasniewski, takes the card in front of him and circulates it in order to get the signatures of all presidents present.

I remember *Churchill's Memoirs*, where the former prime minister of the U.K. tells how he was stunned at the dinner after the Potsdam Conference when Stalin got up and started collecting the signatures of all those present overleaf of the dinner menu.

Our conference has a generous subject – the good neighbourliness relationships between European states –, and our signatures can offer a guarantee for the symbol of the pen drawing: a world of understanding.



EAST SIDE STORIES

ODES AND BALLADS

The Miorita-Type Transition

January, 27 2000, Cotroceni Palace

I welcome Francis Fukuyama in the Yellow Hall. I had met him some time ago at Harvard University, at a symposium under his patronage together with Huntington and I am glad that he has come to Romania to take part in an international seminar with the unattractive title "Social Capital in Economic Development". In fact, Alina Mungiu, who used her period at Harvard to befriend valuable and distinguished personalities in the interests of Romania through the Academic Society, has to take full credit for bringing him to Romania. Although, *The End of History* and then *The End of History and the Last Man* are the books that made him famous, his volume *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* is to me much more important taking into account the difficulties we are currently confronted with. With a pedantry that is typical of a professor, Fukuyama takes his time in defining first and foremost the terms he employs: *fixed assets* made up of plants, machinery, buildings used for production; *human capital*, understood as the skills and knowledge that people have in their mind; *social capital*, representing the ability of people to work together in groups and organizations based on sharing the same norms and values, ability that allows them to set up a business in the economic environment and to efficiently run organizations.

Seen as such, the social capital may be from a political point of view more important than democracy, which may sometimes remain just a non-capitalized premise. Liberal democracy proclaims a governing system in which the state no longer organizes everything, social organization is left to society and only a true social capital allows it to structure itself into groups of interests, political parties, associations. In post-communist societies, where during the period of dictatorship, the state had everything organized, up to family and individual level, this issue is truly relevant.

Fukuyama did not limit himself to presenting the theory, but he courageously embarked upon a case study which he entitled "Trust, Social Solidarity and Economic Development in the case of Romania".

With the typical honesty of US academics, Fukuyama warns us that "in post-Ceausescu Romania, people seem to have lost the ability to see the common good and to be united in attaining it. The experience of a difficult transition seems to have rendered people unable to understand the fact that failure also comes as a result of this, but on the contrary, it has reinforced the idea that man stands alone, or only with close members of his family against the others. Among the countries studied by opinion polls – he goes on – Romanians seem to be the ones with the highest level of distrust in the fact that common people can influence the political process and a very low degree of involvement in voluntary organizations, especially charities which fight for human rights." Unfortunately, I can do nothing else but agree with him.

To reinforce his statements, and maybe to colour them up a bit, Fukuyama quotes, surprisingly to me, George Schopffin and Michael Shafir, two American authors, the latter of Romanian origin, who consider that the "paradigmatic ballad for the mental makeup of the Romanian people, *Miorita*, is a story about the lack of trust among people, the envy and the inability to protect oneself out of lack of trust that one can be helped out."

In 1993, while I was rector at the University, a reader from the Faculty of Letters, who had conducted the high school graduation exam in a small town in the country, had told me that one of the pupils, when asked about the meaning of the ballad "*Miorita*", had answered very sure of himself: "When three Romanians do business together, two of them make a deal to kill the third." Back then I thought that this story was just another of those "high school gems" and I am vexed that two reputed researchers would see it, despite their elevated language in more or less the same colours. Such an approach has its risks. Any piece of literary work may be turned into a simplistic message. How can social capital act at King Arthur's court?

At the end of the seminar, I offered all the participants "an honorary wine" at Cotroceni. During the talks I mention the fact that the greatest victory of communism was the victory against the individual. Before attacking the Administration, Church, Justice, before destroying the rural community, before crashing the elites, communism had

dashed at the individual, by isolating and depersonalizing him. It transformed him from a being into a number. This occurred by canceling all his particular features, giving him instead the pertaining to a class or social category. As a consequence of that, man had received from the communist perspective, the traits of the class or the category he was coming from. He was always talked about in the plural. Communism was not interested in knowing the worker Ion Popescu, the housewife Nicoleta Ionescu, or the student Dan Georgescu. Communism has known, workers, housewives, students.

Before 1989, I used to tell my colleagues at the University that at the Department we are *people*, at the University *names* and at the Ministry *percentages*. The best thing to be in Romania – a lecturer in Physics told me a word that was going around – is to be a *per head* inhabitant, in which case you would be the owner of a big quantity of butter, steel and meat that otherwise would not be available to you.

I nourished the hope that this terrible operation of unifying individual consciousness into a collective one had not succeeded. Today I know that it had. Ceausescu's *new man* is now among us. The *western man* who begins to look like a serial product does not always look that well either. From the communist period we were left with *Ilenutza tractor girl*, Marinica also known as the slacker and the neighbour's goat. What norms, what values, what trust? The so-called business men of the underground economy throw to our face the American slogan: "More important than money is more money", and opinion polls show that 85% of the people do not believe that corruption will ever diminish. It may well be that social capital is for us a tragic ballad from ancient times, projected onto the screen of a computer.

The Last Link

"What is the aim of social solidarity? – Constantin Rădulescu-Motru wondered, trying to decipher the psychology of the Romanian people from this point of view. It aims at a harmonizing of individual souls into one single soul of the entire society. It aims at raising the interests of the group above purely personal interests. Doesn't he represent, therefore, the very soul of the ideal of *solidarity*? Far from it. The Romanian is as good a solidary as the member of a primitive communist society is a good socialist. In order to correspond to the ideal of social solidarity, the Romanian would need the self-awareness of

personal sacrifice. Then there would be the will for such a sacrifice. And he has not got either one of them. He just has a gregarious soul. By a gregarious soul, sociology understands something else than a solidary soul. Solidarity is the work of a conscious sacrifice, it is *the last link* in the moral heightening of will; whereas gregariousness is a state triggered by circumstances and habits. We should love our people, be solidary in sacrifice, but above all each and everyone of us should be somebody. There is sacrifice when we know we make it. The flocks of sheep that throw themselves by imitation into the water and drown make no sacrifice since they do not know what they do.

The Cuculeasa Experiment

Terrifying images on the evening TV news: a reporter broadcasts from a village alley where piles of mud are higher than the windows of houses. It is the village of Cuculeasa from Moldavia, Buzău county. The images are continually broadcast on all TV channels, with scenes of land covered by water. This is how the image of a national disaster as a consequence of heavy rain is created. I call Dorin Marian on the phone: he should have an airplane ready for us to go to Buzău. At the airport in Buzău there should be a helicopter for me to fly over the area to assess the amplitude of the disaster. On the following morning I find myself on my way to the airport. I flip through the newspapers. On the front page: an escalation of the disaster. Big headlines: “Romania covered by water or 80% under water”. In fact, inside the newspaper we can read that it is in fact 80% of the counties where there have been affected areas. On the plane to Buzău we can see nothing but dry land due to the drought. Then, in the helicopter we fly over the county with the prefect and identify a few areas where there had been indeed overflows. These are the normal consequences of an insufficient system of dams and land improvement.

After coming back, we are expected by cars in order to make for Cuculeasa. In the meantime, the delegation has grown in number. In addition to those that had come with me from Bucharest – minister Noica, general Palaghia, the chief of Civil Defense and the minister secretary of state in charge of the environment - there is the prefect, the chairman of the County Council, deputies and senators representing the county in the Parliament. The cars are sinking in the dust, in the areas where there seems to have been no rain. There are no signs

of rain until we reach indeed Cuculeasa in the village of Ziduri. Here the disaster is real and it adds to the terrible smell of mud and bodies of poultry and farm animals in decomposition. I enter. There are many TV and press reporters as usual, but this time, they are less loud because the images are extremely shocking.

We have reached Cuculeasa at a dramatic point in time. It is one thing to read the figures in the newspapers regarding the number of houses that had been demolished and even people killed by the waters and a completely different thing to actually be there, surrounded by that horrible smell of animal carcass, and by the slippery mud which seems to be a representation of what the inferno could be, and, in addition to all that, the dramas of the people left without a household, confused and powerless. The reporters, more than usual, are silent, rather reserved, some of them forced by the inadequate clothing to stay at a safe distance from the mud our feet were sinking into up to our knees. I go from house to house; I cannot skip any, because I cannot betray the desperation in the eyes of the people staying at the gates. When I finish visiting the houses on the left side of the road that have been the most affected I am asked to go by those on the right side that have not been covered by mud, but that were nevertheless affected by the flood. When we reach the edge of the village, we try together with a few specialists to look at the causes for this phenomenon which had manifested itself so destructively, however, at a small scale.

A cloud discharge had made the waters of an insignificant stream swell up, blocking the bridge under the railway dam blowing the houses on the left bank of the alley. A few hours had been enough for the evening disaster to cause all that damage. We go to the village school, a clean school, but with outside restrooms; and while it is true that it is white-washed the level of civilization is still a hundred years old. Once again we are faced with the same problem; the lack of elementary action to introduce utilities in villages. We enter a classroom where I ask General Mihai Palaghia, the Chief of Civil Defense to lay on the teacher's desk the topographic map of the affected area, for us to find an appropriate spot for building new houses given the fact that the degree of deterioration of those affected by the disaster is great. I ask the prefect, the Chairman of the County Council, the mayor, the ministers, the state secretaries to tell me exactly what is that they can do and the amount of time it would take them to do it, because I am aware of the fact that I cannot go out in front of the people without

telling them anything definite and if I tell them, whatever I say would have to be done in the promised span of time. We find the spot, we all reach the conclusion that there are available funds for building thirty house. At the same time, we agree on the total amount of aid that can be distributed to people, when and how it would come, who will provide the materials, where they will be deposited, and I ask for definite organizational measures and commitment. When I come out, I can tell the people gathered what the aids are going to be *what they will benefit from and when*. They are to decide if they wish to move to the new site on a hill near the village, that the village will free it and the County Council will approve, or in case they wish, to stay on the old site and receive an amount of money for repairing their households and for the damage.

Before leaving for Bucharest, as I can see the lack of trust in people's eyes regarding the promises as well as the despair that once I leave, nothing will happen, I promise to come back in a month to see what has been done in the meantime.

30 September 1999

The month has passed and I come back to Cuculeasa, accompanied by the same people as the first time. Firstly, I am informed on what had been done up to that point: the aids had been distributed and further, private or partially private funds had been made available, then I go to talk to the people. I go to see the situation with the houses.

The houses are in an advanced stage of finalizing, in fact they are very close to having the roof built, some of them even had the roof ready. Just as I had asked from the very beginning, each of the victims of the disaster had been given a plot of land, to build a house and one, behind, for the dependencies with the right of ownership over that land.

As always, the most difficult thing: talking to the people. Now, however, I thought that everything would be easier. It was one of the few cases in which what had been promised was also achieved. It was not as easy as that. People keep on asking. They say that "now we have houses, but we have no furniture". I ask around if an effort can be made to have furniture delivered to them. They tell us that winter is coming and they ask to be built stoves. Then, they say that it would not hurt them to have some refrigerators. I inquire around and I am assured that there will be money to distribute refrigerators as well. I say once more: these people have been built houses, the land, the house and even the

appliances have been given to them. Unfortunately, except for three or four, who thought of contributing themselves to the building of their future house, to push a wheelbarrow, to lay a brick, to make a fence – since they know which their plot of land was, – with the exception of these two or three more diligent peasants, who had started at the same time, to build themselves, at the back their dependencies, while the construction workers were raising their house, the great majority, almost all of the others, were content with standing by, commenting, giving advice to the construction workers about how they should work, in what order, and when they come, they insist on claiming that everything is done in a wrong way. Some of them insist on explaining in front of the puzzled engineers the fact that they will not have a chimney, because the roof had to be made differently. It is even worse that people have started talking. Those that had received 15 million lei for repairs – which in 1998 was a lump sum of money – and who had received both goods and aid – because they had chosen not to move house – are now discontent. Although I am not persuaded that what I do is right – the president should not usually start what should start by itself – , I insist just for the achievement of these wishes, having in mind the idea that, if we cannot solve neither the poverty nor the disasters all over the country, we should be able to show that at least in one of the places we could mobilize to make something precise, something that cannot be disputed and indeed, as I have promised all houses had been built before snowfall. Everything that had been promised, had been done. Are people content? No, far from it. One of the gifted directors and producers of the Romanian television, Mihalache, has made a film about the disaster and the buildings from Cuculeasa. And he has presented it in September 2000. In this film I see the people as they really are. Nothing has been made over, except for the sky that had been captured in extraordinary images.

Ticu Alexe draws upon my attention the fact that there will be on TV another film by Mihalache, dedicated to the experiment at Cuculeasa. The film is built around a metaphor which leads as if on a string the dialogues with the people. This time, most of the talks are with those that consider themselves to be “the lower village” and who envy those from “the upper village”, that is those who had got the houses. The really interesting character here, an almost literary character of this film is the former PDSR mayor, extremely diligent on

both the first and the second trip: at the beginning of the film, he is seen during the campaign of 2000, trying to gather the votes of the peasants for the PDSR and for president Iliescu something that he seems to have achieved. PDSR has won the elections. They have not voted for that mayor, however, but for an independent one, who before this film has been released had joined the PDSR because this is where power is. Released from his duty and full of frustration, the former mayor has turned into a moralist judging the people of the village.

I have insisted on the story of Cuculeasa, because it is twofold. On the one hand, the Administration had kept its word and all the promises, it has even surpassed them, something that does not happen often. On the other hand, the people from the village led by distrust... Unfortunately, this distrust, this envy, the lie and the hate are not typical of Cuculeasa. The waves of lies, hate, and exaggerations had overcome the Romanian society just like the high flood from Cuculeasa in a thick, black and foul smelling mud. It will be difficult to build and finish any building that had been started.

The Straightening of Nails

March 2002, Popa Petre 6

We are invited for a glass of red wine, peanuts and Romanian pumpkin seeds, around a low table, in the old house of the Painter Ștefan Câlția. The host tells us about a church built after his wife's project in a neighbourhood in Campina. It is the creation of a neighbourhood priest, whose ultimate goal in life is to be a parish priest, because it is there that he feels among people. The building of a church, the priest thinks, is just the way, the goal being the building of a community. A special man, who has achieved, in our current divided society, to build a community and who had found, by building a church, the way from the stone church to the church within man's soul. All those who had worked at the building of the church had stayed connected between them. After the first chief of the project, an engineer who had just come in to clock in hours of work, had abandoned them for a better paid job, the project was undertaken by a local foreman, who had gathered peasants from different villages around, each being accustomed to his own building method. *We shall learn how to build together, without losing the responsibility for what everyone had worked,* the foreman told them. When the church was ready and when I told the minister Nicolae Noica, a specialist in building assessment, how much it had cost,

he refused to believe that the total cost had been so low. Each peasant was proudly telling about a small part: “this corner was built by me”, “the joint of this spire has been done by me”. Those who were not able to carry heavy material were doing something else. I have seen some incredible things – the painter went on with his story – people that were taking the nails out of the old boards, straightened them with a s-stone hammer, then other sharpened their tips. Those who were too old or ill, those who were unable to work, urged by the priest were praying in turn, so that, during the building of the church, day or night, someone was praying to God.

Next to us, Zemleny Csabo, a Hungarian painter of Romanian origin who has settled in New York, was listening in carefully. Known in the West for the originality of his oil paintings, he has a studio in Budapest, but comes from time to time in Bucharest, because he considers it to be the only place in the world “where he truly feels alive”, where he may again come across the feeling of friendship, which he longs for, and the charm of intelligent unselfish talks. He walks the places of his student years and rejoices every time. He tells us that the first thing he had done that day was walk on Calea Victoriei from the White Church to Cretulescu Church and then up to Stavropoleos Church. Because, as he confesses it is nowhere else but in the tiny Romanian churches that the sublime meets privacy in a more felicitous way.

May be from New York our tormented post-December society is seen in a different light than from Cămpina.

The Wall is Too Tight around Me

21 March 2002, ASPEC

My first press conference regarding the analysis of the current political situation of Romania. I haven't appeared to express a political attitude in public for a year and a half, with the exception of January 2002, as a consequence of the abusive arrest of Mugur Ciuvică by means of an action of political repression. In *The Declaration*, and then in the answers to the questions, I make an analysis on different points of the activity of the Năstase Government, against the election promises, the government program, but especially against its own promises for this period of one year and a half. The reaction does not come late. Hardly had the press conference ended that the general secretary of the PSD, released a public statement without answering any of the questions I had asked the government and the ruling party, he

merely questions the right to express myself. Likewise the government's spokesman in another press statement says literally: "Emil Constantinescu has no right to speak."

So, if we are to speak, then let us speak about this Bolshevik manner of treating the right to an opinion, which, in fact, finds its roots in the communist system. In his volume *Panta rhei*, the well-known Soviet dissident Vassili Grossman – whose book was published only 15 years after his death – wrote, in full fledged communist regime, about the essence of Leninism. Lenin never answered questions: he always charged at his opponent. How come that these *new guys* have learned so well the lessons of the past?

I cannot complain too much about the attacks of my adversaries, as long as these attacks do not come late and belong to those who should have not necessarily backed me up to government's or administration's actions which they were part of themselves. I sometimes wonder where my team of *great masters, apprentices and masons* is. It is difficult to back up what is called "The Constantinescu Administration" when none of the three prime ministers reacts conclusively to defend their own achievements. The last of them, Mugur Isarescu, because he is the governor of the Central Bank which compels him into a neutral attitude; another one, Radu Vasile, because he had forsaken a long time ago any link to his own actions, joining another party which he does not even back up in any way; and the first of them, Victor Ciorbea, speaks up, but unfortunately, is not taken into account. Things are not totally different as far as the three ministers of foreign affairs are concerned; out of them, the last one, Petre Roman has retired and is waiting, the second one, Andrei Plesu, took refuge in culture and philosophy, and the first one, Adrian Severin, who politically and as far as publishing is concerned is active, is now among the leading ranks of the PSD. As far as the other ministers are concerned, things are not better either, and the charges come at will, because irrespective of how much of an aberration they may seem, nobody opposes them.

I have been waiting for one year and a half, for at least a serious analysis based upon documents and statistic data of the activity of the Constantinescu Administration. It did not happen, not even on the part of those who have a critical attitude towards the current PSD governing. The PSD criticism is always accompanied by the same stereotypes regarding the previous governing. Sometimes we reach even aberra-

tions as it was the case of one commentator who had marked as “the negative points of the Constantinescu Administration”, the coming of the miners, as if I was the one who had organized them, and not stopped them; this happens while the lady editor-in-chief of the magazine wonders about whoever remembers Emil Constantinescu, that seems to be sinking in a remote past, somewhere between the two world wars.

Making Confusion Look Plain

20 June 2002, Dalles Hall

The launching of Marius Oprea’s book *The Plainness of Evil. A History of the Security Forces in Documents*. I had received the book a few days before, accompanied by a moving dedication and the request to say something, together with Ticu Dumitrescu, Andrei Plesu and professor Pippidi. Extreme heat, no trace of air conditioning. People seem many because of the narrow space, but if we exclude the press and the former Cotroceni team, – present almost in full – there are not many left. With the exception of Mihai Carp, the former manager of the *Free Europe* radio station, the liberal leader Zamfirescu and the presidential adviser Stireanu, I do not make out anyone remarkable. Plesu is drinking one glass of water after another; whatever he drinks, he sweats off. I ask the other speakers not to comply with the order announced in the program and leave me last. Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu plunges with his well-known impetuosity in the story of what should be another book, his book of memories not written yet, he gives the names of generals and colonels, former lieutenants when they were questioning him and briefly mentions a terrible event. At Poarta Albă, imprisoned in a space of 80 cm in diameter, he could not sit down not even on the floor, because there were nails stuck in the walls with their sharp end outwards, so that when he would no longer stand, those nails would go into his skin. Andrei Plesu acknowledges the harsh reaction of the ruling party towards revealing the identity of Security Forces officers by the CNSAS. Andrei Pippidi, who runs the Institute for the Research of Recent History where the author works, reminds us of a few episodes in the book and does not forget to emphasize the fact that it is one of the first achievements of the institute he is running.

My turn has come. I had nothing prepared beforehand. I had listened in closely to all the other speakers. I did not just flip through the

book. I actually read it. Its coming out seems to me a special thing indeed. The material published is the subject of the author's doctoral dissertation and one can feel the rigour of the scientific researcher. There is something that brings it closer to what is the search for the truth. The facts, "these stubborn beings" remain the most credible arguments. Marius Oprea's idea was to put together, systematize reports, informing, accounts of Security Forces officers, taken down in shorthand, checked, signed, with notes, dated, put in folders and filed by the very Security Forces. This makes the book much more believable because it ensures a real maximum level and objectivity, denying the accusations of bias brought to many books written about victims. The more terrifying the stories of those who have been victims of the Security, the less credible they seem to be because the mind refuses to accept them. This time, it is not those who have suffered who talk about their executioners, it is the executioners talking about themselves in a professional way according to regulations.

The author had the rare and fantastic intuition of not intervening by romancing the book, refraining from the temptation of making any comments. Even the dedication includes a terrible excerpt from a medical report: "The brigadier beat the detainee to extermination. After having beaten him, he was laid on a stretcher in which iron nails had been stuck. When he brought him to the infirmary dead, his body had been entirely pierced." The author adds just one sentence: "This volume is dedicated to this Jesus from the camp."

What is there left?

16 August 2002, Pictor Mirea 4

The analyst Dan Pavel, one of the few, if not the only one who seems preoccupied with a serious examination of the forming and development of the CDR, in opposition and government, asks me for an interview. Little by little, we come to question number 30: "What mark are president Constantinescu, the CDR and the coalition 1996-2000 going to leave in our national history? What were the achievements/the irreversible processes initiated during this period?" It is a question upon which I have to ponder.

I believe that the period 1996-2000 will go down in history as the crucial moment of rupture with the past, of ending the falsely democratic seven year reign of FSN-PDSR, of a radical change in both foreign and domestic policy. The irreversibility of the change is con-

firmed by the new PSD government, which pursues to a great extent the road opened to Romania by the elections of 1996. How deep was the change of 1996-2000 is something that all those who realize what would have happened to us had the PDSR won the elections of 1996, can figure out and which would have been Romania's position in 2000, after eleven years of being ruled by the same political force. I have no doubt that political and historical analysts will eventually tell the truth, namely that what the President and the Government are declaring and doing now would have been far from being the case in 1997. If the CDR had not opened a new road, the PSD would have kept its own. It would not have undergone the risk of losing its voters' confidence. For President Iliescu, the loss of the elections in 1996 was a surprise. For me, the loss of popularity and chances of winning the elections was a risk I has assumed in 1999, just as I had decided to assume both the failures during my term and not running for the presidency in 2000. If we are to admit that both decisions were the first ones of this kind in the Romanian policy of assuming personal responsibility as opposed to risks and failures, then my term would be undoubtedly recorded as beneficial for the first decade of the post-communist era. Just as the governing by the CDR or better said of the coalition CDR-USD-UDMR, which had the courage to impose a different approach to reform and privatization, will be recorded as a coalition of the relationships to the political party of the Hungarians and of the minorities in general. Do you think that back in 2001 there would have been any protocol between the PSD and the UDMR, would the PSD have talked about privatization for one euro or about closing down troubled state companies, that have no buyers or would there have still been today's mobilization in order to fulfill the prerequisites for NATO and EU entrance if its line of victories had not been interrupted in 1996? No matter how many times the prime-minister and the minister of Foreign Affairs would repeat the fact that Romania has gained back its credibility during their year of government, it will go down in history the fact that the NATO documents from Madrid 1997 and Washington 1999 have been a decisive step for Romania, just as the starting of negotiations for EU entrance after the Helsinki summit has been a success. Romania's achievements during the 1996-2000 period have made the timid attempts of domestic reform and Euro-Atlantic integration from previous years be transformed into an effective and irreversible process, from which the current PSD government cannot go astray.

There have been many times during the last years, I felt both like *Master Manole* dominated by the project, dazzled by it, vain and capable of sacrificing those close to him for its sake, and as Ana walled in the bricks of ingratitude and forsaking. At least Manole has the privilege of seeing the walls not going down, the building finished, even if he will not take part in its inauguration. Beyond the two faces of the builder, there remains the construction which lasts. I may have understood too late that in the collective imagination of the last decade of the 20 century, the walled one has to be Neagoe. Now when the fiscal agents are gathering the money due and, with their eyes set on Western Europe, they want to sink us again into the dark ages, I prefer the ballad *Andri Popa* (the famous one).

THE GALLERY WITH PORTRAITS

The Two-pencey Purse

August 2002, Bucharest

Viorel Hrebenciuc, who has some sort of affable and cheerful knavery, teaches the youth of the PSD summoned for the summer school – the low tricks of the presidential campaign of 1992, – boasting about how he had manipulated *Romania Libera*, Petre Mihai Băcanu and the group of the intellectuals around me.

During the second round of the presidential elections 2000, many intellectuals went out of civic and patriotic spirit to vote for Ion Iliescu to save the country from the danger represented by Vadim Tudor during the first round in order to eliminate a possible competition from either Isaescu or Stolojan, that could have regrouped their voters during the first round. For the time being, what Hrebenciuc has revealed is true for 1992. At that pace, we have yet to see the knavery of 1996 and 2000.

The PSD has built a policy based on aggressive propaganda that stifles everything in a lie. As in Orwell's novel *1984*. Everything is presented upside down and the headquarters of the lie is in the Palace of the Truth. The press has had its contribution. The tycoons of the PSD are called Barons. Miron Cozma is a Morning Star. Vadim is a Tribune and a Justice man. Under Dancu's wand, the experience of the communist vehicle, that had stopped because all its energy was directed to its horn, is not far from being repeated.

When looking at somebody, Adrian Năstase does not see the person but the money and the votes and when he addresses the people he sees a bunch of idiots that can be told anything. When he addresses intellectuals, he sees a category of naïve, vain and poor people that can be bought. From: Give them Nicu a hundred lei to: Give them Ion (Antonescu) an anniversary premium, it is not a long way.

The Jack of Spades

June 2002, The Diplomatic Club

A reception given by the ambassador of Great Britain, Richard Ralph, in honour of Queen Elizabeth's birthday. On the terrace, and

the wide expanse of grass on the shore of the lake there are president Iliescu, the Prime Minister Năstase and many other persons. People are mingled just as in any other reception.

After the hymns, discourses and the cutting of the cake, I am approached by Constantin Simirad, the mayor of Iassy. He is ever fatter, ever more cheerful, ever redder. Though I asked him nothing about his recent joining the PSD with his entire tiny party, after the failed attempt of obtaining a job as ambassador from president Iliescu, he starts telling me that even Steven the Great, after decades of fighting the Turks had come to peace with them. The claim of traitors to cover themselves with historic and philosophic pretexts disgusts me. I always prefer a cynical traitor.

What's the story of this opportunist who compares himself with Steven the Great?

I would suggest Mr. Constantin Simirad, if he is so fond of history to take notice of the words uttered by the bishop Ioan Suciu, who, during the early period of the communist regime, had seen only one solution for salvation: "The firmness of the people in heroism and the forsaking of treason and decomposition", adding that "today and in the days to come there is only one way in life moving you away from treason: the heroic way".

It is true that Ioan Suciu did not die in his bishop chair but in an iron bed in prison. There may come a time when those who hold their high official positions by means of treason will die of shame. That is if they still have it.

Cockroaches

4 March 2002, the Gallery of Interests

Iuliana Vilsan is showing me to her exhibition "Miniatures and Hieroglyphs", hosted by an art gallery in the old centre of the city. The young painter, a graduate of the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest and then of the University of Arts, has an original and attractive art. I dwell on in front of two drawings placed next to each other which appear to be quite shocking to me. The first one represents a white, narrow strip between two large black spaces. On the white strip there is a cockroach in the process of going along the free corridor. In the following drawing, two bar stools, with unlikely high legs set next to each other. On each of the chairs drawn in pen, there is one cockroach. One in front of each other, they seem to be talking to

one another. The first drawing is called "We are advancing", the second one "We may succeed, we may not".

The two drawings remind me of a discussion with Dorin Marian, during the period when he was presidential counsellor at Cotroceni, and had to speak with different people from the new post December financial political oligarchy to protect me from those requesting audiences. One evening he told me with the rebelliousness of a young man who had imagined something different about the world of politics when he studied political sciences for a master's degree in the United States: "Do you realize how I feel after I spend my time in such discussions?" He confessed that he had been puzzled when important members financing an ascending party from the opposition of 1999, considered themselves cockroaches. "In the living room, the ideologists of the party are discussing programs and strategy. We are sitting in the kitchen with Mrs. F., organizing the finances and success."

In 2002, those people that Dorin Marian was talking about are now deputies in the Parliament or high officials of the state. *They have made it.*

MACBETH AND MITICĂ***The Last Month of the Year***

Wednesday, 1 December 1999, Cotroceni

1999 has been a nightmare: parliamentary strikes, union strikes, patron strikes; miners' riots; the Kosovo war. And throughout all this, a long list of coalition officials queuing up to complain about the lack of efficiency of Prime Minister Radu Vasile.

The National Peasants' Party feels humiliated that Vasile has practically transferred his attributions as head of the Executive to Traian Băsescu, and the most important decisions are being made without consulting the party leaders.

The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania is dissatisfied that the Prime Minister does not keep any of his promises made during the talks at the Council for Coordinating the Coalition.

The National Liberal Party criticizes Vasile's lack of seriousness and his failing to focus on Government priorities. Finally, Petre Roman, displeased with Băsescu's increasing power, starts to have trouble within his own party.

More or less directly, more or less openly, people come to Cotroceni Palace to ask me or my advisors to support the replacement of Radu Vasile.

I knew Vasile. He was sitting on my right at meetings of the Higher Council for the Defense of the Country (CSAT), we knew each other back in the 1992 campaign, not to mention the fact that in 1996 he should have been my campaign director, but he did not take part in any of the more significant electoral events.

He was an agreeable person to talk to, but not very suitable as Prime Minister. He managed to win over the media, but nearly everybody shortly realized his deficiency in scope. Avid for publicity, but lacking arguments, Radu Vasile was probably the Prime Minister best treated by the press.

I had not preferred him as Prime Minister, but I succeeded, for a while, in communicating with him. He did not have the practice or the patience for longer meetings, which made CSAT meetings a torture for him. He often went out into the hall to watch football games or smoke and more often than not I had to send for him to be able to conclude the Council meetings.

This was Radu Vasile, and those who proposed him a year ago knew as well as I did, or even better, who they were dealing with. The same people now ask me to replace him, just before the European Council at Helsinki, which should bring Romania the invitation to join the EU. My answer was to postpone the topic until after Helsinki. There are other party leaders in the coalition who tell me that Vasile's Government is a failure, that they understand and respect my point of view, but that they will officially request his dismissal after the Helsinki meeting.

The Best Hour

Saturday, 11 December 1999, Otopeni Airport

I come back to Romania, satisfied with the result obtained in Helsinki. I've been thinking that Prime Minister Radu Vasile will be at the airport, in the welcoming committee. A good opportunity to draw him aside and talk as a serious-minded politician to another, and why not, as man to man, acting above board. Whenever I have had anything unpleasant to do, I have done it straightforwardly and personally. I go straight to Cotroceni and ask the Cabinet to put me through to Radu Vasile. He does not answer his phone either.

The President and the Prime Minister have both at work and at home several telephones with an internal Government circuit T.O. and T.S., plus an exclusive protected telephone line, to be used in emergencies. He does not answer any of these. I ask my assistant and order him to find his counterpart in Vasile's office, who accompanies him wherever he goes. The assistant replies that he has gone to bed. I send him word to tell him that I called in an important matter and call me anytime when he wakes up. The next morning I try again. He does not answer any phone until late at night.

Sunday, 12 December 1999

7 a.m. I could not sleep thinking of the address to the Romanian people after the European Council of Helsinki to open negotiation with

Romania. I have always been accustomed not to prepare a victory speech beforehand. For me, the Helsinki decision has been Romania's greatest victory since the Great Union of 1918. It may sound exaggerated, but this is how I feel. This is what I thought and I have fought for this ceaselessly. I believe that Romanian history will now change its course. But how many are there who believe or feel as I do? I feel that what I am about to say in tonight's speech must be convincing, as this is the moment for all Romanians to agree on the future we must build together. I will not dwell on the past. On the contrary, I will start by thanking all those who, one way or another, have contributed to this success: the parliaments from 1990 until today, the former President Ion Iliescu, the Governments led by Petre Roman, Theodor Stolojan, Nicolae Văcăroiu, Victor Ciorbea and Radu Vasile. And last but not least, the diplomats who have represented Romania in her relations with the European Union. I must try to find a convincing answer to a few questions: What is the European Union? What do we want from the European Union? What does the European Union want from us? What can the European Union give us, now and in the future and, finally, what must we do now? I am especially troubled by the last question, because first of all next year we need a good Government, that can give Government actions a new dynamic and draw up a realistic and trustworthy programme for the year 2000. The ministers and the ministries have mostly done their duty. What has been missing and cannot continue to do so is the coordination of all these efforts. A good organization is wanting. The Government must be led and coordinated so that the programmes should be carried out step by step, the promises made taken on earnestly and respected in due course. Responsibility, reliability and coherence are indispensable for the new stage we are about to enter. The first issue is undoubtedly that of the Prime Minister, whom the Government and the coalition can no longer see capable of managing this effort. But who can? Who could ensure the competence, the management, the necessary cohesion? I had stopped all attempts to replace the Prime Minister until after Helsinki, but now time is pressing us ruthlessly. In Helsinki I invited Romano Prodi to come to Bucharest on the 13 of January, so as to give a decisive signal of the help the European Union wishes to grant us. Neither his coming nor the beginning of the negotiations for accession under Portuguese presidency, for which Prime Minister Gutierrez has promised all his personal support and that of his Government can take place during a

Government crisis. The Christmas holidays are approaching and Romanians do not like to think of politics at this time of the year. And as if on purpose they had to in the past two years. So everything must be settled very quickly. I am counting on Radu Vasile's understanding. After all, Walesa changed Prime Ministers four times during his mandate. So has Eltsin, at least so far.

I realize that having dreamt of this success so long, it might be overshadowed by a change of Government. Romanians are hardly interested in foreign policy anyway, the replacement show will completely shift attention. I may only have a day.

6 p.m. The last touches before recording the address. I think it has come out well. Ticu Alexe is messing about with the lights and frames. He has been by my side all these years, ever since Alba Iulia and Lisbon, and at Helsinki. I have rarely met a man so dedicated to what he does. When he is filming, he forgets all else. The time of the recording has come. First take, as they say.

"Shall we do another take, as back-up?" says Ticu.

"No, leave it at that." He leaves in a hurry to make copies for the television channels. It must reach the studios in an hour. I ask Mugar Ciuvică one more time:

"Has Radu Vasile answered?"

"No."

"Not once?"

"Not once."

It is hard to move about in an empty ring. I have never enjoyed shadow boxing. Left alone, I think again of the fate of the address. It will probably be drowned in the same placid or malicious comments like all my addresses in the past three years. A few difficult days might follow, even more. I think again of Churchill's *Memoirs*, my favourite books. I know many chapters by heart. He did not even make it to the end of the war and England's victory, for which he had done so much. A few days before Japan's surrender, he lost the elections disastrously and stepped down from his office as Prime Minister. The titles of the volumes of his Memoirs sound predestined to the events I have lived through during the last few years and perhaps even to those who will come. *The Storm is Gathering*, *The Best Hour*, *The Great Alliance*, *Triumph and Tragedy*. The first volume has as preface the moral thesis of the work: "In war – determination, in defeat – defiance, in victory – generosity, in peace – benevolence."

*The Storm is Gathering**Monday, 13 December 1999*

8 a.m. I try again to reach Radu Vasile. Unsuccessfully.

9 a.m. Ion Diaconescu, the President of the PNTCD calls me up to tell me that he has managed to contact Radu Vasile, who agreed to resign. They made an appointment at the Government at 11 a.m.

1.15 p.m. President Diaconescu calls to tell me that after waiting two hours at Victoria palace, he went to the seat of his party. The leaders of the parties in the coalition announce that they will request their ministers to resign and will call meetings of their offices later in the day to officially withdraw their support from Prime Minister Radu Vasile. I change Constantin Teleagă, state councilor for the relations with the Executive, to keep in touch with the coalition party leaders and the ministers. Cabinet Director Mugur Ciuvică and Chief of Cabinet Mihaela Marcu will call a meeting of the coalition leaders at 8 p.m.

2 p.m. – 4 p.m. All PNTCD ministers tender their resignations at Cotroceni.

5 p.m. The Central Leadership Office of the PNTCD announces the withdrawal of their support from Radu Vasile.

5.30 p.m. Mugur and Alina keep calling Victoria Palace to summon Radu Vasile to the meeting.

6 p.m. The Coordination Council of the PNL decides to withdraw political support from Prime Minister Radu Vasile.

6.30 p.m. The liberal ministers tender their resignations at Cotroceni.

6.45 p.m. I talk with Petre Roman on the phone. He tells me that the Democratic Party will in their turn withdraw their political support from the Prime Minister.

7 p.m. Radu Vasile has sent a message to all TV stations in which he assumes the merit of Romania having been invited to begin negotiations for accession to the European Union and announces that the second part of the loan has been granted by IMF. He says that despite the resignations of almost all the ministers and withdrawal of support on the part of the coalition, "as a private person and as Prime Minister of Romania he does not resign for purely moral reasons."

7.10 p.m. The resignations of UDMR ministers are announced at Cotroceni.

7.20 p.m. At the end of the meeting of the heading Council of the Democratic Party solidarity with the coalition is announced.

7.25 p.m. Considering the resignations of the ministers, I take note of the Government blocking and of the absence of political support. I ask Răsvan Popescu to make an announcement on television on behalf of the President of Romania and to publicly invite Prime Minister Vasile to the meeting with the leaders of the Government coalition.

8 p.m. Meeting with the coalition leaders. I am informed that Radu Vasile is at Snagov and refuses to speak with those who nominated him for the position of Prime Minister. Unexpected situation! Marko Béla says we need a new Prime Minister, who will look to the future and will be capable of establishing Government priorities. Remus O-priþ talks of the bad relations between Radu Vasile and PNTCD members. He stresses the need for a new Prime Minister, truly of his own party. Petre Roman agrees to the change and asks for seriosity in the interim Prime Minister. We decide to address Radu Vasile in writing for the last time, signed this time by the President of Romania, the President of the Senate and the President of the Chamber of deputies. The talks focus on how to deal with the Government crisis. We come to the conclusion that by the resignations of the ministers, the Prime Minister cannot exercise his office as head of the Government, which can no longer function.

I take note of the resignations of the ministers in the Vasile Cabinet, and based on art.106 and 105 from the Constitution, I dismiss Radu Vasile from the office of Prime Minister by Decree 426/December 13, 1999. The talks focus on naming an interim Prime Minister. I propose Andrei Marga, but everyone reject him. I propose Nicolae Noica, who is accepted, but when contacted by phone by President Diaconescu, he declares that the office is too high for him. "Even as interim?" I ask. "Even so." he answers. It is one of the few situations when somebody unassumedly appreciates the peak of his competence in Romania.

I propose Alexandru Athanasiu, present at the meeting as representative of PSDR. He is accepted and he accepts. The meeting ends long after midnight.

When I get to the cabinet, I am informed that in the meantime Radu Vasile has not been a moment off the phone. It is said that he has been consulting with Ion Iliescu, who appears to have assured him of his support and that PDSR and PRM will initiate the procedure of suspension of the President. Răsvan Popescu tells me that Vasile declared to Mediafax that he intends to setup a new Government.

*The critical moment**Tuesday, 14 December 1999*

8 a.m. My cabinet and my assistant resume their attempts to contact Radu Vasile. Meanwhile two Prime Ministers go to Victoria Palace, the dismissed one who refuses to leave the building and the interim who is trying to call a Cabinet meeting. Dorin Marian tells me that the SPP agents are confused and ask for instructions as to who holds the function which they are to protect.

10 a.m. Meeting with the leadership of PNTCD. The difficulty of nominating a Prime Minister begins. PNTCD proposes Ciumara, Spineanu and Dudu Ionescu. None of them are accepted by the coalition parties. I propose Radu Sârbu, but PNTCD reject him.

7 p.m. I receive at home the governor of the National Bank, Mugur Isărescu. We discuss the political crisis and I ask him to run a new Government. He hesitates. He tells me that he is away from home too much as it is and his children suffer from it. He wishes to consult his wife. I understand. After the shows offered by Romanian political life, few attempt to take on such an important office. I have had the chance to know him and I know his weakness. He is from Oltenia, his father was a schoolteacher and an officer in the royal army and he educated him in the patriotic spirit of the period between the world wars.

I play my trump card. The situation is difficult, national and international stakes are immense. It is a turning point. Few people at present in Romania are equal to this historic challenge. What was most difficult has passed. Isărescu has all the qualities to manage the first possible recovery of the country. He has the chance of being a new Brătianu. It is not easy for him to give up the prestige he has achieved in the world of bankers, nor the considerable material benefits. His salary is much greater than that of a Prime Minister. But I feel that the last argument has convinced him. He says yes. He still sets as a condition that his wife should agree.

9 p.m. Dinner with the directors of the larger newspapers.

Wednesday, 15 December 1999

3 p.m. I have a meeting with the former President Ion Iliescu. Out of politeness, I present to him the situation in the Government, which he knows everything about in great detail, and I inform him of my intention of nominating Mugur Isărescu as Prime Minister. He does not seem surprised. I don't know whether he has been consulted by Isărescu or whether he has learnt the news by other means. He tells me that PDSR is for the moment expectant.

4 p.m. Meeting the the leading Bureau of the PNTCD at Cotroceni. I tell them that the new crisis, again due to a PNTCD Prime Minister, has reduced the public image of the party almost completely and it is hard to believe that PNTCD will be able to impose a new Minister. I request them to accept an independent Prime Minister, a technocrat and a political Government.

Ion Diaconescu and Vasile Lupu accept. Remus Opriș considers it a dangerous proposal, Ionescu-Galbeni rejects it, Virgil Petrescu wants a PNTCD Prime Minister, Mircea Ciumara agrees to any solution. Gabriel Țepelea says that the Government must be PNTCD. "We will put forth proposals." The "We will resign but support a new Government" tactic is tried again. Dudu Ionescu is the one who formulates it: "I uphold a political Government, with a technocrat Prime Minister."

The radio and television broadcast the declarations of support of Radu Vasile by PDSR, PRM and the revolutionary organizations represented by Dan Iosif.

8 p.m. The Yellow Hall. A long and weary discussion with the leaders of the opposition. They accept my proposal with Mugur Isărescu as Prime Minister seconded by three state ministers, representing the most important parties in the Government coalition. PNTCD accepts, on condition that I have a meeting with the parliamentary groups of the party. Meanwhile, Isărescu calls me to say that there are difficulties at home. His wife does not agree. I tell this to the leaders. Băsescu proposes Stolojan. Diaconescu is perplexed and refuses vehemently. So do the liberals and UDMR. A short argument between Stoica and Markó Béla. I realize that things tend to approach a dangerous point. I call Mugur Isărescu and invite him to my house with Mrs Isărescu.

11.30 p.m. Pangratti 20. In a parallel and simultaneous *tête à tête*, my wife proves to be an excellent advocate, Mrs Isărescu smiles and offers a symbolic gift: a small crystal scales, "to prompt me to remain a just man." I tell her that I take upon myself all the blows. I finally obtain her acceptance and that of the governor, I get into my car and drive back to Cotroceni.

Tuesday, 16 December 1999

12.30 a.m. On my return to Cotroceni, I find the coalition leaders rather sulky, especially Athanasiu, who had imagined himself state minister and plays hardball from his still valid position as Prime Minister, declaring that unless he is made state minister, he declines a place

in the Government. No one objects and “things stay as settled”, to quote a vodka comercial.

12 p.m. – 7.30 p.m. I meet with the PNTCD parliamentary groups. I propose a technocrat Prime Minister, Mugur Isărescu, and three state ministers: Mircea Ciumara, PNTCD, Petre Roman, PD, and Valeriu Stoica, PNL. Then I met with PUNR, ApR, UFD, Minorities, FER, PER, PNR. I heave a sigh of relief. The hard part is apparently over. Most people don't even seem to realize how hard it has been. We very nearly failed altogether. In the meantime, Radu Vasile has negotiated with PNTCD for canceling the penalization of the Prime Minister on December 13th. President Diaconescu brings me the PNTCD communiqué and I have Răsvan Popescu send it to Radu Vasile. The latter is at home, in his villa in Cotroceni. After letting Răsvan Popescu wait outside in the street, in the cold, for an hour and a half, he sends back the communiqué, with his claims. PNTCD rejects them and broadcasts the communiqué in its initial form.

8 p.m. I address the nation on television on the nomination of the Romanian National Bank governor as Prime Minister of the Romanian Government. I insist on the fact that the new Government will have to manage the economic and social readjustment of the country, and at the same time negotiate with the EU under difficult conditions. I stress the fact that this Government will have a strong political support from the entire coalition. The coalition parties continue to assume responsibility for the Government and for supporting the Government in Parliament.

8.30 p.m. Radu Vasile keeps maneuvering through intermediaries. Mihaela puts me through to Roșca Stănescu, who volunteers as mediator. I tell him there is nothing to mediate. He calls again proposing that I should see the general secretary of the Youth Organization of PNTCD, Marius Bostan. I knew him at the University and know him to be well-meaning. He asks me to receive the Prime Minister at home, at the Pangratti residence, at 9 p.m. When I get home, I see Radu Vasile's car in front of the gate and I tell my assistant to ask him into the house. I find Marius Bostan in the hall, who tells me that Radu Vasile will speak through him. A scene that might have been taken from an absurd play follows, in which I talk to Bostan in my library, and he goes out at times into the hall to communicate to Radu Vasile, who is sitting in his car in front of the house, not 10 metres away. He finally comes back flourishing a mobile phone and hands it to me to speak to Radu Vasile. We talk for over three quarters of an hour, while

Radu Vasile negotiates his resignation. I finally tell him that I will try to convince Mr Diaconescu. He insists that his wife should keep her position as director at AVAB of all his counsellors, he refers to Petrișor Peiu, "the only one I care about", he says. "the others are no good."

Friday, 17 December 1999

Radu Vasile sends in his resignation through Petrișor Peiu, his favourite counsellor.

1 p.m. I have lunch with the ambassadors of EU and NATO member countries. I am pleased to announce the solution of the crisis and Romania's decision to make all efforts so that the first six months of negotiations should be a decisive success. Prodi confirms his visit on the 13 of January. He will find a new and efficient Government. The ambassadors assure me of their Governments' support.

On all radio and TV stations there is a line-up of politicians and journalists all suddenly turned into legal specialists. They prove themselves able to read articles, but not the Constitution in its entirety. Not having found anything in black and white as to interrupting a Prime Minister's mandate when he loses the support of the parties that had nominated and supported him previously, they declare: "It is impossible! The President is wrong! The Constitution has been seriously infringed!"

According to them, the Constitution should be a sort of a code of procedures and rules for every situation which is likely or unlikely to appear in the history of the country. How could the Constituents Assembly have imagined that a Prime Minister in the situation of the current one should refuse to resign? And why should we think that, in speaking of the Prime Minister, art.106, with reference to art.105, which refers to "the cessation of function as member of the Government" through "revocation", cannot be applied to the situation in which the Prime Minister cannot act as head of the Government because he no longer has ministers? It can of course be believed by those who are not professionals, or by those who are, even experts on the Constitution, but who prefer to interpret things according to party interests at a given time.

"The spirit of the law" has as starting point the interest of the country to have a Government that functions as a team in its entirety as invested by the Parliament and with a Prime Minister legitimized by the support of the majority and by the trust placed in him by his Cabinet. It would be interesting for the TV specialists to have found it right that

art.108 in the Constitution, according to which "each member of the Government is politically responsible concurrently with the other members for the activity of the Government", should not apply to the Prime Minister because he is not specifically mentioned in the text. I have no doubt that political responsibility and revocation as defined in the Constitution apply to the Prime Minister as well as to the other members of his team. Not to mention honourable resignation, which the Prime Minister did not deign to take into consideration even after his colleagues in the Government have set the example.

12 December 1999

3.30 p.m. I receive Plesu in a farewell meeting. We have collaborated excellently in difficult and decisive moments. He let me know as early as last spring that he was having health problems and that he wished to go. I asked him to stay, at least until the end of the year, so that the two successes, at OSCE and EU should bear his name as well. Too often, in politics as well as in life, do some build and others reap the benefits.

22 December 1999

12 p.m. Prime Minister Mugur Isărescu swears in with the other members of the new Government are sworn in. In my speech, I thank all those who have made possible the solution of the crisis preceding the creation of the new Government and first of all the parties in the Government, who have finally demonstrated their solidarity and decision to intensify reform with the start of the negotiations for EU accession. I warn the Government that a difficult period awaits them, at the level of the expectations of the EC from a negotiating partner and of the population.

I remind them of the difficult conditions confronting the former Government and I thank Prime Minister Radu Vasile for the efforts he has made. I express my regret that ministers Pleșu and Athanasiu have chosen not to continue their participation. I say this in all sincerity, they have been excellent ministers. In fact, this has been the paradox of the Radu Vasile Cabinet. One of the best Governments in Romania, but for the man who had named it.

Chess in Cișmigiu

Whenever I have to overstep the boundaries of an essay giving you the pleasure of joining ideas and words to describe a real event,

with real characters, I find myself faltering. Is it really necessary? In the case described here as I have seen it, it is. It definitely is. Because it is about a person who, while in high office, took a decision at a certain time which could have dragged the country, torn apart as it was, into a serious civil conflict and do long-term damage to its internal and external opportunities. Who really is Radu Vasile, the main character of this story? The attempt to portray him in a minor key: a man with a drooping moustache, with a long nail on his little finger, a ring on his ring finger and a red string tied around his wrist against evil eye, a joke always on his lips, ready for a drink and fiddlers, who is quick to make a promise but forgets it on the morrow, is an inaccurate attempt, leading nowhere.

As is his exaltation as saviour of the nation and great economic thinker, or on the contrary, his repudiation as a party- and Government- destroying evil genius. Because Radu Vasile is all of this but nothing completely. That is he is a truly Romanian character, like a shop display where everyone can pick up a small parcel to take home and there were undoubtedly many who recognized themselves in a person one can deal with in almost anything.

This is the nub. Radu Vasile is not a real Mitică. The real Mitică drinks beer with his meatballs and chats about friends and women, not about the EU and GNP. He makes decisions on his, his wife's and family's behalf. Not on behalf of the nation. He can afford to take a guess because he does not sign Governmental decisions. But, at the same time, nor is Radu Vasile a tragic character, who commits crimes to get power and expires gnawed by remorse. No one had prophesied to him that he would be at the peak of power until the Birnam forest should come to him.

Nor is he intelligent enough to notice that he was not Prime Minister by the grace of God and the will of the people, but much more prosaically, by the political intention of the parties with a majority in Parliament, which obliges him to resign when this support is withdrawn. Nevertheless, he is intelligent enough to negotiate, skillfully and cynically, a position for himself, one for his wife, and one for the guy with the money. How and at what price? It is immaterial. Infringing the laws, throwing the country into chaos, ruining your party, abandoning the ideology and the values in the name of which you were promoted in order to serve them? What country? What party? What ideology? The lack of any principle and character becomes a launching pad at a time when everything is for sale.

Fortunately, circumstances and making deals with those whom he had made deals sent Radu Vasile to a cosy position where he can play truant once in a while to play a game of chess in Cişmigiu gardens, thinking of the great political strategies he had dreamed of.

It is not his problem. It is ours. And it is called recklessness. The 2000 elections proved it fully and the 2004 elections are preparing to strengthen it. There are people you would be ashamed to walk down the street with, but you let them represent your country and your people in the world. There are people you would not lend 50,000 lei to, but you place the country's wealth and finances in their hands. There are people you would not invite in your home for a cup of coffee, because you are ashamed of the children, but you entrust to them the future of the country. Be careful who you shake hands with, who you go out with, who you lend money to, who you receive into your home, but be extra careful who you vote for.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

Bloodstained Wars Where Soldiers Seldom Die

29 July 1999, Sarajevo

The Pact of Stability Summit. I am going to meet again tomorrow the presidents Alia Izetbegovici, Zivko Radisici and Ante Jelavici. I cannot sleep. From the window of the small private hotel I watch the summits of the mountains in the moonlight that surrounds the city and from where they shot with so much anger on it. I am thinking about all these strange wars in the former Yugoslavia, in which there died tens of thousands of people out of which very few were actually military. Each combatant army or militia killed especially the civilians of the opposite nationality. In the cities, most public institutions or industrial units were not destroyed by the enemy party but by those who left them, not to be used by the enemy. In the villages, the peasants put fire to their own houses and chattels. This is the old Balkan tradition, the tactics of the burnt land in your own country when the more powerful one invades you.

What was destroyed in each other camp with prevalence were not military and administrative objectives but religious and cultural sites, old buildings, churches, mosques, works of art, the library of Sarajevo and the bridge of Mostar, a bridge of remembrance.

Aiming at destroying anything concerning national identity it was, first of all, a war against the past. Future was not left aside either, due to the sinister action of ethnic rape. Between the past and the future, the madness of the present hit terribly the mixed families who in Bosnia-Herzegovina comprised the majority of population.

18 November 1998, Zenica

The military all terrain car with which I return from the inspection of the Romanian peace keeping forces in Bosnia goes up the mountain slope with difficulty. The ambassador asks driver to stop in a place from where one can be seen, in the valley a bridge, the only one that was not destroyed. He tells me that was the only place on which the enemy militias never shot. It is Saturday and here, at the end of the

week, the husbands and wives of the mixed families meet, each withdrawn in their native community, Serbian, Bosniac or Croat. With faces like stone in the cold wind, they exchange news about the children taken away, forced to forget their parents and brothers, banished from the villages torn apart by hate.

Soldiers and Generals

April 1994, Vienna

Together with some Romanians established in Austria, of modest trades – constructors on building sites, taxi drivers – on the terrace of a restaurant near the railway station. One of the companions points at a table in one of the corners. “Can you see them? They are colleagues of mine at the building site. Now they are drinking together. After a little while they take the train to Bosnia. At weekend they go there to fight in the camp of their nationality. Sometimes, on Monday, some of them do not show up. The owner sends funeral aid to the relatives.”

September 1994, Bucharest

The same year the meeting of the General Staffs of the armies of Balkan countries was organized in Bucharest. The organizers made efforts to place at the biggest possible distance the Serb and Croat delegations. Nevertheless, at the reception that followed the conference, they were stupefied to see Serb and Croat generals drawing their tables together and, after drinking several bottles of spirits, leaving together singing to the hotel.

Love in Chaos

7 February, Amman

The funeral of King Hussein of Jordan, a close friend of Romania. One of the largest attendance of chiefs of states known in history made the official planes circle above the airport for more than an hour before being able to land safely. The presence of such a large number of kings, presidents, prime ministers and emirs, among which the latest four presidents of the United States is an homage brought to a king who succeeded in reconciling the Jordanians and the Palestinians in his country, in making peace with Israel, being an oasis of peace in the Middle East. The funeral convoy goes through the streets of Amman. The king's horse, carrying the boots of his master in the stirrups, escorts him on the last way.

We are escorted to the royal palace, surrounded by an enormous green garden, suspended on an abrupt calcareous peak above the city neighborhoods with crowded white little houses. I will remember for long the bizarre amalgam of kings, presidents and governments which, for several hours, let themselves be drawn into free spontaneous talks, among baklava cakes and cataifs. At a certain moment, as I wanted to be alone, I went upstairs looking for an emptier lounge. I opened a door and I entered a long hall. On the right I saw the president of Syria, Hafez Al-Assad, escorted by a guard officer, and on the left a beautiful, thin lady with blue eyes, alone in front of a cup of coffee. I recognized the president of Ireland, Mary Mc' Aleese. I had met her a year before in Dublin and I asked the permission to join her at the same table. We talked about the curse of intolerance, hate, endless violence and the frail chances of understanding and peace in the zones of prolonged conflicts in the East, in Europe, all over the world.

April 1999, Bucharest

Two months after I returned, I received a book from Ireland, *Reconciled Being. Love in Chaos*, signed Mary Mc' Aleese, with a beautiful dedication from the author. Through the endeavor of Elena Zamfirescu, former ambassador from Ireland, the Romanians can enjoy a refined translation of this touching book.

"My dictionary Mary Mc' Aleese writes – defines the verb *to reconcile* as being the action of becoming friends again. Reconciliation does nothing else but bringing things back as they were. Sometimes it is difficult to see the initial friendship, if that ever existed. In a television commentary about the systematic raping of women in Bosnia, a journalist, feeling shocked, asked how it was possible that the victims knew the names of those having ruthlessly undone them. The victims' answer was perplexing: "Because we were school mates". Is it possible that sectarian groups, deeply divided, may live together, in worlds apparently integrated, living in fact in parallel universes, totally lacking communication?"

Whom Do the Gods Love?

1 December 1996, Alba Iulia

In the symbolic space of the Nation's Cathedral, the Primates of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches celebrate, for the first time after decades, a *Te Deum* in the presence of all the chiefs of religious

cults in Romania – Catholic, Protestant, Neoprotestant, Judaic, and Muslim. With the representatives of this extraordinary sign of unity beside me I take again, in front of a huge crowd of people, the *Oath of Faith to the Country*, that I had taken in the Parliament of Romania at the vesting ceremony three days before. In the next four years, whenever I was confronted with bursts of anger and violence that threatened the stability of the country I was to feel strengthened by this sign of the men of church who prayed for a god of peace and understanding.

April 1999, Bucharest

Can we be friends with God unless we are friends with the other people? Don't we deceive ourselves that we are loving simply because we choose our friends among those beings we find easy to love? "What can politics do – Mary Mc' Aleese was wondering taking a look at her own experience – when we are confronted with the overwhelming task of realizing political reconciliation starting from the chaos of conflicting ambitions, of boiling hate and deep wounds. Politics can finally lead to pragmatism and the latter to compromise, or at least, that is what people hope. But gods who accept compromise are rare. These gods give birth to powerful enemies and loyal friends. They know their own kind and the latter know them. These gods have favorites, and their hug is a curious thing, with one arm they hold those dear to them, with the other they raise a barrier against those they hate. Reviewing the many faces of hate: the holocaust, the massacres in Rwanda, the ethnic purification in Bosnia, a suicidal terrorist in a square in Jerusalem, the assassination of a teenager because he was catholic, the rape of a woman because she was Muslim, a bomb placed in the center of an English town because it is British or the shooting of peaceful demonstrators in Dublin by British troops because they were Irish, we can easily find out whom the gods love and how far the savage force of their hate can go" concludes the president grown up in the bosom of a great nation still torn apart by intolerance.

A Sunday in the Family

May 1999, Bucharest

In full war in Kossovo and Yugoslavia, taking advantage of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Bucharest I invited to Romania, political leaders from Serbia, Croatia, Albania and Bulgaria to spend a short stay at a guesthouse on the banks of Lake Herastrau. On Sunday we

had lunch together talking in the peaceful afternoon about peace, understanding, about the unifying common traditions, about our duty to fight violence. I found again the rare feeling of Sunday dinners that gather together the scattered family.

25 October 2000, Skopje

The Miloševich regime, the last national-communist bastion in Europe, fell. Immediately after the result of the elections was made public, in the confusing moments before Miloshevich gave up, I phoned Voislav Koshtuniza to assure him of my support and I proposed to organize a summit of the chiefs of state in the Balkan countries to show the world that we are able to think and act for our common future. Then, while Belgrade was boiling under the popular pressure I phoned the other presidents, who agreed to that. The president of Macedonia, Boris Traikovski, offered to host it in Skopje under the aegis of SEECF whose acting president he was. At the end of the reunion, before leaving home, president Traikovki invited us in a small lounge of the hotel having hosted the proceedings. After the agitation of the press conference, seated on low chairs at some low tables on which there were steaming cups of coffee and glasses of cold water, we kept silence for a while abandoning ourselves to a moment of quiet peace that brought to mind the expression: *an angel passed*. That was a rare feeling in our tormented region. Somebody broke the silence to notice that, for the first time, among the chiefs of states in the Balkan region there is nobody of the old guard was present.

It will not be easy, but it now depends only on us to understand each other, I added.

THE RICH AND THE POOR***Two Sides of Humbleness****1987 Transylvania*

Together with two colleagues of mine we were returning from a research trip. We had to change trains so we got off in a city in central Transylvania for a connection to Bucharest. We had several hours ahead of us, so we left our backpacks at the railway station and started off strolling downtown. The centre of the city, also known as 'the plate', seemed almost deserted in the slumbering afternoon with its big colourful houses and its tidy park. Then in front of an old building with big window shutters and worn out stairs, we saw about one hundred people queuing at the entrance with plastic bags or woolen sacks in their hands. 'What's on sale here?', somebody asked a man in the queue. 'Today's Thursday, there's bread coming', the man answered. Indeed, shortly after that, the car that had been ardently waited for since the break of dawn arrived. Several people volunteered to pass from one hand to another the big, round, black loaves of bread to the wooden counter. The car raced its ancient engine and drove away. When the crowd realised that the bread would scarcely be enough for a quarter of the queuing people, something hard to believe happened: all of them pounced on the door left ajar, sweeping aside the weaker people. A crippled man was thrown down off his wheelchair, several old women wearing black shawls were also knocked down. Only children's cries for help could come out of the general stampede, while the stronger were leaving in a hurry, their bags full of bread, without looking back. Several centuries of civilisation, or the illusion of it, melted away in several minutes by the inhuman fear of being left without bread for several days until the next transport.

One way or another, most of my generation is familiar with this image. Yet, we have always refrained from describing it to our children or students. My childhood bears the marks of interminable queues for rationalised bread, rationalised marmalade sliced off from big slabs in wooden boxes, hours on end waiting for meat in empty butch-

er's shops. It was early in my life that I became familiar with the hunger, cold and fear of 1947-1953, so that, when it all came back in the 90's, I was no longer scared. But in the 90's things were different. That peculiar psychological comfort of generalised poverty was gone. In the last years of Ceausescu's dictatorship I realised by looking at my students and my children who were going to high-school, that poverty was much more bearable if all the people around suffered from it. I don't look back on my student days as on a miserable time in my life, although I had only one drab suit to wear. We looked all the same and if one of my colleagues turned up better-dressed, he looked almost ridiculous. But things were different with my children who studied at the Sf. Sava High School in Bucharest. They had to go out with their colleagues, some of them dressed up to the latest fashion abroad. Their parents were of other means than those of a University professor.

Empty Shelves, Full Shelves

1993, Munich

Upon the invitation of the Hans Seidel Foundation I attend in a meeting with other University professors from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria, all involved in civil society. The director of the foundation, an intelligent, modest man invites us out in the evening to a small, traditional Bavarian brewery. He tells us he was born the Sudete region of the Czech Republic and he came to Germany as a refugee after the war. He recalls how he would stand, for hours on end, clinging to his mother's hand in the two-rowed lines that stretched for hundreds of metres, only to receive two potatoes. The difference between this *orderly* image, characteristic of the poverty-stricken Germany after World War Two and the *chaotic* picture of poverty in Romania as I have it in my mind, is, perhaps, most telling of the economic and educational gap separating Germany from Romania. And, maybe, it can tone down our not always modest claims to benefit from the living standards of the present-day Germany without the efforts and the decency of the German people in the 50's and the 60's. But it's also true that Germany's reconstruction did not have as background the strong impact of commercial television, neither the defying richness of its neighboring countries, as long as an ocean still separated Europe from America. My neighbors in the block of flats in which I live preferred to be late with paying their energy bills only to

buy a cable TV subscription. Private TV stations quickly became the *circus without bread* for the people, serving them tempting but utterly frustrating advertisements. Then there came the fever of the big prizes to be won by sending product packages or calling special numbers on the phone. But those things never make up for the daily drama of parents who cannot afford to buy their children the tantalizingly-out-of-reach chocolate appearing obsessively on TV screens. The American recipe, *easy to make and inexpensive food*, does not go in Romania or in other south-east European country because the US dollar weighs heavily here. I have quickly understood the drama of the future, when all shop-windows will be full but only some people will have money to buy things.

2001, Bucharest

In my strange country I had the mischance to experience, to the bitter end, the absurd situation of the post-communist decade, when, together with a handful of intellectuals, we promoted and supported, out of reason and firm belief, the laws and institutions of capitalism to secure a future prosperity based on the private initiative. Meanwhile the wolves of the communist nomenclature and the cubs of transition were putting on the guise of social-democrat defenders of the poor. I imagine the big laugh the transition profiteers were having at us, while they were voicing out loudly their disappointment with the lagging reform of the rightist government, and while they were getting rich from dirty business with the communist left.

Bread Smelling of Fish

1992, Galați

In the Russian textbook I had in high school there was a short story entitled *Râba (Fish Soup)*. It was about a poor man who, every day, would go and stand glued to the window of a pub where they served fish soup. After he would stare long enough at all the people eating there, he would sit down by the open door and eat his loaf of bread smelling of fish soup.

Is It So Terrible to Be a Swiss?

1996, Geneva

I'm having a chat with my old friend and colleague Tinti Orășanu and with some of his friends. We're talking hard life in Romania and

Switzerland. I recall that, one year ago, the famous Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa visited Bucharest. In 1990 he ran for president in Peru without any success. He spent many years in London writing for the literary page of the *Times*. 'Is it so terrible to be a Swiss?' he asks in a review of a book by Swiss writer Max Frisch. 'Reading this book, one might think there's no worse nightmare than civilisation. Being prosperous, well educated and free seems to be stiff boring. The price paid for these privileges is a humdrum existence. Maybe that's how things are, maybe the material progress and the political development, regarded as a model by so many poor and repressed nations, do look depressing. Any stage in the progress of humanity brings about new forms of frustration and unhappiness, different from those of the previous stage, and consequently, new reasons to wish for a better life. That doesn't mean that there's no such thing as progress, or that civilisation is a fraud. These notions do not necessarily translate in ultimate, perfect forms of existence. No matter how advanced and admirable a society were, people would still be discontent. If not, then discontent would have to be artificially provoked, for the sake of the future health of that nation. But *there is* progress. It's better to be bored to death in Switzerland, than to starve to death in Ethiopia, or to be tortured by a dictatorship in a third world country. But most important for the people striving for their countries to reach some day the living standards of Switzerland, is to know the mistakes they could do, so that they could avoid them or, at least, mitigate their effects.'

Llosa ends his review in a humorous tone: 'We must not lose hope. With some luck, the Swiss limb may be, some day, the much longed for inferno of the hero in Frisch's novel.'

We needn't wait for that. We have here, at home, the perfect malcontent, the newly-rich by fraud of transition whose revolt surges along with undeserved profits.

The Feast of Hospitality

July 1999, Sarajevo

The Conference of the Stability Pact brings together an important number of heads of state and government. During the working lunch a high official with the European Union turns to me noticing with a smile the bountiful dinner. 'Perhaps to offer more time for discussions', I answered returning his smile. I understood he intended his remark as a comparison with the official dinners in western countries, stylish but

frugal. In a diplomatic manner he wanted to emphasise a too obvious aspect: the poorer the country, the higher the expenses for its representation.

Of course, my answer, as prompt as unconvincing, can be better discussed within the frame of the south-east European mentality, the product of a Mediterranean tradition: the feast as a form of hospitality.

March 1990, The Rector's Office

A French delegation bringing food aid to the poor villages of Romania enters my office at the Bucharest University. They tell me they were rather puzzled when after they unloaded the powder milk and the tinned food they had bought from their own savings, they were invited by the villagers to a dinner so rich in food and drink, the like of which they hadn't seen in their entire lives. They told me they were left dumfounded by what they called the *uselessness of their gesture*. I asked them how long in advance they had announced their arrival to the mayor of the village.

'One month', they said. My answer was: 'You can be sure that all that month they did nothing but prepare to welcome you. They can't speak your language, they have no idea about your lifestyle. The only way to show you their love and gratefulness was that dinner prepared according to their custom from what they managed to save from their poverty. It was not a protocol dinner, they laid their soul on that table.'

If this short story speaks about difference deriving from a cultural understanding of hospitality, greater differences become manifest when we turn to the idea of saving and wasting vital resources. With the advent of urban civilisation wasting food becomes less important than wasting raw materials, water, electricity or energy resources. It's becoming obvious that the poor countries are the most reckless in using and saving these resources.

The most dramatic case is that of water resources because the mismanagement and the failure to preserve water resources triggers natural disasters. Romanian architect G.M. Cantacuzino once said that the history of the Romanians speaks about all kinds of invasions, but never mentions floods wreaking havoc on thousands of hectares of land. With the radicalism of a philosopher, a radicalism a politician could never afford, André Gide said that those nations which are not able to build roads and dam up their waters have no right to live. In faulty organised countries even when they do succeed in building with great

efforts a water supply system, its lamentable quality triggers huge losses, paid from the pocket of the consumer with an indifference hard to explain.

The Rain, the Sun and Us

February 2000, London

There was a short period of time between the meeting with Prime-minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street and the reception by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. It was too short for me to go upstairs to the suite on the 4th floor of the luxurious Claridge's hotel. The adjutant told the hotel butler that I wanted to wash my hands. He shows me ceremoniously to a toilet which is covered with marble where, after having put a tap to the basin he mixes hot and cold water to an appropriate temperature. This is the British way which makes one save water in a country surrounded by water and under water due to the rain most of the year. There is a warning in all big hotels in the West regarding the water crisis, the costs for its purification, and the risks regarding its pollution with detergent, all accompanied by the polite request of taking away used from the towels one has not used yet. My decades long memories from back in the country keep alive the image of broken canal pipes pouring out water ceaselessly, taps that went without being repaired for years on end, water running in the bathroom or in the kitchen most likely forgotten...

In the year 2000, when one of the most terrible droughts of the century had come upon Romania, I went to see the crops burnt because of the non-functioning of the irrigation system. *We cannot do anything*, the specialists shrugged their shoulders. Right after '90 everything has been stolen, all copper, iron and lead pieces have been disassembled and carried away, everything that could be sold. These things however, were not done in the middle of the night, secretly, these things were done in broad daylight, under the eyes of all the people living in the same village who could see how their neighbour would gather in his yard metal products that had no way of growing there, because nobody had opened mines of iron, copper or lead in their yards.

August 2000, Tancabesti

We are during one of the most droughty summers of the 20 century. The images of the crusty soil and dried crops prevail on the TV screens. I make a stop at one of the irrigation centres in the Romanian

Field, located 10 metres away from a spot still filled with water because the winter had been rich in snowfall. The irrigation system does not work and the cultures on the brim of the lake are dried with drought. The engineer keeps on telling me that the centre has not been working since 1990 because everything had been stolen: the lead pipes, the copper from the transformer a.s.o. There is no money to make it work again. And everything would be stolen once more anyway.

Who sifts the chaff from the wheat? Fences and gates welded from the irrigation pipes, swings and rib stalls for beating the dust out of carpets have moved into the yards of "households" an entire irrigation infrastructure. Leaving the soil and the cultures without a guard against drought, people have stolen from themselves under the passive look of the others.

June 2000, Mures Valley

As far as one can see, the waters of the Mures river stretch over the cultures after having crossed the road and the railway. The dams left broken, the modified courses of water, the chaotic exploitation of sands, uncontrolled grubbing, sloth, carelessness.

Scissors and Bulkworks

February 2002, Cluj

There has been a little over a year since I decided not to have critical reactions in order to save my time for a more serious analysis and since I have substantially cut off public contacts as well. I have used my time travelling – I cannot say incognito, because for me this is not possible yet, but as less officially as possible – throughout the country.

Crossing Transylvania I stop for a few hours in Cluj. I have old and warm memories from this city. When I was a second year student at the Faculty of Geology and a guide with NTO, I used to take several times a year the so-called "Tour of Romania", out of which there were five days meant for visiting Transylvania and a day and a half for visiting Cluj. I remember that on my first trip, arriving there in the evening, after having shown the tourists to the hotel, I had taken a few history and art guide books and I had gone into the city to identify the monuments that I had to present the following day, at the rather dim light of the streetlights. The first thing that I identified was the Tailors' Bastion. It had been erected around 1475 and it was dedicated to

a rich and sought for guild in the Romanian Middle Ages. It was part of the twenty towers set along the defence wall of the Cluj Fortress. In the small copybooks that I keep on rediscovering whenever I move house in the trunks in the lumber room there is underlined: *Baba Novac*, former captain of Michael the Brave, was burnt at the stake here in the year 1601; and then, in red pencil: not to be forgotten.

The sky is cloudy, and a cold wind is blowing. The weather is not welcoming and the city seems deserted in the hours of the afternoon. I tell my friend that I would like to go visit the Tailors' Bastion.

– It will be difficult – he tells me. *Homeless* people, or the *boschetari*, as we call them have started to squat in here for some time.

I remember that category, the category of those wretched people had nourished a strange feeling of congeniality towards me when I was president, which seems almost inexplicable when I think that I could not do almost anything for them. I decide to go there despite everything.

– It might be better not to go there – my friend insists. There are some minor felons sought for by the police amidst those wretched people.

I wasn't wrong. In the end, those few that have recognised me did not look upon me with hostility, quite on the contrary, with the strange love of those wretched people doomed by their fate for the one that they imagine closer to God. But this image has left a mark. In a House of History that had gathered the signs of wealth and military pride, the present appears among piles of garbage, and the gesture of making beautiful clothes is now replaced by an existence that keeps on getting rotten between the walls that crumble, abandoned by any trace of responsibility. The Tailors' Bastion is now inhabited by felons, sparrows and ring doves, flies that feed upon the piles of garbage. Because I know better now the dimensions of poverty in Romania, as well as its more visible or hidden presence to the European West, I have learned not to generalise and not to point fingers. I cannot help remembering however that at the beginning of my term, the Law of Local Budgets had become operational by means of a decree of emergency; it was one of the most important normative acts of my term. A larger amount of money remains at the level of local administration, where it can be spend with more care. I cannot help remembering the demagogic appearances of the pompous mayor of the city of Cluj, Funar, who always brags about the cleanliness and the order he had established in the city. This is true, for some areas. If we cannot put an end to pover-

ty and corruption, a long time from now on maybe, we may at least diminish the differences. I keep on looking how the underground economy keeps on popping up ostentatiously to the surface by means of a series of haughty buildings and I cannot help noticing that a great part of local authorities if not most of them are playing at being site supervisors of their own villas and warehouses. Looking straight at the *euro*, whoever would stumble on the garbage that is all over the rooms of the Bastion?

During a trip to the east of the country I passed through a spa in Moldavia where one of my companions has shown me a stadium with a night lights system turned into a private club for some privileged who were drinking whisky in a close circle, at the edge of the sport field, while the other inhabitants live with no perspectives abandoned with scorn and arrogance by the red Mafia people.

While the ministers and high officials of the PSD power, led by the first hunter of the country, are killing bears and boars with silver fangs, the homeless from the Tailors' Bastion are on a hunt of their own for sparrows, part of their daily menu. Each man has his own hunt. The Cluj philosopher D.D. Roșca used to speak of "the time cloth". Which scissors would we use to make the clothes suited for our history and where would the bastion of its tailors be?

THE ART OF BETRAYAL

Don't turn your head

April 2002, Magheru Boulevard

Conversation with Victor Ciorbea in the office at ASPEC. In spite of being late in the afternoon and his having to leave by car to Alba Iulia, he does not show signs of being in a hurry. Four years after the visit I paid him in the apartment ON 1848 Boulevard, where he had returned after the change of government, in 1998, this is the first calm, long and sincere discussion we have. In the middle of April, outside it is snowing with big snowflakes, which makes us feel normal in an upside down world. After three hours of discussions Ciorbea makes an unexpected confession:

'You should know that, in July 1996, when you came back from the States, after the scandal of the restoration of monarchy when some of the 'distinguished intellectuals' of the Civic Alliance called me to tell me you had no chance to become president and they wanted to propose me as candidate on behalf of CDR in the presidential elections, because I was up, I denied the proposal. I did not do it only because I thought it was a stupid thing to do politically, but out of a moral duty I had to you. I do not know what they told you, I thought of that many times and I do not know if...

I am not following him any longer...

'I did not know, I was not told, I couldn't have believed it.'

Walking around the museums or lingering in the great cathedrals, whenever I watched The Last supper, I noticed that, out of all the Apostles, Judas was the most handsome. Only in the small villages churches, the peasant painters, with their simple heart divided between good and bad, painted him ugly and with a face black as pitch. The famous artists of the royal courts were conversant with the school of ambiguity and the refined art of justifications conferring moral support to treason.

Do not turn your head; those behind you, who are just betraying you, might convince you of the good they are doing to you.

Better than Sandra Brown*April 2002, Cantemir Boulevard 23*

Once again at president Diaconescu's house. At the end of the discussion I ask him: "Is it true that a couple of months before the elections in 1996, a group of intellectuals proposed to you to substitute the candidature of Ciorbea for mine?" I know that the venerable politician never lies. Many shamelessly used his disarming sincerity.

Some time ago I asked a bookseller at a bookstand down town: What is the book that sells the best? He answered without hesitation: *The aft of betraying!*

An essay book stronger than Sandra Brown?

Maybe now is the moment when we act fairly and above board. In the performance of universal treason – Casamayor lets us know – the illusory shield of whispering has been given up. The traitor must know that it is now possible to speak loudly. Of late, treason is expressed in an enormous quantity of decibels and watts. It vibrates coils, deafens, and blinds.

Until 1990 I had not experienced the treason of friends, or beloved women, which gave me a kind of trust that looked like foolishness for many.

The Bait and the Hook*February 1998, Cotroceni*

Zoe Petre tells me that Radu Vasile insists to see me for a private talk, very important to him. I must say that this request quite surprise me. We had had only one private talk, in July 1996. I had asked the president of PNTCD, Ion Diaconescu, to propose a representative of the party as co-director of the presidential campaign, and he proposed Radu Vasile. Costin Georgescu was charged to organize a preliminary meeting and he proposed to meet at the restaurant *Casa Romana*. Generally, I do not agree with meetings in restaurants, I would rather have them in offices, because important matters should not be discussed in the atmosphere of a restaurant.

I must admit I was not very happy with the proposal made by the president of the party, but I had to admit its righteousness. Asking him whom would the PNTCD propose as prime minister in case we would win both the presidential and the parliamentary elections, he told me that because of a crisis of personalities the party generally experiences, he would go for Radu Vasile, as a specialist in economy, since this is

the requirement, and out of the three economists (the three men in the second line of PNTCD – considered specialists in economy: Mircea Ciumara, Ulm Spineanu and Radu Vasile) he would go for the last. Then we agreed not to announce a tandem, as this was not in the line of view of Corneliu Coposu. In 1992 he firmly stated that he did not agree with this idea, inspired by Maniu who thought that this is the weakest political idea as it discourages all those who must feel, during the campaign, that they have a role to play. This idea of a real competition in this transparent open framework represented, every four years by the election campaign, looked appropriate to me, too.

The former meetings with Radu Vasile had been sporadic and public, because Radu Vasile never took part, between '92-'96, in the meetings of the Democratic Convention. Generally, whenever I came to PNTCD headquarters, I would always arrive together with Coposu the last to come when they were all gathered together, and I did not have much time to discuss with those coming to put them at the disposal of the Convention, like Remus Opris, Ulm Spineanu and many others. I remember that only once, at the end of a meeting, Vasile had asked me to support him at the Superior Commission of Accreditation of Academic Titles, as I was member of that commission in my capacity of rector of the University of Bucharest. I made some inquiries – that implied no influence – finding out that the papers were delayed, but the candidate met all the requirements (doctorate, papers) and the only new thing I found out then was – to my surprise, as I thought he was an economist – that, in fact he was a historian teaching the history of economic doctrines.

We met in a booth on the first floor and after telling me that he was satisfied to take over the position of co-director, together with Radu Boroianu, the representative of the National Liberal Party, he added that through his being chosen in this position I was going to have no financial problems with the campaign since he had important connections and would take care of all these aspects. What came after was really stupefying. Maybe it is useless for me to say that, irrespective of what happened, and I am not insinuating anything, I never received a single *leu*, or any other kind of currency, from Radu Vasile line. Moreover, he never joined me in any activity in the election campaign, not even in the launching of the campaign when he ostentatiously went to Ramnicu Valcea to see his family.

Appearances could be kept because, generally speaking, the elec-

torate, the parties, and to my surprise, the press, too are not interested in the co-director of the electoral campaign. I was amused by what president Diaconescu told me, when I asked him about the reasons for this lack of participation. He reproduced Radu Vasile's answer: "I'm not going to carry Constantinescu's briefcase, am I?" For the benefit of the 'unity' of the Convention, I let this go, making every time clear – at the ever insisting questions of the press concerning the person I was going to nominate to be prime minister in case I was elected president – that he would be the person proposed by the PNTCD. I never rejected either ironically, or by implication, the name of Radu Vasile. All this time – Diaconescu told me – at each meeting with the members of the PNTCD in the country, sometimes attended by president Diaconescu Radu Vasile would say: "if the party is going to nominate me", then "in my capacity of party nominee candidate", "if I am to be prime minister" and finally "as prime minister"... That was not such a bad thing after all. Yet campaign ended shortly, due to the simultaneity of the presidential and the parliamentary elections. The electorate was only interested in the presidential elections and, the candidate running for president, was essential to organize open successful meetings anywhere with the participation of thousands or tens of thousands persons.

At the time proposed for the meeting, all these things were history. As it was well known, I had proposed Victor Ciorbea as prime minister and the PNTCD had accepted, Radu Vasile turning paradoxically into the critic of the prime minister assumed by the PNTCD.

I saw him in my very office in Cotroceni, and to ensure a cozy atmosphere, in one of the corners there was a low little table, with some chairs and a lamp, where the meetings could be close and friendly. From the beginning I found myself in the presence of a warm nice person, who transmitted a strange feeling of comfort through his natural attitude. He looked really moved and he told me he was experiencing a decisive moment in his life. The policy he saw was carried out then did not satisfy him, he could see no future for him, he was considering totally abandoning the party and he would be interested to find out if he could work for me as presidential counselor, to help me in the economic issues. I admit I was totally surprised and I did not have, in that moment, any reaction, which does not often happen to me. He told me that before continuing the discussion, he wished to make a confession concerning the fact that he betrayed me in the election campaign in

1996. That was not a brand new thing for me, much had been written about that and about the fact that he had been offered the prime minister position or, anyway, a very important position in the government if the results of the elections would have led to a coalition PDSR-PNTCD. That was something completely new for the Romanian customs, and even in general, that was the confession of treason by the traitor. Radu Vasile, looking straight into my eyes, told me that he did not consider that he had political responsibility because, from a political point of view, that was what he thought then, he was of the opinion that I had no chance at all, he did not have faith in CDR and acted to save the interests of the party. Being sure that Iliescu would win the presidential elections with the PDSR he considered that for the interests of the party and country that was a good move. At the same time he considered that he had a moral responsibility to me, because he had betrayed me, that confession did him good and he was eager to correct, if I accept, through a future cooperation, the moral mistake he had made then. I looked into his eyes. I had seen many liars in my life, but even now, after so much time, I could not think he was lying then. I think, as a matter of fact that he suited well the category of duplicitous people who transpose themselves so well in a character that, at least for a short period of time, would identify themselves with that character. It was something more in Radu Vasile's case. He had the capability to convey this credibility that was to bring him the sympathy of many people, even if the open contempt he manifested towards his closest and most faithful collaborators should have made them be on their guard.

Going back to Casamayor, I remembered that the most efficient manner of betraying was to make people think they understood, when in fact they did not understand you were offering them to understand an object that simply hid another. There is no better example than that of the bait and the hook. The fish understands that it was offered food, and the fisherman does not lie, because the feeding substance of the worm playing the role of the bait is the truth. So, the fish and the fisherman become acquainted to the first truth: the nutrient; only the fisherman knows the second truth: the steel hook. He is the one to win.

I overcame my surprise, I told him that the party still needed him, that we were going through difficult times and all people were useful. When he left he shook my hand, he hugged me and told me, as he was going to tell me many times from that moment on: God bless you.

The history of Radu Vasile's nomination, functioning and resignation from the office of Prime Minister of the Government of Romania will be told elsewhere. I can't stop noticing once again the charm of this extraordinary sincerity. This time I knew the second truth, told by the very owner of the steel hook, who had used it before. I knew how right Traian Stanculescu was when noticing that treason and faith share constancy, a virtue on which either flowers or thorns grow, in accordance to the purpose they are going to be used for and the soil on which they are sown. Life had confirmed that if faith lacks imagination contented with what it has, treason, which is a continuous creation, must imagine a future that it builds. I was aware of all that and still I let my cheek be kissed.

Masked ball

29 July 2002, OTI

During the talk show, the host asks me if, by giving up my candidacy for a new presidential term, in July 2000, I did betray CDR, The Romanian Democratic Convention. I have repeatedly explained the reasons for my giving up on the nomination, for my choice to assume full responsibility for the political price to be paid and even today I still believe that the program I put forth was beneficial to Romania, and the PNTCD. I reject the constant victimization of the PNT leaders.

I admit that, had I been nominated, the feeble CDR, the outcome of so many betrayals, may have gained parliamentary access. But who else, if its own leaders, has betrayed the PNTCD? How can one speak of Victor Ciorbea's gesture who, angry at not being a prime minister any longer deserted the party that had promoted him mayor general and prime minister and had appointed him vice president while he was just a regular member, enlisted into the party less than one year before? He also hurled vehement accusations of immorality and incompetence to his former party, which were even more trustworthy in front of the public opinion as they were not coming from any political opponent but from one's closest friend.

How can one call Radu Vasile's attitude who, when he came to lose his position as prime minister, split up the party and set up a new one for himself? Subsequently, seeing that this new party was not quite successful, he betrayed it as well and he joined the Democratic Party (PD) in order to get a senator seat. After he got it, chiefly due to Băseșcu's support, he left the latter to face alone the violent attacks coming

from PSD, when he should have been himself – as a former head of the Government- his most appropriate supporter in the unbalanced fight Bănescu was waging on the ruling party. He keeps silent for one year and a half and when, eventually, he speaks up on television and writes in the newspapers, he does so in order to flirt with PSD, which was engaged in a tough battle with his new party.

How can one judge Vasile Lupu's campaign against CDR and PNT during the CDR government and during the 2000 elections, generated by the fact that he hadn't been appointed prime minister or at least Minister of the Environment, position for which he had actually nominated himself?

In February 2001, Viorel Hrebenciuc confessed to me that, during the electoral campaign he used to recommend to the PDSR staff not to bother to look for anti-governmental issues and just quote Vasile Lupu, the best and the most trustworthy enemy of PNT. He also added that even after his party's victory in the elections he tempered their enthusiasm as he considered that 10% of the votes had been brought by opponents like Vasile Lupu. The same Vasile Lupu who, then split up PNTCD, which he now considers the main enemy.

What are we to understand from the attitude of these politicians? That loyalty to a party, to a doctrine, lasts only as long as it brings along some position which, by all means, has to be the first one within the party or even the state? As many lost positions-as many parties?

On the other hand, I stand convinced that what led PNT to defeat in the elections was not the commitment to reforms. The PNT ministers were not in charge of any of the offices causing the popular discontent, as the Ministry of Industry, The Ministry of Transport, or the Ministry of Labour.

What brought them to lose was the perception of most of the common people that a party which was not capable to defend their representative as President of Romania, its own party leader representing them as head of the Chamber of Deputies or its own ministers in the Government would not be able to support them either in case of need. Which was not so far-fetched. For four years, at the beginning of every week, in the political statements on Mondays, in The Chamber of Deputies and on Tuesdays, in The Senate, deputies and senators of the Oppositions have vehemently attacked me and made use of blatant lies in an uncivil language. Behind my back. But to their face. They were present there. They would keep silent or amuse themselves. Apart from a few, they didn't protest. It was a long, constant and intentional betrayal.

They did not walk out of the session, they did not reply, they did not ask for the legal sanctions, not even when the president of the party was heavily insulted by a PDSR deputy during a session of the Parliament.

As a matter of fact, in July 2000, many of the PNTCD leaders were not looking for a presidential candidate who they should back up, but for one who they could lay the blame on, on account of an already presumed failure. Or even an expected one, which should allow them to trigger the attack for taking over the leadership of the party. May it be even the leadership of a party which was getting smaller and which had been forsaken even by those who had lent it vigor and dignity.

These bitter reflections are not aimed at President Diaconescu, who I think highly of, they are not aimed at most of the PNT ministers and state secretaries from the coalition Government, nor at most of the prefects and mayors who paid the price of fratricidal, still ongoing fights. But above all, they are not aimed at the members and supporters of PNT as well as of other parties of CDR to whom I owe my gratitude and love and who I will never abandon.

My conviction is that loyalty is an essential quality in the political world when it is in relation to principles and ideals and the privilege of consideration and honour should be bestowed only upon those leaders who are consistent with high values and not with their personal interest.

Or, on the contrary, can politics be defined as the art of betrayal? I think it can rather be defined as an art of adjusting ideas and actions to a higher goal which can well be the general interest or the pursuit of an ideal. May it be true or false, but one in which you should place all your faith.

In 1968, Dubcek did not betray communism during the Spring in Prague or his colleagues from the Political Board either. He imagined another kind of communism with a humane face and for the well being of the people and he believed in it. And he paid for his actions and he didn't disavow it when the Soviet tanks reinforced the old Brezhnev communist tradition.

Nor can Gorbachev be judged a traitor as he genuinely believed that perestroika could safeguard the survival of communism in a changing world. He didn't only launch the idea of "glasnost" but he also put it into practice. Although this concept, as well as perestroika was going to prove fatal, he did not alter his ideas, not even after he was overthrown. He was not really reinstated after the defeat of the putsch and he suffered a disastrous defeat in the presidential elections precisely because he could not give up on his ideas in the electoral

campaign.

A distinction needs to be made: among the traitors one cannot include those whose mission was to destroy from the inside, the likes of Valerian Stan from the Civic Alliance, Radu Campeanu from the Liberal Party, Radu Ciuceanu from AFDR, Vasile Lupu from PNTCD, Octavian Paler from "Romania Libera". They were loyal to their commanders from the outside and, if one bothers to take the time and observe how consistent they were to their course of action, one might say they were quite honest with respect to what may have been a purpose they had been serving. The mask has stuck to the face. It has become their own face.

The Romanian political quadrille has enabled me to become well acquainted to several artists of betrayal who used to exchange the masks of the parties in a dazzling swing.

All these masters of the game "politicians without frontiers" have impetuously followed Casamayor's advice: take advantage of the ingeniousness of the others and pursue your own success.

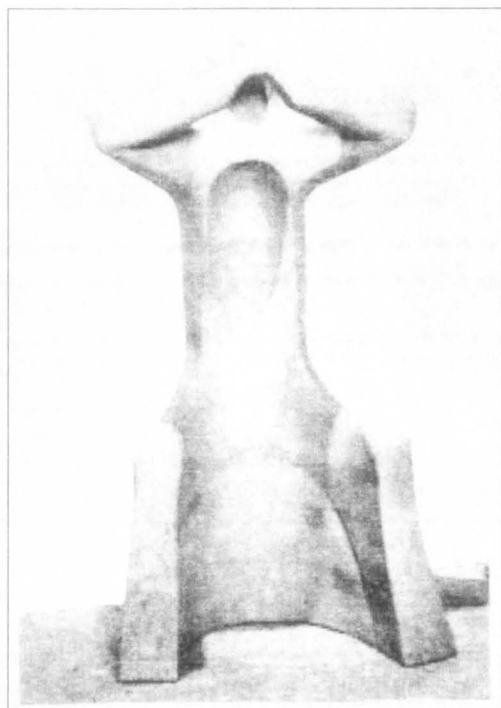
The Mistletoe above the Door

June 2002, Realitatea TV

The "Cristoiu Vector" is broadcast on television. The "Vector" diligently digs through the garbage of pre-communist history in order to make clear to the anti-communists (if there still are any) that those ones were not any better. He contentedly lets his interlocutor know that in 1944 the papers from the capital had different headlines in store regarding the successful turning of weapons against the Germans, the preservation of the alliance with the Germans or any other possible course of events.

Most of the people I've known seem to think on a small scale, even when it comes to betrayal. There is a germinative bed which condones betrayal as something natural in politics. And even the "betrayal of betrayal". The stake of betrayal is the satisfaction of personal interest under any condition, and, on a social level, the survival at any costs. Because traitors do survive. Moreover, I might say that, with them, it is a way of living which is associated with pleasure.

While the leafless oak lies under the snow and the blizzard is blowing all over, we joyously step into the New Year together with its parasite, the green mistletoe hanging above, in place of honour, over the door.



A CANDLE IN THE WINDS

EXILE AND DIASPORA

The Sky in Water

March 1993, Zurich

The flight from Los Angeles back home is to be interrupted for half a day, till the flight to Bucharest. It is Sunday and the richest town in Switzerland (even in small, homogeneously rich countries there are differences) looks deserted. The red and yellow flowers on the windowsills stress even more the sober nature of buildings in the solid Germanic style. Downtown all shops are closed, only a few small Italian restaurants are crowded with American and Japanese tourists, all of them slightly confused, scouring the empty streets after the coloured umbrellas of their guides.

The lake, shining in the mild autumn sunlight, seems the only living place in this town.

Huge white swans glide on the water, incredibly huge, reminding me of the huge tasteless apples in California. To the joy of natives and tourists, the graceful birds can be admired in any season. Used to comfort, they have stopped migrating. The sky is reflected in the blue water, the clouds are the swans of another realm. They dip their head in the water like a search of the once high flight over seas and continents.

On the promenade, turning their backs on the imposing buildings of banks and luxury hotels, facing the wooded mountains on the other shore, people walk alone or in small groups, or sit at picnic tables. Languages mix, a Russian harmonica plays the same as a flute. On Sundays, after morning mass, natives stay indoors. Those outside are the strangers. After several months spent abroad, I watch them warmly. They are between 40 and 60. Well dressed and obviously proud of their status. The thrill of their mother tongue, silence together and gazing in the distance, beyond water and mountains, betray the melancholy of the first estranged generation, which the luxury of this polished exile amplifies heartrendingly.

Those who Have Chosen Freedom

May 1994, Paris

I am invited to the congress of Romanian exiles. It is not a usual one. The elite of anticommunist exiles is here. For the first time they

have invited the spiritual leaders of the young civic Romanian society. The congress takes place in an elegant hall in the centre of the capital and is opened by the vice-mayor of Paris, and the French press is also there, but I felt from the very first day a sort of tension in the debates. I understand later it comes from the meaning the term acquires for those present.

Diaspora, which means the exile of a nation all over the world, is rejected violently and they prefer political exile instead. They differentiate it from economic migration; political refugees are different from exiles from various other reasons.

I agree. For the first time I meet those I knew from books only, magazines, broadcasts that were politically forbidden. We often forget that those who ran from communism *chose freedom*, although the slogan usually is *choose well being*. Books of confessions described the hard way these people followed in their integration, the humiliation of losing the status they had at home, of political refugee camps. These Romanians resisted communist dictatorship and carried on our values in the West when in Romania they were trampled. I meditate on the dichotomy exile–Diaspora. What can be the part played by those who left Romania after the fall of communism?

Psalm 136

25 December 1998, Brasov

Livia Vatafu gives me for Christmas a book by Max Dimont, *Jews, God and History*. I open it and can't put it down till morning. It is another version of the story of Jewish slaves in Babylon that most know from Verdi's opera. In 539 BC, after vanquishing Babylon, the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great gave an edict which allowed Jews, exiled to Babylon 50 years before, to return home. The Jews were unprepared and had a mixed reaction. Why go back to Jerusalem, where there was only desert, poverty and labour, when they were well off in Babylon? Only a quarter went back to the Jews that had survived ruin and destruction, and they were all poor. The rest of the Jews were in love with their new country, where they became prosperous and cultivated, went into commerce, became refined. *Psalm 137*, 'If I forget you, Jerusalem/.../ let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth/ if I do not remember you,/.../ my chief joy', expressed a feeling that was true at the beginning of exile but weakened 50 years later, when both words and the tone had changed.

Dimont writes, 'This situation is seen today, when the independent Jewish state was formed. Not many American Jews were willing to emigrate to Israel. The reasons were the same: I am a good Babylonian, or a good American, why should I leave?'

The world never changes.

The Fir Tree after Christmas

December 25, 1999, Sinaia

I was talking to Doina Uricariu, by the fire, about roots and rootlessness. She says that especially now she feels involved in this. She always thought of the fate of Romanians that emigrated, that were cut off just like our woods and spread like ashes: brought back home after 1989, to visit, like a Christmas tree and sent away after the holidays, just like the tree again...

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe gave freedom to the citizens of these country but also to those who are now living abroad.

Till then exile was political, they could never go back because they were considered enemies of their homeland. It was also moral, for those who had chosen exile as a rejection of communist dictatorship and way of life.

With the fall of communism, the exiled had a dramatic option in front of them, an individual one. It was no longer a question of group imposed choice. Acting in the name of this new freedom became as difficult for those abroad and those in ex-communist countries.

Once the country no longer was a prison and travel became possible, small exile communities were overwhelmed by new emigration waves, and the reasons were no longer political or moral, just the desire for well being or better performance in a better system. None of these could be blamed, they are all part of the human right to decide what is best for each one.

Is dialogue natural or just a holiday? Planting exotic trees in native soil might regenerate it or just adorn it. There are many possible landscapes with Romanians.

"Soy Salami" IMPEX

1990-2000, all over the world

After the fall of communism, what relations can there be between Diaspora and the country? Can it be a proof of patriotism that those who never ate soy salami should come back home to help? What is the part of the Diaspora in the fate and future of the country?

I met Romanian Diaspora in many countries, Europe, North and South America, Australia, South Africa, Near East, Asia. They all received me with unforgettable warmth.

Before touching upon the problems of Romanians who became the citizens of other states, before talking about Romanian minorities with acknowledged or unacknowledged traditions, we must admit that it is a delicate question. I wanted to be the president of Romanians everywhere, so I always used the term 'Romanian communities abroad'. Were they really communities or hoping to become so, or was that just a utopia? I have no answer to this day.

Statistics show that in 1992 and 1996 Romanians abroad voted for me from 90 to 95%. But those who voted were just a few thousand, which showed, sadly, lack of civic interest and concern for the country.

An unavoidable conclusion is that Romanian emigrants are often exceptional and adapt wonderfully in the West, but also that they are not united.

Dimont wrote, 'Diaspora has been for millennia the essential condition for the Jews' cultural survival beyond the natural time span of a civilization'. He saw the success of a nation in the creation of a Diaspora and a cultural elite in all centres of progress of the world.

Fireflies of the Amazon

December 1995, Rio de Janeiro

Invited to the conference of university rectors in Brazil. At the end of the conference, I gave a speech at the National University of Rio. Brazilian colleagues tell me that in the jungle of the Amazon there is a species of fireflies that fly in swarms and that first shine alone, then unite in light. They give thus intermittent but strong light around, more efficiently than the light of only one insect. A few years back, Vietnamese students told me in their country fireflies were the friends of poor students, whom they help to study at night.

January 1996, Magurele Platform

As rector, I meet professors, students and researchers at the Department of Physics and research institutes on the platform. Usual problems. Financing contracts, transportation, heating. I visit hostels, diners and laboratories to check what is true in the reports of the administration. Not everything. The dean is accompanied by some visiting professors of Romanian origin from USA and France who teach

or do research. They enjoy the cooperation. I tell them the story of the Amazon fireflies. Professor Tănăsescu, chief of the optics department says they have achieved a physical mode of synchronizing luminous signals and experimented it.

It is very simple and easy to understand by anyone.

I will describe it because I have always admired the colourful, meaningful language of physicists. Let us imagine an electric circuit, a source, a photo resistor, a condenser, a switch and a bulb. At first the current flows on the upper side of the circuit, as the lower part is interrupted by the switch. In a drawing, electric tension in the condenser, time-related, is a slowly ascending curve to the T_0 value of tension, when the switch is perforated and the condenser gives light. If there is a second *firefly*, when it glimmers, it enhances the current of the first firefly. Lowering the resistance of the photo resistor the condenser recharges sooner and the first one gives light sooner than if it were on its own. Repeating the process we get to a coincidence of curves. More fireflies speed firefly 1 even more. All glimmering is sped and synchronization is achieved. Once achieved, it becomes stable.

6-9 May 2002, New York

The ministry of foreign affairs of Romania sent the medals and decrees to those who received them on December 1, 2002, on the occasion of Romania's national day (Romania's Star, For Merit and Faithful Service). They were brought back decades after their abrogation by the communist regime. As I was in the States, the Romanian general consul Eugen Șerbănescu invited me to take part. The consul reads my decrees, I hand them personally to distinguished American citizens of Romanian origin. The new Romanian ambassador in Washington, Sorin Ducaru, a very special person, utters a few heartfelt words in the end. Ducaru and Șerbănescu did a lot to improve the relations between Diaspora and the country. I remember the two incidents with fireflies the natural instinct of the living beings and the physical experiment seem convincing for the need that we should synchronize our individualities to heighten common light, the light of our homeland, wherever we may be living at the time.

I wonder if we are entitled to ask for solidarity from the exiles when we are so divided inside this country. They live so far away, in joy or pain, while we are so far away from ourselves, from unity, right here, at home.

GOD'S ANOINTED KING*August 1991, Versoix*

Interview for Radio Free Europe. At the end of the programme, the director of the station, Nicolae Stroescu-Stânișoară, asked me whether I wished to visit the King at Versoix. After my immediate consent, he announced His Majesty and bought me a return ticket Munich-Zurich. The Swiss Consulate in Munich granted me the visa for Switzerland without any great difficulty and after that I got on a bus for pensioners who go on one-day trips at a low price supported by the social assistance services in Bavaria. When I reached Zurich as a Bavarian pensioner, I bought another ticket and, after a short stroll about the town, I got on the train to Geneva. Serban Mironescu was waiting for me at the station. He recognized me and told me he worked at the Municipal Library. We made for Versoix, stopped in front of a simple wooden gate beyond which I saw a neat garden with a small house at its back. We rang the bell and a person opened the door and invited us in. His Majesty shook my hand on the doorstep and asked me in. Queen Ana was watching carefully the BBC news on TV and on computer. After drinking a cup of tea, His Majesty invited me in the library where we talked for an hour. I was surprised to see how updated he was on Romania's state of affairs, and especially to discover his calm nature, which spread a natural serenity, apparently a gift from Above.

He was the first king I had ever met and it was for the first time when I had felt that the syntagm God's Anointed may hide a miraculous truth, at least for some kings, and I thought Michael of Romania is one of them. After talking to Queen Ana about the latest developments in Russia, His Majesty offered me an autographed book on his interviews given to Mircea Ciobanu and then saw me off at the gate on an alley bordered by flowers. Romanians' old custom of seeing someone off at the gate may sound strange here in Switzerland.

King Michael's simple gestures do not offend his grandeur, but make it complete.

The Meek's Easter*24-26 April 1992*

Completely absorbed in demonstrating a diagram on the blackboard, I felt that something was wrong in the amphitheatre. I turned

my head and saw the chief laboratory assistant of the department standing on the doorstep. Though I was looking at him in anger, he made for the platform and told me: "Professor Anastasiu asks you to give students a break earlier and to come to the Department because there is an emergency that must be solved as soon as possible". I looked at my watch; twenty minutes left until break time. I told him to kindly ask Professor Anastasiu to go on to deliver the lecture. After he took over, I climbed down to the Department where Petre Mihai Băcanu rang up again, letting me know about the emergency. On a visit to Romania, King Michael was coming to Bucharest, invited by Metropolitan Bishop Corneanu and Archbishop Pimen of Suceava and Rădăuți. His Majesty's participation in the Easter service officiated in Bucharest hit the headlines issued by Băcanu.

An official statement made by the Patriarchy flatly said that there was no authorization or invitation from the Patriarch. Băcanu told me that any attempt to get into contact with the patriarch was to no avail and asked me whether, as Rector of the University, I could talk directly with him. Băcanu made one more gesture that seemed to be absurd and unrealistic at first sight, but miraculously effective in the long run. Romulus Rusan often says that Petrică Băcanu jumps into empty pools from the big springboard and pillows have to be brought for him to fall on. I was preparing to bring him a pillow. I phoned the Rector Hall's secretary to ask her to call the Patriarchy and make an appointment with Patriarch Teoctist. The positive answer came immediately and, by a car that came from the Law faculty, I got to Dealul Mitropoliei in a few minutes. The Patriarch's assistant opened the door and invited me in the library, where the Patriarch welcomed me with cold water and rose jam. After a short official talk, the door opened and painter Sorin Dumitrescu came in agitated, as usual, kissing the Patriarch's hand and then sitting beside me to support me if needed. I got right to the point and told Patriarch Teoctist what the purpose of my unexpected visit was. He did not seem surprised. His sharp mind and fine observation of all things made him guess at once what was all about. I paused for a few moments in order to let him express his dissatisfaction with the offensive way of ignoring an elementary politeness, that is the gesture of being consulted. Sorin Dumitrescu, familiar with the Church engagements and aware of all its regulations, knew very well that the Patriarch was, at the same time, Archbishop of Bucharest and that no event can be organized by Wallachia's and

Dobrogea's Metropolitan Church without his consent. His Beatitude patiently told us that, according to the Orthodox Church's tradition, the Metropolitan and Bishops are free to make invitations in their "units", so that the invitation of Metropolitan Corneanu to the region of Banat, and the one of Archbishop Pimen to Rădăuți and Suceava had been in accordance with the rules of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Our discussion gradually became enlivened. I reminded Him that the King and his friends had supported the Church and its ideals during the communist regime and that those who are against his coming to Bucharest were the former church destroyers. It was not about a political act, but about a participation of the sovereign in the most important holidays of all Christians that ought to mark the fall of the barriers of intolerance. The Patriarch basically agreed to that, called the patriarchal vicar to agree on the place where the service was to be officiated. We chose St. Gheorghe Church whose interior and front yard are very roomy for the crowd that was expected to take part in the Easter service on Sunday. I thanked the Patriarch and went on talking about the Faculty of Theology, about its importance for Bucharest academia and about the faith which animated the generation of students at that time.

That afternoon I summoned the leading board of the University Solidarity Association and then I held a meeting with the leadership of the Democratic Convention which includes "România Viitoare" Movement supported by Simina Mezincescu. We prepared an event perfectly adapted to the spirit of such a ceremony, though we took into account potential threats that could not be excluded given the recent past and the brutal way of reacting to other visits of His Majesty to Romania. Yet, I expressed my doubt that on Easter day such threats might be caused by the most fanatic anti-monarchists.

The Easter day surpassed all expectations. The clear sky, the colorful flowers and the shining sun seemed to reveal God's grace poured on earth. A feeling of love and understanding transfigured the crowd present at the service and then in front of Continental Hotel where the sovereign made an address from the balcony of his room.

It is one of the few days when Romanians discover how good they can be. However, those who, for one reason or another, thought of it as a vote for the monarchy were deeply wrong once again. It was not a plebiscite, but a transfiguration. It was the miraculous gift of King Michael and his family that gave everyone the impression that they were taking part in an event which strengthened their dignity, faith and hope.

A Change of Portraits

March 1993, 6 Martie Boulevard (today 64 Queen Elisabeth)

Excited students and guests animated the halls and the park of the Law Faculty. Together with the head of the Students' Union, I welcomed Queen Ana on the steps of the University's Rector's Office. She was very modest and happy to be surrounded by students. They gave her a big clap and offered her flowers. We accompanied her to the Students' Union where a bust of King Michael was to be uncovered, himself a student of Bucharest University decades before.

There was an exciting atmosphere and I uttered just a few introductory words. "Our University is glad to take an important step today in its rediscovery of the truth. We are very happy to have amidst us people who have fought for it". It was the students' day. It was their initiative and merit. They were the first, the same as they had been in the past three years. The irony of fate was that the Students' Union headquarters was the former building of the University's Committee with the Romanian Communist Party. The bust of the king was then placed on the desk of the ex-Party secretary of the University. King Michael's portrait hung on the wall instead of Ceausescu's one. The students understood immediately what and who had to be changed.

The Quarantine

1 December 1993, The Revolution Square

A demonstration staged to celebrate the Union Day in Bucharest. Despite the freezing cold, tens of thousands of people gathered in front of the Royal Palace. At the meeting of the Leading Council of the Romanian Democratic Convention, I proposed not to participate in the Alba Iulia Assembly, organised by the neo-communist Power, as a protest against the government's decision of not allowing the Sovereign to be present at the 75 anniversary of the Great Union. We decided to organise an alternative popular assembly. A delegation of senators and deputies of the Romanian Democratic Convention was to go to Alba Iulia in order to share the feelings of the Transylvanians. At the same time, delegates of all the CDR organisations and associations from the Transylvanian counties were to come to Bucharest. This was not the best way of celebrating the Union, but we could no longer tolerate the abuses of the PDSR party and of its acolytes.

Senator Alexandru Paleologu proposed King Michael should be officially invited to the ceremonies dedicated to Romania's National

Day, and the mayor of Timisoara city, Viorel Oancea, member of the CDR, sent His Majesty the invitation to visit the hero-municipality. On the 9 of November, the Sovereign expressed his wish to come to Romania, saying he acknowledges the new state bodies. On the 16 of November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied his access to the country and the spokesman of president Iliescu considered it a right decision.

I looked at the people's faces from the tribune of the Royal Palace. I knew they were just a few, but I knew they were right. Simina Mezincescu read out the Sovereign's message: "I am grieved because, thinking of the future of your country, those who rule it today have not yet managed to get rid of the old habits of the communist dictatorship, at a time when they held senior public offices. Today, when we want to get united, they torn us apart; today, when we want to live in harmony, they are afraid of us". I concluded by saying that there was only one way to prove that we had good intentions: to take hold of power and use it to achieve the real reconciliation and national unity all the nation's sons could take part in.

By denying King Michael the right to participate, as a citizen, in the anniversary of the Great Union, 46 years after he was forced to abdicate, they also contested his quality of citizen of the country where he was born. That abusive quarantine proved that the leadership of that time were afraid of the monarchy, fear that had lasted for decades. The fear of monarchy was presented in the form of certain incompatibilities or labelled as a *hasty, unwise action*. It was, in fact, a means of exhausting its last chances. President Iliescu is waiting for the Sovereign to get older and weary, hoping probably to lose his pride and honourable posture. When he only aims at claiming the estates, he and his family once owned, and not the throne, no grounds that prevented him from coming to Romania will ever be solid. It is like "chess to the king" in a game with few moves. The action of undermining monarchy began in a brutal manner and is still unfinished. The recurrent chorus "Time has not come yet", also used in the case of the reform, of the privatization procedures, of the retrocession of estates, reinforces the policy of keeping the values in a state of quarantine, hoping that time will make them obsolete. The red card of the unpropitious moment was fluttered against the Opposition which did want His Majesty to enjoy all rights. The reform of mentalities is a continuous offside. Democracy's potential is still suppressed. The day when interdictions

disappear, today's fanatic opponents to monarchy and its recidivist usurpers might turn the royal couple, as in many other cases, into protagonists of a fashionable reconciliation. The usurpers often exhibit on their empty escutcheons old arms which do not belong to them, purchased from antique shops. The PDSR has a younger leader keen on collecting art objects. One day we may come across relics exhibited with visible pride, isolated and exiled today in remote areas, like a dangerous virus.

The Dung Hole Full of Slops

October 1996, Bucharest

All TV stations broadcast the electoral video of the PDSR in which my figure turned into the Sovereign's one, followed by a massive display of pictures about the disasters that would take place in Romania after I was to be elected president and to set up the monarchy. Encouraged by the violent attack Cristian Tudor Popescu launched on me in *Adevărul* daily, following some declarations I had made in the United States when I met the exiled Romanians from New York, the members of the party rushed to deal with that issue at length. As the video was not enough, Adrian Năstase suddenly appeared to talk, with a sobriety well-known to people, about the impact of the disasters and to explain, as a specialist in Law, how they were to stem out. Adrian Năstase, a sharp and brilliant mind of the PDSR, relied on my psychological impact. They knew they put me in an unsolved situation: either to deny monarchy which, weak as it was, represented the tough and reliable nucleus of my supporters, or to refrain from revolting against them. The plan he elaborated turned out to work accordingly. I could not accuse them of false statements as it meant that being a supporter of monarchy was a shame, which I could not stand.

A great deal of offence, libels and lies were targeted on His Majesty King Michael, on Queen Ana and His family after 1989. Corneliu Vadim Tudor and his team of *Securitate* informants, Adrian Păunescu and his churlish statements about the daughters of His Majesty, *Europa* and *Politica* magazines, *Dimineața* daily, the newspaper of the FDSR or *Azi*, the FSN daily, different newspapers, radio and TV stations blackened the past and the present for ten years. Was there anything left undisclosed or unused in that shameless plot that exceeded the limits of common sense? Unfortunately, president Ion Iliescu got involved in this campaign and, quite often, he could not

suppress his real feelings in front of the journalists, using tough or rude words when talking about monarchy, especially about King Michael. The three electoral campaigns from '90, '92 and '96 were the top of it. Only the people's common sense resisted to these dirty campaigns. It also did in 1996.

March Amulet in May

24 May 1994, Paris

The conference of Romanian exiles. A common meeting of the Romanian exiles with those considered by the leaders of the exile to be the real supporters of democracy in Romania had taken place for the first time. Among other prominent personalities, the presence of His Majesty King Michael was announced, if not at the conference, at least in the capital of France, where he was to organize a reception in honour of the participants. This was another sign of reconciliation of the Romanian exiles with themselves. In 1992, when I met the members of the Romanian communities from California, at South-West University of Los Angeles, I was shocked to hear a roar of revolt from a corner of the room, while I was praising King Michael I.

Later on I was told they were supporters of Marshall Antonescu who considered King Michael a traitor. The exiles are stuck in opinions, limited only to the abandonment of their country. In Paris, they were trying to reconcile the past, the present and the future. At least it seemed so. Perhaps it was not true. On my way to Paris, I travelled with Octavian Paler by plane. I was startled when I opened *România liberă* daily, I had bought on my way to the airport. The leading article was a direct attack against the Democratic Convention, the PNT and me. Petre Mihai Băcanu had arrived in Paris a day before. When I showed him the article, he told me that Paler, without showing it to him, had been given the approval to change the day when, by shifts, he wrote the editorial, so that his article could appear on the very day he left for Paris. Familiar with all the mischievous set-ups of the communist press, the old politruc had given another heavy blow, knowing that the authorized correspondents of the newspaper were carrying by plane thousands of copies of *România liberă* that were to be handed to each participant at the opening of the congress. Băcanu's solution was to tell the editors to throw the newspapers, carried with so much toil, in the sewers of Paris and in the waste-paper baskets near the conference hall. Paler's hypocrisy did not stop here. He knew his biogra-

phy made him vulnerable in front of those who left the country and had been cornered many times, with proletarian anger, by the communist press, radio and television he ran, one by one, all throughout the period of their exile. It was thanks to Petre Mihai Băcanu's generosity and naivete that he attended the event, drafting an aggressive speech by which he gave the others patriotic advice. But not before he started with the magic sentence: "I was born in a kingdom, I wish to die in a kingdom" which benumbed the audience, since afterwards they all listened hypnotically to the advice uttered by the ex-nomenclature official. He nonchalantly participated in the meeting of the restricted circle of the Royal Council, held in an apartment in the centre of Paris, placed at their disposal by a French admirer of the King. Though I had a private meeting with His Majesty and the royal family at the hotel they were staying, I was also invited to take part in this restricted council I was not part of. When I got into the living room together with Corneliu Coposu, I met Doina Cornea, Alexandru Paleologu, Octavian Paler, architect C. Brâncoveanu, Constantin Antoniadu, chief of the Royal Bureau and, as far as I can remember, Roxana Iordache, all seated around His Majesty. As usual, the King's presence poured a bright light on everyone and Doina Cornea, in a white jacket and with serene eyes, seemed to be a fine *abatjour* of this light. Unfortunately, the meeting suddenly turned ridiculous under the contemptuous glance of Paler who, in the presence of Ceausescu, and within the Central Committee, had witnessed a real party propaganda. The solutions adopted for increasing the king's popularity among people were very uncommon. While they were talking about a future visit that was to be heralded by distributing autographed pictures everywhere, military bases included, Paleologu proposed a photo with the king dressed in military uniform. There were heated discussions about the photo – whether the king should be dressed in infantry, air forces or naval uniform, whether the photo should be old or lately taken, whether the king should single out a suit from the latest wardrobe or an older one, typical of the time when he was the Army's commander. The King was looking absent-mindedly... He lost the thread.

Portrait Frame

December 1996

By a miracle of fate, I had the opportunity to meet most of the kings, emperors, emirs, princes or dukes of the contemporary world.

These meetings are part of the most exciting moments of my life. Most of the Royal Houses have a protocol that provides that these meetings should take place in restricted circles, without any other persons from the retinue and any interpreters, except, of course, the dinner parties within the official and state visits. Private meetings are held according to this protocol. It offered me the possibility to know a special world, superior people who are educated to be like this, who do not depend on peoples' changing options up to a certain extent. At least that is what happens in democratic countries, seized with a feeling of being at ease, possessing a specific philosophy of life, a curiosity open to everything new, but, at the same time, to fundamental values. Maybe one day I will have time to ponder on these meetings. I have home a gallery of autographed portraits of the royal and imperial families, meant to remind me of them all the time and in the case of Great Britain, I have the honour to be one of the Royal Order knights. I had the opportunity to meet dejected people, who were dethroned or sometimes lost any chance to come back to their motherland. I am not referring only to members of the royal families from the ex-communist countries, but also to those from some EU member states that could not recuperate their status, estates and, like Austria, Greece and Italy, the right or possibility to return to their native country.

That is why I was very sensitive to this problem and, immediately after I was elected president of Romania, I took all the necessary measures in order to set up adequate procedures for His Majesty to come back to Romania in the right conditions he had claimed: he was to be granted the Romanian citizenship without any former request. Of course I could not do everything for the king, but I put my best into ensuring the *frame* which reinforced His dignity, because his dignity had never faded out. We managed to create the legal circumstances, and not only, by means of which the king could express freely in the country he had served with honour and faith, and be proud to support it officially in front of the other Royal Houses in Europe or elsewhere in the world. I have always regarded Him with respect and affection and I would be very glad if more officials could do it as sincerely as I did.

Letters and Meetings

Between 1994 and 2000 I had a steady correspondence with His Majesty and many personal meetings. With a typical royal sincerity,

His Majesty pointed to my inappropriate measures or positions. I remember that, he told me in Pangratti Street, in an office on the floor, that he disagreed about the decision to reinvest the national orders *Steaua României (Romania's Star)*, *Serviciul Credincios (The Loyal Service)*, and *Pentru merit (For Great Merit)*, introduced by kings Carol I, Ferdinand and Carol II. He also confessed that he wanted to reinvest a personal distinction. I told him my opinion in the same frank style, and when the orders were legally reinstalled, I talked in my speeches, disarmed by a complete ignorance up to the highest levels of the intelligentsia, about the history of these orders and the role of monarchy. I do want to point out the steady concern of the King – both during the period I was president of the CDR and a presidential candidate and when I was president of Romania – with keeping me away from any difficulties. He kept me by letters or by some representatives – especially by the Royal House chief, Mr. Antoniadă, a very special and brilliant person – about the actions he wanted to put to use. Mr. Antoniadă and the Royal House lawyer get into contact with me to communicate me the King's intention of resorting to legal proceedings in order to claim his estates. I told them I fully agreed, as otherwise it would have been absurd that the King should not enjoy the same rights as a lay citizen who claims his possessions, as long as there was no retrocession law that automatically stipulated the retrocession of all estates. I encouraged him by saying that once the General Prosecutor Sorin Moisescu had suspended the appeals and became president of the Supreme Court of Justice, all verdicts were given in favour of those who claimed their estates.

I welcomed His Majesty and his family both to the Presidential palace, and to my place, and we took great pleasure in participating together in different public events. I have had pleasant and priceless memories since then.

Sour Grape covered in Chocolate

19 May 2001, Bucharest

All TV and radio stations and newspapers announced that president Iliescu invited King Michael to Romania. The government declared that, following the passing of the law on ex-presidents' rights, Elisabeta Palace was to be the residence of the King for life. The changing attitude of president Iliescu, of the PSD and of the Năstase government was a good thing which had to be considered as such. Still,

manipulated by the PSD's propaganda, the event acquired a hallucinating dimension. They were talking about historic reconciliation – whose? and with whom?, about the achievement of what the former power did not manage to carry out. As known, the propagandistic apparatus of PSD was trying to fool everyone, relying on people's willingness to be fooled. Surfing on the Internet, I discovered that the website of *Ziarul de Iași* revealed a chronology of King Michael's failures to return to Romania between 1990 and 1997 and the series of visits paid between 1997 and 2000.

Let's try to refresh our memory a little.

3 April 1990: King Michael expressed his intention of coming to Romania on a visit on the occasion of Easter holidays. The deputy foreign minister said in 1990: "The king lived 43 years in exile and he will not suffer too much if he lives in exile a little longer". On 11 April 1990, the Romanian government considered that the presence of the ex-sovereign might give birth to unpredictable incidents and that they could not ensure the protection of the Royal House members. As if by magic, the incidents did take place: on 16 April 1990, an unknown coalition made up to this purpose of FSN and the Romanian Antimonarchist League organised such an event and the King was forced to postpone his visit.

25 December 1990: King Michael and the members of the Royal Family arrived on the Otopeni Airport. The customs authorities granted them an interim 24-hour visa. After that, the royal family went to Curtea de Argeș to take part in a religious service. On Bucharest-Pitești motorway, at kilometre 110, a barrage of military vehicles and tractors was built in order to stop the royal family that was summoned under weapons threat and taken, under protection, to the Otopeni Airport where, at 5.43 p.m. they were embarked on a Romanian aircraft bound for Switzerland. Petre Roman declared that he defended the constitutional order.

26 April 1992: The ex-Sovereign paid a visit to Romania on the occasion of Easter holidays, the only one in the six years of the Iliescu regime. Despite people's sympathy for the King, PDSR launched vehement reactions against His visit. An employee of TVR was summoned to resign for having talked about the royal visit in a political review programme. On 29 April, president Ion Iliescu made a violent address against King Michael, stating that "when he left the country, he took with him ten railway carriages and three cars, as if it were

nothing. Let's remember what Charles I brought to Romania and what Charles II took, and what Michael I took, and now they want to come back. Monarchy is a non-democratic institution, out of popular control".

December 1992: King Michael expressed his wish to spend Christmas in Romania. He was forced to cancel his visit because the conditions imposed by the Romanian authorities "blemished" his dignity.

14 April 1993: Michael I was obliged to postpone the visit to Timișoara because of the same humiliating conditions.

9 November 1993: The King expressed his wish to come to Romania, saying that he acknowledged the new state authority. On November 15 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to grant Romanian entry visa to the royal family.

11 April 1994: The King expressed his wish to spend the Easter holidays in Timișoara. On April 28, the negotiations between the Royal House and the government on entry visa were suspended, given that Michael I rejected the restrictive provisions imposed by the government.

29 April 1994: President Iliescu stated that one of the most important conditions the King had to comply with if he wanted to come to Romania was to give up the throne once and for all.

10 August 1994: In the name of the "Iuliu Maniu" and "René Radu Polierat" foundations, Corneliu Coposu and Dinu Patriciu invited King Michael to participate in the commemoration of the 23 of August 1944 events, considering that the Sovereign's testimony would be important. The King accepted on condition that the problem of visas should be solved. On 11 of September, the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that King Michael's visit to Romania was unpropitious.

7 October 1994: King Michael and Queen Ana arrived on the Otopeni Airport on an Air France flight, hoping they would get the visa at the airport. A governmental statement said that the king and the queen tried to enter Romania illegally and, consequently, they were forced to come back.

24 October 1994: The king was forced to reject the invitation launched by Timișoara's mayor of taking part in the commemoration of five years from the outbreak of the '89 revolution in this city. On 10 of November 1994, the PRM senator Corneliu Vadim Tudor called on the premier and the ministers of justice and home affairs ministers to elaborate a draft bill that "should deny the access of the ex-sovereign and the members of his family to Romania for an indefinite period of time".

11 November 1994: PDSR asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to declare King Michael *persona non grata*. President Iliescu did not exclude a legislative measure that should deny the king's access to Romania. "It is a pity that, at his age, he should be manipulated. The whole affair related to the King's visit is a diversion".

14 December 1994: King Michael was forced to announce that he could not accept the invitation to participate in the commemorative service officiated in honour of the tragic events from Timișoara in December 1989.

November 1995: King Michael asked the Romanian authorities to grant him an entry visa for Romania in order to participate in the funerals of the PNTCD leader Corneliu Coposu.

13 November 1995: At the request of the foreign minister Teodor Meleșcanu, premier Nicolae Văcăroiu decided to deny the king's access to Romania.

If between 1990 and 1996 president Iliescu, the FDSN, FSN and PDSR governments objected to granting King Michael the Romanian citizenship, the passport or the entry visa, after 1997, when all of them were finally granted to him by the new government, president Iliescu and PDSR, now an opposition party, had a vehement reaction. On 13 of February 1997, president Iliescu declared that the CDR's objectives, hidden during the electoral campaign, were confirmed. They targeted to defend monarchy and the interests of the ex-owners. A new restoration was confirmed at all levels.

The former sovereign could very well enter Romania in a decent manner, without facing so many obstacles. When King Michael received a new passport on 9th of March 1997, Ion Iliescu said that the authorities were immoral and irresponsible, that they were trying to be humble servants of the former sovereign whereas president Constantinescu "defiles the Constitution". He protested that the king had been welcomed with royal honours and that the new authorities offered him the Elisabeta Palace as a residence. A big scandal burst out in Parliament on 4 march, generated by the opposition deputies. Sever Meșca called King Michael "a ghost haunting the Europe" and wondered why the king had not been arrested on the Otopeni Airport, instead of being given a passport. Miron Mitrea (PDSR) stated that "the government have to remember that Romania is a republic". PDSR senator Virgil Popa asked the government to show "the costs supported by the Romanian people", though, as stated by Simina Mezincescu, the bill was fully supported by the Royal House.

If we are to divide the events into two columns, one for each period, we understand that he who did harm before is the only one appreciated now for doing good.

President Iliescu's reconciliation with King Michael the his great victory of his and not of Romanians, of Romania or of the Romanian state institutions. He changed his rejecting attitude, which has to be positively appreciated, but not drawn from the context. After the 2000 elections and especially after Vadim Tudor got the second place in the presidential elections and the PRM the same place within the parliamentary opposition, Romania was again banned to have bilateral meetings, especially with the EU monarchic states. The imminent pressure generated by Queen Iuliana of Holland's visit to Bucharest, reciprocating my official visit to Hague, at the invitation of the queen. An exact date had been set during my mandate.

The same context led to the passage and, particularly, to the implementation of the law on rights granted to ex-state leaders. During my mandate I encouraged a law meant to grant rights to the former Sovereign. Unfortunately, tormented by internal fights and governmental problems, the so-called monarchists of PNȚ and PNL, members of the government, forgot about this draft bill, the same as the MPs, who could pass it as early as January 1997 in the legislative forum. The government ought to have acted in the same manner, being able to pass it as an emergency ordinance, as was otherwise recommended in the very year of 1997. It was only during the second half of my mandate and due to my prompt influence on Remus Opreș that the draft bill had been submitted to Parliament. PDSR staged a vehement opposition against the draft bill's text, best illustrated by senator Predescu, member of the Judicial Commission. The PDSR senators attacked the law, starting from its title and accepting only the statement "the former presidents", and not "the former heads of state", so that King Michael should be excluded. The law remained for long on the Senate's agenda. Towards the end of my mandate, the Coalition had lost the majority in the Senate, dominated, after Petre Roman had been invested foreign minister, by Nicolae Văcăroiu, whereas the new president of the Senate, Ionescu-Quintus, was a pale figure. I was forced to resort to PNL and PNȚ senators, good friends of mine, to ask that the law should not be passed under such circumstances. I realized it was a heavy blow that may have compromised my status once and for all. I think this was in fact the diabolical plan of PDSR which already

saw itself as the winner of the elections. It was another situation that was to become ridiculous, because of some reluctant and indolent monarchists, though it could have been solved efficiently in the very first months of the CDR governing.

This political incapacity unleashed PDSR's propagandistic manoeuvres for the so-called reconciliation and the use of monarchy for defending its own honour. No monarchist of the CDR-UDMR-PD-USD-PNL government, premier Ciorbea included, could bring convincing arguments on the impossibility to solve this problem by an emergency ordinance at the beginning of 1997. Thus, all the monarchic drives of these persons, now in opposition, were ridiculous.

As usual, passivity goes with the president, even when the government members' or the MPs' indecision or cowardice is at stake.

The Grey Circle I

Frankfurt, 1996

On my way to America, I made a stopover in Frankfurt to meet the Romanians from Hessen land. The discussions were held in a hall of the Cultural Centre. A deputy from Bundestag and several German journalists were also present. All of them wanted to know what happened in Romania. We continued our discussion in a small restaurant and then in a famous doctor's house from a satellite town near Frankfurt. After reaching the hotel late at night, I received a call from a journalist from *Radio Free Europe*. He told me about the interviews he had taken to His Majesty after the Revolution and asked me to give him an interview. I accepted and when it was over, he proposed me to meet an important German businessman, interested in the investment market of Romania. He took me by car to his villa. After presenting his position within the business circle, he asked me to make a record about the advantages that a great oil company might take in case I became president. I was to obtain a substantial support on the basis of this record. We could start. Everything was prepared. It seemed to me so dirty a set-up that I rose immediately and made for the door. Still, I depended on the car I came by, so I was forced to bear the *journalist's* company a little longer. When reproaching him that was a trap, he suddenly changed the subject and presented me a hallucinating scenario. He was trying to persuade me of the Romanian Intelligence Service director's merits, Virgil Măgureanu, who carried out an intense meditation activity in order to bring the King to the country. President Ilies-

cu accepted, as it were, to install Princess Margaret as deputy president in a first phase and to leave room after that to the King. The plot was destined for the monarchists. The fact is that such attempts existed. Măgureanu and one advisor from Cotroceni proposed to invite the King to Romania in the run up of the 1996 elections in order to destabilise the right-wing electorate the very moment I became a dangerous opponent of Iliescu. The obvious delay related to the proposal's approval focused on the fact that there was a fierce competition revealed by opinion polls between Petre Roman and me, so the action was inappropriate if Petre Roman, a genuine republican, seconded me in the first ballot.

June 2002, Bucharest

Twelve years from the '89 Revolution, familiar with the appearances and reality of all people who evolved on the foreground of political scenarios, I realise that the King was encircled from the very beginning by people of the former communist *Securitate* who carried out different missions and played different roles. They hid sensitive biographies of those who were to be used in the country as informants about the democratic structures or became part of Măgureanu's group subsequently, careful supervisors of any move made by the King or recruited for staging different plots. There were prominent personalities among them who may not have acted at order, but, because of their past, they could be blackmailed by *the Securitate*.

It is odd that, after the King's voice could not be heard in our country for decades, it could be heard after the Revolution by many of those who had prevented it from being heard before.

The Grey Circle 2

July 2002, ASPEC

In a long interview on TV, answering the eternal statement "You declared you have been defeated by the former Securitate", I clarified the real meaning of my speech at the 2000 meeting with PNȚCD physicians and chemists. I stated that I was not referring to the relation with those involved in the intelligence services which I ran firmly and cleared up from a large part of the former Securitate members, but to those outside their circle, who dominate the economy and the press and who built a system, by appealing to democracy, meant to distort all my statements, to resort to allusions and calumny in order to spoil the natural communication between me and the Romanians in the country or abroad.

Within days, I was visited by a friend. He said to me: "I have listened to what you said on TV and now I am convinced you are right. That is the proof", he added and put a thick book with crimson covers on the table. "You will find here all the proofs related to manipulation and to the disinformation technique". The book was called *King Michael among Us*, written by Liviu Vălenaş and issued in 1999 at a publishing house in Iasi. That year, facing all sorts of crises, I did not have time to read, nor had I found out about it until then. I knew he was a second-rate author. "This is not the point. Read it carefully. If you don't have time to read it, I marked in yellow the important passages", my friend told me. I followed his piece of advice and I discovered a perfect model of manipulation. The book has 703 pages, out of which 256, that is one third of it, contain interviews with King Michael. The back cover contained the biography of the author, presented as a model of the anticommunist fight.. He did not ignore to mention that he definitely refused to co-operate with *the Securitate*. Everything looks honourable: the subject, the author of the preface. Two thirds of the book contain statements and messages of His Majesty King Michael and of the Royal House recorded between 1989 and 1999 which reinforce the author's credibility. Three interviews, one taken in 1998 and two in 1999 are the essence of the book. I read the interviews and told my friend that I appreciated the right and unblemished attitude of King Michael who refused to accept the tricks, the proposals and the invitations, more or less direct, of adopting a critical position towards me. "This is where the mistake lies". He answered, "the author didn't want more. The purpose was to sharply record the accusations that would spoil later on your reputation. Suffice it to say that the false accusations should be recorded as questions and that the king, careful not to blame the president, to accept to comment on some statements which presumed the least honesty of the author". "What should we do?" "You must do what you have never done so far. You must tell the truth". He was right. Dan Pavel himself told me that he believed in many false statements about me because I failed to reject or comment on them.

I listened to him and I still do it, accompanying each question that introduces a lie with the naked truth. Thus, I drafted a virtual interview, closer to a reality which can be anytime verified.

Typical examples of tricks are the questions referring to NATO. The first question of the interview taken on 22 May 1999 at Versoix read:

L.V.: Your Majesty, first of all I kindly ask you to refer to NATO and Romania. Sire, how would you characterise the results of the Washington summit held last month from the point of view of the Romanian interests?

King Michael started by answering that “I do not know yet all the details discussed there. The fact that Romania has been again tabled for discussion is a big step forward. Nothing has been said about Romania before, but this time it was taken into account more seriously. It is hard to know what will happen until the end”.

L.V., feeling that the King was not updated on details, took advantage and said: “Very recently, on 17 of April 1999 Your Majesty have met president Constantinescu at Cotroceni. Was the Romanian president concerned with the fact that Romania is still outside NATO?”

K.M. understood and avoided the answer elegantly: “I don’t like to talk about my meeting with president Constantinescu at Cotroceni”.

L.V.: “How should we interpret the fact that this year (that is 1999) at the Washington summit Romania is no longer mentioned (together with Slovenia) as a main candidate for the future accession to NATO?”

E.C.: That is a lie. Point 7 of the statement of the Washington summit made on 24 April 1999, called “Alliance for the 21 Century”, begins with the following words, after it reaffirms the commitment to receive new members: “We acknowledge and salute today the ongoing efforts and progress of Romania and Slovenia”.

Unfortunately, the King, misled by the inaccurate information provided by the journalist, answered: “It is good that Romania was taken into account at Washington, but the fact that it was not mentioned in the Final Statement should be alarming”. “NATO and the Americans have concluded again that things are not going as it should in Romania”.

L.V. went on: “Can Romania’s rejection be the cause of a wrong perception of the State Department regarding Romania’s geo-strategic role, or is it because of the weak economic performances?”

*E.C.: The passage from the NATO Statement and the declarations of the Mixed Commission for the U.S.-Romanian Strategic Partnership talk about an ongoing **progress**, the one of the economic reform included.*

L.V.: It is rumoured in our country that, behind fine statements uttered to this purpose, Romania was deliberately left by the Americans in a Russian space of influence, in order to protect Russia’s ambitions.

E.C.: That’s a lie. In July 1997, president Clinton and president

Constantinescu launched in Bucharest the U.S.-Romanian Strategic Partnership (Israel, for instance, still benefits from such a partnership). It is precisely the effective partnership that made Russia respect the Romanian refusal to provide flight path to Russian aircrafts, which appealed to the one offered by NATO countries, such as Poland and Hungary.

The King felt the journalist's bias.

K.M.: "I think you are exaggerating a bit".

L.V.: If the present power does not hide its aversion towards King Ferdinand (probably because he united the nation), why so much contempt for a gentle and peaceful person like Queen Elisabeta – Carmen Silva?

E.C.: Nonsense. I have often invoked King Ferdinand and, of course, Queen Elisabeta with respect and admiration. The contempt for Carmen Silva was a mere fabrication of the journalist.

L.V.: Is it a good thing the fact that the Island of the Snakes was so easily given up to Ukraine in the context in which Romania is about to be ousted from the continental platform of the Black Sea?

E.C. This is a tendentious question. Romania was not ousted from the continental platform and the Island of the Snakes could not possibly be given up to Ukraine.

K.M: I am not so sure we have given up our territories for good. It goes without saying that without the support of the neighbouring countries there will be no major investment for oil exploitation in the Black Sea. The right decision of any government must be a balance between desire and reality.

L.V.: Why is the new Romanian power so stuck in the decision of maintaining Pacea's death sentence?

E.C.: The capital punishment was abolished in Romania after 1990.

L.V.: Don't you think, Sir, that you are still shadowed by the Romanian intelligence services? I've heard that SRI set up an interception centre very close to Your Majesty's house at Versoix.

E.C.: This is a terrible lie: SRI does not operate abroad and, moreover, who could imagine that the Swiss services wouldn't be updated or allow such thing to happen?

L.V.: President Constantinescu took over most of the former palaces and castles of the Crown, Cotroceni, Scroviștea, and has recently given an interview to journalist Dan Fornade from the Canadi-

an newspaper "Luceafărul românesc" in the Foişor Castle from the Peleş complex, now used as winter residence by the president. Why this? Could this be the eternal cause of the Oriental despot?

E.C.: *Not for a single day have I lived in any of the palaces or castles of the Crown, or in any of Ceausescu's residences. The Royal Palace from Scrovistea was pulled down during the Gheorghiu-Dej period. In Scrovistea I used a building in Stalinist style which Cornel Nistorescu described accurately in his daily. I invited King Michael to visit Scrovistea. He knows very well what happens there.*

L.V.: We remember that during 1995-1996 Emil Constantinescu, the candidate at that time, made a firm promise that if he became president of Romania, he would not move to the Cotroceni Palace, but he did not keep his promise. Why?

E.C.: *I did not move to Cotroceni. At Cotroceni there are only offices and a museum open to the public.*

L.V.: President Constantinescu and the Democratic Convention took hold of power following an ambitious electoral platform, 'the Contract with Romania', a programme which provided that Romania should witness serious improvements within 200 days. No promise was fulfilled.

E.C.: *This is not true. Most of the promises that actually provided **draft bills** were fulfilled. Moreover, many of them were passed and put into practice. One should consider the abolition of the agricultural tax, the Law against pyramidal games etc.*

K.M.: This contract was carried out slowly. Democracy says politicians have to have the electorate's consent every four years, but they ought to govern without subsequently asking the electorate about it. Romania has forged a better image after the 1996 elections, though now its image is damaged again. There are much more complex reasons than some promises made before the elections.

L.V.: Immediately after he was elected president, Mr. Emil Constantinescu no longer agreed on the implementation of point 8 of the Proclamation from Timișoara, though he had promised this in the electoral campaign.

E.C.: *I said something completely different: that we had to rule the country as well as we could during my mandate, so that after four years there should be no restrictions for us to win. During my mandate I did not accept anyone that failed to comply with the require-*

ments of point 8 of the Proclamation from Timisoara.

L.V.: President Constantinescu is very angry with the Romanian press, almost unanimously critical of him and his regime. He now decided to launch an attack against the Romanian press of the Diaspora. The first victim was 'Luceafarul romanesc' from Canada. The protocol funds were lavishly used; following the invitation to Romania addressed to the director of this review, Mr. Dan Fornade and to his wife, Mrs. Aura Fornade, the latter changed his attitude, supporting president Constantinescu. Is it a good thing for the press to be controlled by Cotroceni?

E.C.: *That is a lie. As very well known and shown, I did not control any journalist. I only asked that "Vocea Romaniei" the governmental paper and "Palatul Cotroceni" magazine be suspended.*

L.V.: The Iliescu regime was quite cautious with the press and journalists, but the Constantinescu regime did not refrain from putting to jail some of them; besides, he accused the press of spoiling Romania's image. What do you think of that, Sire?

E.C.: That is not true. The press was all free, I did not accuse it of denigrating Romania.

L.V.: Mrs. Zoe Petre, the main advisor of president Constantinescu, said morality has nothing to do with politics. Do you think politics should be made like this?

E.C. *This is a misquoted statement.*

L.V.: Last year, an advisor of the president, Mr. Daniel Barbu, challenged the Romanian public opinion by saying bluntly: "Communism was not imposed to Romania from outside; on the contrary, it was an undisputable option of the Romanian nation". What do you think of that?

E.C.: *Distorted statement.*

L.V.: In 1995-1996, as a CDR candidate for presidency, professor Emil Constantinescu promised all his supporter that if he is elected, he will do his best during his mandate to bring His Majesty to the throne again. What can you tell me about these promises?

E.C.: *I did not make this statement, as I did not have any right to modify the Constitution. The president does not have legislative initiative for any kind of law or ordinance. I said I would agree on a referendum, if it were required. No one asked for it.*

L.V.: The present president Constantinescu promised in the 1996 electoral campaign that he would shed light upon the events that took

place during the '89 Revolution. Nothing has been done. Who is to blame that the truth is still shrouded in mystery?

E.C.: *All files were opened. Investigations were set up, cases judged and severe sentences pronounced, including generals Victor Stănculescu and Mihai Chițac.*

K.M.: I do not know either why this problem did not enjoy more attention.

L.V.: Why cannot president Constantinescu and the actual power get rid of the former *Securitate*?

E.C.: *SRI and SIE have been massively reshuffled. One can see that after 2000, when many generals and colonels of the former Securitate dismissed at my request were installed again in important offices.*

K.M.: "No democratic country can function without security and intelligence services. The problem is not that the intelligence services should continue to exist, but what kind of persons should operate in these services."

L.V.: The well-known political analyst Șerban Orăscu has launched since 1997 the thesis according to which president Constantinescu signed a pact with the devil in 1995, that is with the ex-*Securitate*.

E.C.: *False and absurd statement. If I had signed such a pact, I would not have dismissed Măgureanu whereas he and the companies he protected would not have been subject to prosecution proceedings.*

K.M.: I wouldn't go too far and say it was a pact, but it seems that the situation is still unclear.

L.V.: A series of prominent intellectuals from the city of Timisoara led by Mr. Mircea Mihăieș have recently protested against the fact that SRI acted as political police, supervising the scholars from the town on the bank of Bega river who were critical of the Constantinescu regime. Is it a natural thing that, almost ten years from the Revolution, this situation happens again?

E.C.: *Nonsense. No scholar was followed during my mandate.*

L.V.: Why does Romania, a traumatized and poor country, maintain such a complicated apparatus of secret services, ten times as big as the German one?

E.C. *Untrue statement.*

L.V. About G-ral Pecepa's situation we talked a year ago; nothing changed since. Gen. Pacepa remains a death convict, as do the other

convicts defecting Securitate officers. They remain convicts “because they had betrayed Ceausescu.” Is that normal?

K.M. Responsible for the situation we are in is also the president who could have said: “I pardon them and that is that”. And when necessary that was what we used to do back in our days. Probably there are too many advisors around Constantinescu, telling him to do things the way he does. I don’t know exactly what people at Cotroceni think.

E.C. *According to the law, pardon can be granted only by request. I brought to Gen. Pacepa’s knowledge the fact that I’m willing to pardon him. He wished to have his case reopened in order to be acquitted and that was what happened in the end.*

L.V. It is possible that Pacepa’s death conviction to be a consequence of the pact with the Devil that Șerban Orăscu was talking about.

K.M. Yes, that would be a possibility, if such a pact was ever signed, only the word is rather strong.

E.C. *A very inconsiderate thing, just as unwise as the story with the pact. The pact with the devil was signed by the ones who are inquiring at the moment.*

Something needs to be mentioned here. Vălenas’s book, this sample of Securitate’s manipulation, opens with a dedication to a list of numerous names of the people who died in the mountains fighting against the Securitate, to the ones exterminated in communist jails, to the martyrdom of the United Church, to the humiliated Romano-Catholic Church, to the Orthodox priests and monks slaughtered in communist jails, to the Chief Rabbi Alexandru Safran, to all the ones crushed by the red plague, to the unknown heroes who died in Romania and for its people. The acknowledgements are also impressive. Almost all important and respectable names of the Romanians living in the country as well as abroad are listed here.

I remember that when I was assistant, a student in Geophysics, now teaching in Iași, had written capital letters on his dorm-room wall: “Judas had amazing friends.”

I am one of King Michael’s supporters. Not only did I want him here but I also did everything that was up to me to bring him among us as soon as possible. We wanted him and want him still due to his intelligence and to his aristocracy, meanwhile we also reject the grey circle that has surrounded him. If up to 1989 and during the first few

post-communist years the truth was hidden behind a black veil, now we know for a fact that many of the ones who have surrounded or are gathering around the king are either former collaborators of the *Securitate* or people who are responsible for communism in Romania. His Majesty is the only one who, from the pedestal that history and God had put him on, may ask them to step back.

Stories about the King

When my parents first took me to primary school, in my first classroom, just above the blackboard, on the wall behind the teacher's desk, there was a crucifix and the King's portrait, so that every time I looked up from my blue horizontally lined notebooks, I would see his face. My generation gap was not one of a happy childhood, neither a quiet one for that matter. I was born the moment the war started, I lived through bombardments and refuge. In the quiet town of Pitești I was experiencing at that point the shocking presence of the Red Army soldiers, who took over the military garrison and amused themselves until late at night shooting fire-guns. My way back from school, along the main road was often interrupted by communist marches or meetings. I could hear the shouts and could see the faces full of hatred of some people, without understanding what was happening. The teacher was close to the retiring age, and the priest who taught religion was an old man with a great white beard, as if he came from another world. When I asked him who was in the portrait, he answered: "He is God's chosen, King Michael." "And why is he so young?", we asked. "So he could lead you, children, after our passing away." The old priest did not know or did not want to tell us what he had understood from the tragic historical development which was issuing at that moment. When I was in the third grade, the portrait of that blue-eyed adolescent that I could feel very close to the horizon of my childhood, had gone away. Only legends were left to us. When, during the summer, we would go in the village where I grew up, Brădet, on Sundays, at the church built by Mircea the Old, I could see coming to the same church from houses scattered on the hills, tall old men wearing traditional clothes and long hair waving on their shoulders. That was because Brădet was in an area of robust tall people. From one generation to the next, this was the recruiting place for soldiers in the royal guard. Our young sharp ear could catch the drift of some of their remembrances since they were

guarding the Royal Palace. They were talking – a rare thing at that time – about happenings with kings and queens which had become deep-seated in their minds. Years later, at Cotroceni Palace, when we were to receive the visits of some kings and queens, when the soldiers of the Royal Guard were lined up along the columns, so still that they would make you believe they were statues, I was thinking that yet, they can see and hear and that maybe they would recount to other children about the kings and queens of some faraway countries who were visiting Romania at that moment.

When I became teaching assistant at the Mineralogy Department, the laboratory chief assistant was an elder Transylvanian, brought over by the founding father of the department, professor Ludovic Mrazec. He lived in the basement of the old building of the University and he had spent his entire life in the laboratory, mending and guarding the collections. His favourite story was about the examination in mineralogy at the Faculty of Sciences that King Michael had to take with professor Ionescu-Bujor. He would recount to us how the King would come escorted by an army officer, who stayed outside the university building and how the King entered the laboratory where the laboratory assistant would lay the minerals he had to learn to recognize.

I will never know the truth from fiction and I haven't found the appropriate time to ask the King about such old stories.

Doina Uricariu has recently told me that in November 1990, before going to Versoix for working on an interview book of King Michael's, she went to Sinaia Monastery where she met an old monk named Arcadie who told her that King Michael, once when he was a child, had joined the monks in their frugal meal. And, as he heard a little story at the Palace, he began recounting it to the monks: "Once upon a time a short man received as a gift a long club with the handle set in precious stones. The club was shining and noble, but, since he was a short man, he cut the club, not from its bottom, but from the upper part of its handle, which was the part longer than him". Doina Uricariu told me that for her book called the Soul Asylum. She wrote a poem about old Arcadie. She quoted the following lines: "He cut away what overtopped him, he cut away the brilliance that overtopped him, and now he can change club after club".

Whether a legend or not, unfortunately, Romania was several times ruled by little people who cut the brilliance that overtops them.

FAITH AND LIFE

Beyond the White Clouds

6 August 1992, Sucevita

I came from Bucharest by train, in the company of Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan, to attend the celebration of the Transfiguration.

After the mass, Pimen, the Archbishop of Suceava and Radauti, invites us on the porch of the episcopal house, where he serves us jam and cold water.

The archbishop draws our attention to the procession of people climbing in the heat of the afternoon the steep slope of the hill guarding the monastery, which is an age-old custom. I remembered the winding road to the peak of Mount Tabor, and Naim, the little village at the foot of the mountain. Perhaps pilgrims from times long forgotten were the first to climb the hill, struck by the resemblance to the place of Jesus Christ's Transfiguration. I tell His Excellency that I had talked on the way with Romulus Rusan about the meaning of the brief moment when victory was revealed before the beginning of the Passion. He stares at us for a few moments with his piercing eyes brightening his wrinkled Bucovinian peasant face: "May God protect you!".

After a few years, a colleague of mine, also a geologist, told me that, as he made a halt the house of an old woman from a Bucovinian village, he found in the *front room* the old poster from the '92 electoral campaign with the slogan *Let us rebuild hope together*. "Why do you keep this poster on the wall?", he asked her. "Because this man stares at the sky with faith and, beyond the white cloud, there is the light of God."

The Cross Borne on the Shoulders

31 March 2002, Skopje

In a street of the Old City, a square is drawn with white stone on the Grey pavement. Nearby, on a grassy lawn, a small monument with an inscription. It marks the place of the house where Mother Theresa

was born. A Catholic Albanian woman in a country where the Slavic majority are Orthodox and the Albanian minority – Muslim. Twice in minority. Brought up in poverty and pain, she decided to devote her life to those even poorer and more miserable than herself. To the sick people of far away India. Whenever I look at her face in the photo she sent me with a dedication and I remember how we met, this woman's eyes, enlightening a wrinkled face, start haunting me again.

September 1997, Calcutta

The official plane taking me back from China stops over at Calcutta. The airport is full of the official aircraft having brought high officials and personalities from all over the world, from Queen Sophia of Spain to Hillary Clinton, who have come to the funeral of a woman turned into a symbol of devotion in an ever more selfish world. While I'm going to the huge airport guestroom, the head of the protocol department asks me what I have decided: should we stop over for the funeral or should we continue our flight homewards. Daybreak will be in no time now, and Calcutta will turn into the meeting point of the two worlds. The crowd – terrible in its silence – of the poor of India versus the high official group of state personalities and foreign guests. Separated by many invisible walls, they will be close to each other, yet they will never come together.

I order that, after the plane has been fueled, we take off. In the calm night, the city between the jungle and the ocean is being left farther and farther behind us, while the stars draw nearer and nearer. God, let her soul rest in peace.

I have recently seen more and more people wearing crosses for jewelry to adorn their necks. Crosses ever bigger, ever brighter. And most of them seem to have forgotten one thing: the really sacred cross is borne on one's shoulders.

April 2002, Dragomirna Monastery

It is Holy Week and we have chosen Bucovina again. The fields are green and the houses are bright after Easter cleaning. The car climbs up north, to the place where, from among the soft hills covered by firs and oak trees, like a stone light Dragomirna rises. High and narrow "like a case of holy relics", as Nicolae Iorga used to say, it resembles none of the other 17 century monasteries of Moldavia. High, thick, citadel-like walls. The founder was no prince, but a metropolitan bish-

op, a man of letters and an artist. The innocent faced young nun meeting us regards these walls not only as a barrier against inimical invasions of the dark Middle Ages, but also as a frontier between the secular world and the monastic world, with their different measures for time and life.

It is a workday and before the Easter vigil the church is empty but for a few women praying. Their faces with deep wrinkles and quiet look remind me of the picture of the Balkan nun, now resting in far away India.

December 2000, Rome

Talks on human nature. Scientific chemists, analyzing human body, have accurately established that it contains fat enough for 7 bars of soap, iron enough for a medium-sized nail, phosphorus for 2,000 matches and sulfur for... A list of items to be purchased at the shop round the corner. An apparently frivolous vision, which the 20 century - so often monstrous and tragic - did not refrain from carrying to the limits of the imagination: using man as a raw material for soap.

This is why, at the dawn of a new century, I shudder at the idea of a contemporary theologian - Pronzato - who imagines what would happen if we could determine the Quantity and the Quality of prayer in the human life.

Two visions: man weighed on some laboratory scales and the value of life measured in the scales of faith.

The Sons of Tears

15 August 1998, Nicula

At night, I walked all the way from the outskirts of Gherla to the monastery, climbing the hill next to thousands of men and women, old people and young people, laymen, monks and priests from all over Romania, together with Romanians coming from other countries, where fate had taken them. Trying to get some rest for the next day in the room Metropolitan Bishop Bartolomeu Anania allowed me to have for a few hours, I am thinking of what urged those who are praying together, in the grass-covered amphitheatre, among hills and forests, to undertake such a long and tiresome journey. Through the open window, I can hear the pure voices of women singing something which resembles a melancholy Romanian folk song rather than a religious hymn. "Help us, Mother of God, when we fall on the way, we are the sons of Your tears".

In Lourdes, at Cestohova, throughout the world, I have seen processions to the icons of Virgin Mary, I have seen countless invalids who had come for the healing of bodily diseases. The icon of Saint Mary at Nicula, out of whose eyes tears had presumably fallen, has not been attributed such miracles of healing the body. In a painful moment of our history, Virgin Mary wept for the soul of the Romanians, deprived of freedom and justice. Maybe at least once a year, our souls, tormented by the curse of separation, can come together in the name of faith.

At home, I have put up on the wall a few old icons from the XVIIth and XIXth centuries. Among them, a few icons from Nicula. There has existed for hundreds of years a school of naïve painters painting icons on glass. These icons are different from those in Wallachia and Moldavia. The old icons of the Orthodoxy developed around the Byzantium are painted in fresco on the walls of churches and monasteries, painted on wood or decorated in gold and silver. Painting on glass as well as glass itself reached Transylvania from Central Europe, but there is something profoundly Romanian about it. Even if it is obvious that the motifs or the models which were the source of inspiration are West-European lithographies, however they carry an unmistakably local mark. The saints wear peasant clothes, their faces are those of Romanian peasants, and the painters, who are peasants themselves, preserve the old oriental traditions. Even though clearly not trained in the technique of the perspective and lacking any knowledge of anatomy, their paintings convey the emotion of a naïveté and a sincerity of being transposed into a world which, from father to son, they have kept in their souls: the mystery of unborn beauty into born beauty.

As in the case of the Nicula monastery, most Romanian Orthodox monasteries and churches in Transylvania were not erected by voivods, princes, kings or great landowners. They were founded by communities of peasants, who transferred onto them their faith and their dream of freedom and justice.

These icons, born out of faith and suffering, are an image of the burden we are able to carry.

I am thirsty

24 March 2002, Bratislava

It is Easter Sunday for Catholics and Protestants. When we enter the Cathedral of Saint Martin, a few minutes before 7 p.m., the central

nave is full. Statues and white flowers are brightening the nave. The parish priest is taking us to the seats which were reserved for us in the front row. There is an elegant booklet, folded in four, on the desk in front of each of us. While the Symphonic Orchestra in Bratislava, standing in front of the altar, are tuning their instruments discreetly, I am reading the first page of the leaflet with the names of the presidents Lech Walesa, Michal Kovac, Arpad Göncz, Emil Constantinescu, Zheliu Zhelev, who will give brief reflections whose texts will be translated into Slovak. President Havel is represented by the Archbishop of Prague, who will be joined by Count Schwarzenberg. The choir, the soloists and the conductor take their seats and the first notes of the oratorio are heard. I am used to consider Haydn a precursor of Mozart and Beethoven, outshone by Bach and Brahms.

Never before has he seemed so profound and his music so heart-breaking to me. After the fourth part of the oratorio ends in a whisper like a sigh, one of the pastors of the church, an old man with white hair and elegant conduct, takes me to a wooden platform where the text of the reflection I have prepared is placed in a leather portfolio. The words I am reading join together, in the concert of Central Europe, not only the expression of the Romanian experience, but also the musicality of a Latin language next to Slavic, German and Hungarian sounds. My reflection is entitled *I am thirsty*.

“During the communist dictatorship, a young Romanian philosopher, of Jewish descent, called Nicolae Steinhardt, received the proposition to be a witness for the prosecution in the trial against some writers of his generation. As he refused, he himself was arrested, tortured and sentenced to twenty years in prison. In the extermination camp, he got to know the New Testament, was christened by two priests – an Orthodox and a Catholic –, who were also his cell mates, and upon his release from prison he became a monk in a monastery in the Carpathians. In his book, *The Diary of Happiness*, where he tells the story of his life in prison, Nicolae Steinhardt recalls that people in most of the cells were debating upon the last words uttered by Christ on the cross.

What most troubled the prisoners subjected to physical and moral suffering was the human nature which seemed to have overwhelmed our Saviour for a while, despite the fact that He was fully aware of his Resurrection. For how could He otherwise have said with so much grief *I am thirsty* or *My Lord, why have you forsaken me?*

Steinhardt makes a troubling analogy between the death of the Saviour Jesus Christ and that of the philosopher Socrates: "Socrates dies calmly, surrounded by faithful and attentive disciples, who seem to absorb every word uttered by him; while He, imperturbable and serene, sips the painless poison which the guardian offers in reverence.

Abandoned and betrayed by his people, Christ agonizes on the cross, tortured by thirst and jeered at. Socrates dies like a seigneur, Christ dies like a knave, between two bandits, on a vacant lot. Socrates thanks the gods he is going to escape the vicissitudes of the material world, Christ cries out: *Why have you forsaken me?* Of the two deaths, it is the divine one that seems inferior and troubled. The truth is, it is all the more human. Socrates – in good faith and successful to a large extent – rises from the state of human to that of a deity. Christ descends to the lowest abyss of the human condition.

Eli, Eli, the cry on the cross, proves that God did not try to comfort us with an elevating appearance of the sacrifice, but treated humans as free individuals, capable of enduring and understanding the unpleasant truths."

"If the crucifixion had been a farce and a masquerade, I would never ever have converted to Christianity", confesses the man who would took his conversion the whole way, by choosing, after being released back to freedom, to become a monk to the end of his life.

For those in Romania who, at the time, were young academics, of all the words spoken on the cross the most troubling must have been *I'm thirsty*. We were thirsty for freedom, for truth, for justice, for real love among people. On the night of 21 December 1989, the young people in Bucharest's University Square kneeled in front of the troops of Romanian dictator Ceausescu, crying out "We shall die and we shall be free!"

The Securitate troops opened fire and a whippet drove into the crowd, crushing under its tracks the bodies of the demonstrators. Over a thousand people killed that December became free in front of God. For those who remained alive, freedom proved to be less than easy; the fall of the Iron Curtain ended the illusions of the East and the hypocrisy of the West. Many thought their thirst would be quenched by the sweet liquor of freedom. They had, instead, to taste the vinegar water of transition.

In the Oriental tradition, vinegar in water better quenches the thirst of the traveler. Those who cross the desert of Eastern European post-

communism cannot say *It is over* yet, but they have learned that the price of redemption must be paid by each according to their best possibilities. Coming back into my own, I am once again subdued by the polyphony of Joseph Haydn's oratorio: the redemption of man through faith and the transfiguration, through music, of suffering into joy.

CHILD BITING FROM AN APPLE***Soot Black****August 1992, Copșa Mică*

Our small election convey has reached the town of Copșa Mică. A fairly large group of people – children included – has been expecting us downtown. They know me to be a professor and a geologist engineer –and they are asking me whether – should I be elected for president of the country – the soot black factory is closing.

Two years before I had seen a photo published by *Newsweek*, illustrating a detailed reportage on pollution in Central and Eastern Europe. On the cover they had put the image of a child from Copșa Mică, his face black with smoke, biting into an apple of a cleanliness just as debatable as that of the hungry child's face. Their concern takes into consideration no ecological reasons, but strictly social-economical ones. What worries them is their and their children's food – be it clean or contaminated – which can only be secured as long as the factory functions and they, the parents of those poor children, keep their employment. I know the answer, but I also know how difficult it is for me to account for it in front of some people less concerned – for the time being – about the relation ecology-production-health.

Between the Heat of Day and the Cold of Night*August 2001, Dakar*

I have been invited to chair the International Committee of Supervising the Parliamentary Elections in Senegal. Invited by some Somali geologists having graduated from the University of Bucharest, I take a privileged trip to the Sub-Saharan Desert. While driving deeper into the Desert, my friends tell me about the desperate fight against the advancing desert. They tell me a story having happened at the border of Sahel, where a group of tired and thirsty nomads were waiting once for the night to come.

After a long, full day spent in the heat of the Sahara Desert they were now ready to spend their short cold night by a tiny bunch of trees,

recovering for a new long exhausting journey across the endless African desert. The question – never uttered, but present in all their suspicious eyes – regarded a vital choice in stock for them. Should they cut down one of the few trees, thus getting a bit of warmth for their exhausted bodies – or would they rather give themselves up to the cold, sparing the lives of those trees as fighters against the expansion of the merciless desert?

Ecology – as a fashionable expression of today's science, civic and political conscience – brings together in a linguistic unity two words with the deepest meanings: oikos and logos, thus liable to being limited to a unique significance, i.e. that of the particular knowledge of a fine management of all the goods employed. Hence the question we should ask ourselves: is our household confined to just the oasis we live within? Is it just Coșca Mică, Romania, Europe – or is it rather the whole world?

God gave us the Earth as a whole, not piece by piece, and by no means dirty.

But of all living creatures man seems to best resemble viruses, since it is only humans and viruses who destroy the media they inhabit, thereafter moving to some other medium which they will use until destruction.

In his volume of essays entitled *Unto This Last*, published in 1862, John Ruskin launched a warning, in the latter half of the 19 century, a warning still valid today: "What seems to be richness might only be the gilded sign of ruin's last stage".

The Microprocessor Fountain Pen

June 1998, the Capitol

The President of the US Congress, Newt Gingrich, affably welcomes me into his office. As I expected, the discussion soon becomes captivating. I met him some time ago, in 1997 and 1998, in Davos. In 1997 he wanted to meet me out of curiosity, he had heard I had won the elections with an electoral program entitled *The Contract with Romania*. I explained to him that, indeed, the title had been inspired by the model of the *Contract with America*, which he had launched for the Republican campaign in 1996, but that, except for the title, there was nothing else in common, since the political and social context of Romania and the U.S. is completely different. I used that title, I explained further, because I wanted to introduce to Romania the Ameri-

can attitude concerning the rigour of obligations stipulated by contract. That is, specific competences and deadlines that do not normally appear in political programs or doctrines.

The next year, at Davos, the discussion was completely different. Concerned by the political and military evolutions, he was visibly interested in my opinion (a rare thing for an American in a high-ranking position such as his) about the situation in the Balkans, about Eastern Europe, about the Middle East. I told him that, as far as Yugoslavia was concerned, my opinion was that a more efficient measure than certain military expenses would have been a US program which would place a PC at the disposal of any Kosovo adolescent, either Serbian or Albanian. Because, with the help of the computer, they would have found out something else than what they were told in a system where everyone was kept prisoner within an abusively interpreted history, targeted at the enemy. With a computer for each, they would not have been so easily manipulated by people of the older generations, for purposes or interests that were not their own.

Now we are discussing more about Romania, about its position at the crossroads of several great commercial routes, something I had pointed in my speech to Congress, in the session he presided, on the elaborate strategic partnership with the US.

At the end of the visit, in a spontaneous gesture, he offers me his microprocessor fountain pen that was on his desk. It takes a day, though, to download the information it contains. I can imagine how much information there is inside and how important it is. I placed the pen on my desk, next to the book-shaped mail case that I received from Bill Clinton. American bi-partnership in 4, Pictor Mirea Street.

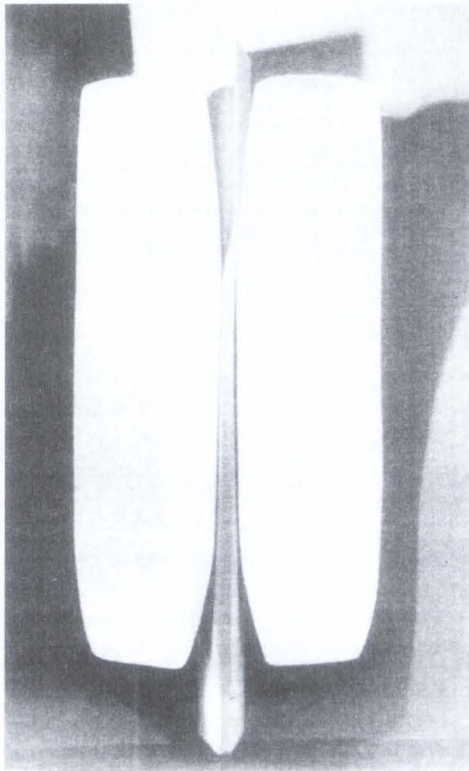
I look at the small, rounded, blunt fountain pen and I think of the great changes of the past thirty years, around the world, that followed the 1971 invention of the microprocessor. Passing from calculus *operations* to *mathematical phrases* allowed for the quick mathematical calculus of the next step: a small *chip* actually replaces *institutions* and *masses of people*.

The starting point was when intelligence was introduced in this *chip*; then intelligent machines, *capable of interpreting* data, became involved in all fields of activity. At first with huge manufacturing costs and prohibitive prices, but now sold for prices that are a few thousand times lower than the initial ones. By spreading technology and calculus techniques, the United States managed to conquer the world in a

new historic manner, via software programs.

The political impact is enormous. The battle for power is fought in a new, insidious manner. Whoever holds technological supremacy is able to find out whatever the other's household contains, to the smallest detail. The danger of separating people into *those who have information* and *those who don't* is real. Whoever knows most controls the other, and has the satisfaction of being the keeper of information he thinks he needs. This places him in a virtual world and, in a way, makes him happy, because it gives him something he himself cannot accomplish. It gives him the possibility of talking to people he can't meet, to fight battles he could not fight in real life.

But how much will the wizard who created the tool be able to control his magic? And, in the absence of the wizard, how about the disciple who thinks he knows, but he doesn't know when and how to stop?



THE THIRD BANK OF THE RIVER

FREEING WORDS

Arms and Ammunition

1998, Scrovistea

During a stroll along the lake shore the young researcher Marius Oprea, who is working on a book about the history of the Securitate, tells me that, during the dictatorship, he was obliged to go with his typewriter every year to the Militia and, watched closely by the militia man (policeman), he was supposed to type a text, which would remain in the records kept by the Militia. The sentence, that had to be reproduced by all owners of typewriters considered potential threats for the national security, was taken – what absurd humor – from the *Program of the Romanian Communist Party*: I know this – I tell him – from many of my friends. What you probably do not know – answers Marius Oprea with a smile – is that this action took place in the *Weapons and Ammunition Office*.

In its morbid fear of any kind of opposition, the communism arrested not only thought, but it arrested also the words. The fall of communism meant not only freedom of thought but also freedom of words.

The exceptional poet Andrei Codrescu, who in '89 catapulted himself directly from Louisiana to the University Square to take out a bucket of fresh water from the river of history, notices in his moving diary *The Hole in the Flag* how: "The Romanians were to find out in the following days that all the things they had feared of or despised for so many years were getting new names. Militia, schools, factories, government sectors, all were about to change their names. All this festival of change was a symbolic act linked to the magic of the New Year, out of the desire of the new leaders to give people the illusion that not only the Ceausescu regime had been destroyed, but so was the Communist Party with its entire bureaucracy. In a country led by myth, fable, fiction and lie, the disappearance of the rotten language was to be received with enthusiasm. The stealthy looks, the whispering and the harsh words used by everybody to dissimulate were to be forgotten."

Only two years later, in 1992, Andrei Codrescu writes again to define the reality of the transformations that took place: "Freedom of speech, so stunning and ravishing at the beginning of the '90s turned into a dim battle field, where the fascism, the kitsch and the lie win, it seems, over intelligence, sincerity and common sense."

The liberation of words proved to be a long and hard fight, the fight with the wooden language, and especially with what had generated it – the communist mentality.

The Abyss of Dumbness

10-12 June 1994, Sighet

On the improvised stage of the symposium *Memory as form of justice* there come; in the order of the papers announced in the program, distinguished intellectuals who spent a hard time of their lives as political anticommunist prisoners. What impresses me is the strange symbiosis between the horror of the sufferings they had been through and the elegance of language they use to describe them. Noble words that were a passport of the value of the condemned elite and the garment of dignity in front of primitive brutality. To help me pass through the eleven hours of travelling by train from Bucharest to Sighet, I had taken with me a booklet by Andrei Plesu, *The Language of the Birds*. The book, a learned study on language and communication, two themes that are of interest for me now, starts with a story about Frederick the Great of Prussia, who, lured by the thought of an experimental recovery of the "genuine language", decided to grow two babies in princely conditions, secluding them, nevertheless, from any verbal stimuli, from any contact with the sphere of human speech. The two kids were perfectly taken care of but nobody spoke with them and nobody spoke in the surrounding space. The king hoped that, urged by an inborn need to communicate and lacking any exterior linguistic model, the two subjects would come to spontaneously talk in the genuine language of humanity, the one before the Babel Tower. After a couple of years, few in number, in spite of a continuously checked body health and of a flawless physiological management, both children died, absorbed in an abyss of muteness. Consequently, Frederick the Great did not find out anything about the genuine language, but he found out – at a price only kings can afford – something more important: that language is not an annex of human condition, an auxiliary part in its biological and social economy; language is for man a reality of the same rank as food

and air: it feeds, therefore it is vital. To speak – claims the author – is not to make merely a “communication” exercise, as a significant section of modern linguistics is contented to think. To speak is to vitaminize (or to poison) the interlocutor. The word is not a derived phenomenon of life and intelligence: it is, on the contrary, the source for both, their fit rhythm, or shortly, “their breath”.

All survivors of communist extermination prisons with whom I have talked in time, from my uncle and godfather to those I have met recently, have told me how in the inferno of the isolation cells, in their memory, they would rebuild, out of words, their intellectual adventures, or would put into words, with difficulty, the messages transmitted through knocks in the stone walls separating them from the colleagues in suffering. It is a serious mistake to reduce communist dictatorship to the wooden language of the Nomenklatura. In fact, the oppressed society kept surviving through strata of various languages.

Babel – Blois

1991, Salzburg

The quiet city of the musical festivals hosts a meeting of the representatives of the civic movements in Central and South Eastern Europe. During the coffee break, two dissidents, a Czech and a Polish woman, tell me the emotion they felt when they met for the first time in Blois, at the beginning of November 1989, when the Berlin Wall was still erect. At the initiative of Jaques Lang, the future minister of culture, who was then a mayor, a symposium was held consecrated to the European culture. Lang’s guests came from all over Europe, they were all colors – a kind of Babel, where one could risk discovering how the same words peace, liberty, democracy radically changed sense with respect to the speaker and the interlocutor. At Blois, almost miraculously, before the reunification of Germany, there took place a reunification of language among the people, many of them divided for many decades, by the Iron Curtain. From Moscow, Warsaw, Leipzig, they would hug each other. The reunification of Berlin, Germany, Europe would not have been possible without a reunification of language. The language that was to become a key to the reconciliation of the two fields of the former Cold War around common values.

That was not a discovery of the end of the 20 century; Confucius, when asked what he would do if he were ever to become emperor, said that “first he would do a dictionary, which should give back to words

their meaning.” This answer reminds us of a thing we often forget: we cannot hear each other if we do not understand and we do not understand each other if we do not have a common language.

The Salt of the Earth

March 1990, Spiru Haret 12

I am taking part, as the new vice-rector of the University, in a meeting presided by the equally new Minister of Education, Mihai Sora. After the meeting he talks to me for awhile. I had that rare occasion when meeting the man was a confirmation of the pleasure of meeting the author of a book – enjoyment. I remember that, in 1978, I could read a charming profound book by Mihai Sora. *The Salt of the Earth*. In the complicated dialogue between the maestro and his young friend, I was attracted by the passage regarding the signification given to the word. “Can we speak of a *world of words*, great luminous spheres, drifting above the world of beings and giving resonance to our speech which acquires meaning only this way? Yes – comes the answer – there is a world of words. We are born in it, we live in it, we live together in it, we are constrained through it and by it. Along its entire possible career, a living word floats and unfolds between the flexible limits of its own analogic identity. As a matter of fact, always the same, it is intimately contaminated by the contexts either of the various speakers, coming to be uttered from various horizons, or of the one and the same speaker considered in the successive moments of his speech.”

If the Romanian anticommunist dissidence, as it was, is far from comparing, from the point of view of the philosophic, ideological or sociologic contributions, with the anticommunist dissidence in the other Central or Eastern European countries, the Romanians’ fight with the wooden language was marked by outstanding contributions.

The Weight of the Word

May 1998, Cotroceni

Although the bronze clock above the fireplace struck midnight long ago, I ask Mugur Ciuvică to find some *English breakfast* tea for me. With the eyes to the bulky file on my desk I pour it in the big thick cup, a gift from Mihai Stanescu, on which, the artist, with his acid sense of humor, printed “The man subject to power is subject to error”. I have in front of me the essays of the young candidates for posi-

tions of experts to be occupied by competition organized by the Presidential Administration. I considered that besides examining resumes, recommendations and the interview with the chiefs of departments, they should also forward an essay, which I want to read personally, as the future beneficiary of what the ones to succeed will write.

The academician Giuscă, my professor of petrography, warned us, in his first lecture, that it was essential that a fine specialist should master, the art of eloquence, too. Otherwise there appears the risk that the ones presenting in a better way weaker solutions may convince and win. I was going to find out later how right he was, because, if you are not able to say well what you think, you will never be able to think well what you say.

My own experience in working with students made me realize that explanations are meant to open the way to knowledge, not to shut it down.

The totalitarian political discourse shut down the way to knowledge, while in an open society the motivation of decision making is a way to eliminate the political paternalism just because it can be discussed and fought against. The political word is reloaded during the demonstration with the etymological values of the genuine term (*word*), coming from *conventus*, which means *gathering, meeting*. *Conventum*, we should not forget, means *understanding*.

The association between political action and the word is a founding approach checking if you are as good as your word. The political word creates a course of action, like a riverbed giving shape to the project. The word gives weight to or refutes realities. I stubbornly believe that the political discourse can be thought of as a watchword, as a promise judged, checked, honored.

The political discourse – as a word of honor.

The Apples in the Pantry

September 2001, Capsa

A friendly dinner with Mihai Sora, Mariana Celac, Neagu Djuvara, Sorin Ilfoveanu at the famous meeting place of the inter-war élites, renovated now respectful of tradition. Neagu Djuvara tells us a story that happened in the first half of the 19th century. On his family estate, there had been hired an administrator of Brăila, from whom the peasants learnt very quickly the new terms that replaced the traditional words. Neagu Djuvara bemoans this hasty introduction of new

terms, as long as there existed very suggestive terms in the language. I retorted that, in my opinion, neologisms were not the enemies of old words. On the contrary, I think they are the best friends, because taking over their place in the irksome task of usual communication, they let them rest, the same as apples put in the pantry in winter, which preserve their color and savor. In fact, the words kept for a while in the hidden drawers of our memory acquire nobleness, waiting to be taken over by poetry. Sometimes, like Cinderellas, the words are princesses. This is the case of the word *muiere* (woman), despised in high society because it was used only by the peasants, as compared with the terms *femeie* (woman) or *doamnă* (lady), which have been used for a relatively short time. Forget that *muiere* comes directly from the noble and old Latin word *mulier*.

Up the River

February 1983, The Mineralogy Department

I embarked upon an ambitious project, *The Crystallographic Atlas of Romania*. It is much more difficult than I imagined. In the golden age of geometric crystallography, Transylvania, the Ardeal, Banat, Bucovina were part of the Habsburg Empire, so the greatest part of sources are in German and the equivalent names are difficult to translate.

In the geological scientific terminology, and not only geological, the names in German are definitions which were born as a form of education in the Middle Ages, when each word was explanatory and described the object it named. The terms used in the Romanian scientific language taken from the French – English lexicon, are also definitions, but using phrases taken over from old Greek or Latin, now emptied of sense for us, we do not understand their story any longer.

Etymology is a deceiving science, but maybe that is why it is so fascinating. It resembles geology, especially a part of it, sedimentology, which studies the pebbles carried by rivers, their area, their alteration, the way they changed their form and structure. Researchers, going up the river, from the river mouth to the spring, try to establish the source areas. Some other times, discovering the origin of the words resembles the identification of volcanic magmas, which as a consequence of explosions were projected at big distances, covered then by ashes or retaken in newer strata of sediments.

The Silence of Frogs

September 1991, Agapia

The path going up to the monastery passes by a little pond surrounded with vegetation and trees. The nuns hosting us and offering us fresh water and preserves do not forget to tell us about an old legend of this place. Years away, when Agapia was a monk monastery, they were very sad because the croaking of the frogs covered the prayers they raised day by day at the evening service. No matter how loudly they sang, the croaking of the frogs was stronger. As they respected the living being created by God, the monks could not dare kill or banish them. Then they prayed heart felt to the Almighty to make them keep silence at least during the service or to make less noise.

After the failure of the attempt to stop with the clubs the voices of the former resistance men or dissidents as well as the voices of the young people who wanted a change, there appeared, overnight, hundreds of political parties and tens of thousands of voices raised covering those who really had something to say. The Revolution and the University Square were not covered only by a wave of blood, but also by a wave of ink and vociferations. The sinister shouts of Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Eugen Barbu and their acolytes come forcefully up front.

TO HAVE, TO BE***How Much Land Does a Man Need***

September 2000

I am reading a book I am quite fond of: *The Works of Leo Tolstoy*. Some time ago, the late professor R., the much lamented dean of the Faculty of Medicine, asked his family while on his hospital deathbed – to bring him Leo Tolstoy’s book, as he wanted to read – for a last time – the story entitled “*How Much Land a Man Need*”. That book is in my library today. I often look at the hard covers, on whose deep dark green the author’s name is engraved in golden letters – a surprisingly elegant book for the 6 decade of the 20 century when it was published.

It is the story of Pakhom, a poor man, who starts by presenting the Russian peasant’s life philosophy. “The life we carry is dull; yet our job is safe. The Russian peasant may not always have too much to eat, yet he has patience. Rich we’ll never be, yet a full stomach we are sure to have as long as we live”. And, content with his lot, he evokes the saying: “Loss is the elder sister of gain”. This secular reconciliation with destiny is only shadowed by one discontent: “not enough land”.

Therefore, when the landlady decides to sell land for half the price, Pakhom becomes envious of the other peasants who could buy land. He sells everything he’s got and buys himself a plot of land which he toils over with all his might – but his relationships with the other peasants start changing. Pakhom sues them to court, they start taking revenge, he quarrels with the judges, too, and also with the neighbors who threaten to set his house on fire. He is no longer poor now, but his life within the community has become unbearable. Learning there was plenty of good land beyond the Volga River, he sells his little property, leaves for Samara, joins the community, and, step by step, he starts saving again. But he began to envy the village tradesmen who would get rich faster – and he thought now he could buy more land. He found out from a tradesman that there was plenty of cheap land where the

Bashkirian people lived.

After a long journey he meets the leader of the Bashkirians, who tells Pakhom he can buy as much land as he wants to. Inquiring about the price, the protagonist gets the leader's answer: "We are no good at calculating. We sell by the day. You can have all the land you can walk around all along one solid day. The price of the day – one thousand roubles. But you lose your money unless you return the selfsame day, right where you started from. You can walk as far as you please, provided that – by sunset – you are right back where you started from. All the land you walk around will be yours."

Pakhom made plans all through the night: "I'll get myself a great estate on this fine rich land. I can sell the worse land or I can get peasants settle down on it. The better land will be mine to settle on. I'll get myself a couple of ploughs with oxen, I will get a couple of farm servants and with what's left I'll get myself some nice pastures for my cattle."

The next day the Bashkirians took Pakhom to a hillock. They put down a fox fur cap, Pakhom put the money on the fur cap, and the leader told him: "You start from here now and here it is that you must get back, too. All the land you can walk around will be yours."

Pakhom set out on his way, trying to walk around as much as he could, marking the limits with sods of turf. He went further and further away from the hillock and his steps became heavier. When he meant to get back, his legs would not carry him. He tried to get some rest, but he realized he would have no more time to get back before sunset. Although he found it so hard, he quickened his step, then started running, threw out his coat, boots, bottle of water, cap. "I have been too greedy", he repeated now. "I'll never get back before sunset". His heart was beating like a hammer, and he was afraid lest the pressure should kill him. He feared there was no way back from death for him now – but stop he could no more. "Should I stop now they'll take me for a fool – and rightly so". He had come so close now that he could hear the Bashkirians encouraging him. He could see the people on the hillock waving for him. He could see his fox fur cap on the ground, and the money he himself had put on it. Pakhom remembered his dream. "Land there is a lenty, but will I ever live on it?". He climbed up the hillock running. Although the sun seemed to have set before he climbed it up, on top of it there was still light. When he got there, the man saw the fox fur cap. His legs would not help him any more and he

jumped forward – only to touch the fur cap with his fingers.

“Good for you! You’ve got plenty of land now!” – the Bashkirian leader shouted.

Pakhom’s farm-servant ran to help him rise from the ground. But there was already blood dripping from his master’s lips. He was dead. The Bashkirians were sorry for him. The farm servant took the spade and dug a grave big enough for his master; then he buried Pakhom.

A Wooden Chair in Business Class

District of Pajura, 1995

I’ve been wondering about a question asked by my son.

Ever since the early 90’s, I have often been invited – as a professor – to deliver lectures to various universities and scientific societies. I have flown around the world on business class, and lived in high class hotels, paid by organizers with money to spend, and then come to my flat in the district of Pajura, where the elevator would so often not work, so that I’ve had to carry my luggage up to the 9 floor. I would climb up the stairs of the block-of-flats, smelling of fried onion, and I would watch the scratches made by children on the walls, wet from a recently broken pipe – and thus I readjust myself to all the troubles which are common knowledge to anyone who has ever lived in a block-of-flats. Once arrived upstairs I may often have to climb back down to buy potatoes from the market and a loaf of bread from the baker’s round the corner.

“How can you pass – like this – from one world to the next?” – my son asked me once on such an occasion, seeing me crossing such frontiers so fast, as in some tunnel of time, without any difficulty.

This adaptability comes from my double experience as a geologist and professor. On my geological expeditions I would share with my colleagues dry bread, cheese and salami, we would wait together for night train joints on some scratched wooden bench, beside poor people drinking to forget their troubles – and I would sleep in modest country houses, in some tent on a river bank or by some sheepfold pen, with kind shepherds for hosts. On my autumnal return to the faculty, I would leave aside my blue jeans, torn at the knees, and my worn-out boots, and I would enter the classroom wearing a suit and a tie, or a white robe when I had laboratory classes. If while I was away I would not hesitate to drink water from a hoof mark – if need be –, or I would surrender to fleas – no matter how reluctantly – once I returned to

Bucharest I would not stand a trace of dust in my office or at home. This is how I have learned that naturalness is a great gift of life, no matter how trivial the circumstances. It is just as much of a blunder to wear a tie on the beach as it is to go to a concert at the Athenaeum wearing a jumper.

The Hunting and the Feast

January 1997

After the 1996 elections I was surprised by the eagerness of State Protocol Department leaders. Terrorized at the thought of losing their jobs, they are doing their best to prove themselves useful. Their first suggestion – how could it be otherwise? – is organizing a hunting party.

“When would you like us to organize a hunting party?” they asked me.

“I’m no hunter.”

“Your friends or guests may be, though, and you could only participate in it.”

“My friends are no hunters, either, and I will not invite anyone to hunting parties.”

“Then perhaps you would like us to organize some official dinners” – he was just about to say “comradely”, “something special”, he immediately readjusted himself to the line of the dialogue.

“There are already too many official dinners”, I said. “And while I’m away, I’d rather eat in my room.”

This is what they have always been best at – ever since the communist days, since the heyday of the Nomenklature – and their “art” has been quite appreciated, too, after the change of masters.

At the communist reunions, the banquet represented not only the great moment of relaxation after the comrades’ efforts spent in the “working visit”, and moreover an opportunity – for the privileged guests – to establish relationships, but also a chance for the organizers of the dinner. Not only because, if everything turned out well, the organizers would feel relieved to have kept their jobs or even hope for a promotion, but also for the rather prosaic reason of “supplementing resources”.

New faces have turned up meanwhile: “specialists in catering” is what they are called nowadays – and I could not swear they have not found amateurs of such services as theirs. None the less, the disaster seems to be almost perfect, since neither Ion Diaconescu – the president of the Chamber of Deputies, nor Victor Ciorbea, the Prime Minister, can boast such hunting or convivial talents, nor can Mircea

Ionescu Quintus, the president of the Senate, for that matter.

November 2000

The organizers of hunting parties and official dinners – well used to waiting – have got ready for better times. Which – for them, at least – seem to have just returned.

The House and the Money: A Statement

December 2000

The image of successful persons in Romania – and not only in Romania – is generally defined by the way their house is arranged, the brand of their car, and the money they rely on. This is how people are evaluated. This is not wrong altogether. These are signs of private property, which should guarantee human life.

When communism was defeated, the much too sudden change created confusion, frustrations or arrogance. Likewise, in the absence of any legal control, this also created suspicion. The ostentatiously displayed wealth of certain people – whose honesty as businesspersons is rather doubtful – has also generated protests. As soon as the newly rich of transition bought themselves TV and radio stations, and newspapers' editorships, this social protests changed their direction to the state high officials. They had started from a fundamental idea of civil society, from the citizens' awareness that, by the taxes they pay, they pay the high officials' salaries – hence it is the citizens' right to check these state persons' activities. This is quite proper in any democratic state. In Romania, from this proper idea to the notion that the poverty of those whom the wave of transition rendered unlucky losers was due to the high officials' salaries – there was but a step. Once this step was taken, no one cared any more to check up – let alone accept – the fact that all the salaries of our ministers and members of parliament would hardly sustain the budget of a little town. Very few people supported me during my campaign of checking up the enormous salaries and profits of leaders of autonomous administrations with state capital – which are actually twice as much as either the state president's or the prime-minister's emolument. The fact that these autonomous administrations spend a lot on mass-media promotion may have played its role here. On the other hand, state institutions are represented by the people who are only temporarily in their services. Could their symbols – such as headquarters, cars – be humiliated by the ostentatiously displayed affluence of all those who have built up their fortunes fast – on

account of the state, as well? A modest life is indeed commendable for a state official, but this can only fit a Scandinavian cultural pattern of society – for instance – since their lifestyle and code of manners are rather marked by a specific restraint. This does not mean that I do not agree to particularly decent living standards for the state officials – on the contrary, this has always been a necessity in my opinion.

The Presidential Palace is the headquarters – not the residence – of the state president. There are many countries – in Central and South – Eastern Europe included – where the state leader lives in the very palace or headquarters where he works. In my presidential program “Now for Romania” I promised I would not live at Cotroceni Palace. For as long as I was a president, there were just offices at the Cotroceni Palace. Nobody lived there. It was a place for work, not for relaxation, for everyone, the president included. Except for a plain sofa – on which I would lie for a quarter of hour or so, all through the long nights when the miners vandalized Bucharest – there is no place for rest.

I promised in 1996 that the residence of the President of Romania would be on a street on which the traffic would not be banned, and especially that I would not live in the Primăverii district. Until my term was over I lived in Pangratti Street, in a well circulated zone not far from the Television building, where not even access on the sidewalk was blocked until I lived there. I chose the house carefully, for I would not have the president’s lodgings face any claims of property restoration. The documents testified to it that the building became state property after the commercial society which had owned it had turned bankrupt between the two world wars. It later entered the property of the Diplomatic Protocol Office, having been used – before my time – by the Embassy of Germany. Nevertheless, it did not hold the rank of an ambassador’s or a councilor – minister’s residence, being ascribed to a medium rank official of the Embassy of Germany in Bucharest. When the latter was called back to his country, the Embassy of Germany gave up this building, which I found out in the public patrimony. In order to avoid discussions, after the State Protocol Administration was well established and equipped, I invited over to dinner all the managers and editors – in – chief of all the central daily newspapers, all the radio- and television-stations’ managers, and I personally showed them around the house.

I must admit that my residence in Pangratti Street was never a target for any mass-media innuendo. They only tried to film or photo-

graph it so that it should look bigger. It actually consists of a ground floor with a living room, a library, and a kitchen, plus the upper floor, with two bedrooms and an office; my daughter lived with her husband in the garret. My son and his wife lived in the semi-basement, until my daughter-in-law got pregnant and the doctors deemed it no fit for her to live in the semi-basement anymore. The flat in the district of Pajura and another flat in a block-of-flats, not finished – which we had paid for in installments until 1992 – were both sold so that we might offer our two children the possibility of making a good start in their lives and careers and of beginning to build up houses of their own. My son lived for a while in a rented flat – a sleeping room, a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom – at the ground floor of a villa, until 2001, when he moved to Prague.

All this may sound incredible to some people. This may be because I chose to observe the rules. During my term my daughter got married. My son-in-law is an old friend of hers, a medical doctor today, whom she met in Sibiu, when she was a pupil there. He is specializing in surgery now. He had inherited a beautiful house from his parents – unfortunately it has been claimed by the owner. It goes without saying they were not happy to leave it.

I have thought it preposterous to answer all the most unbelievable attacks. Now, when I am no more a president and such information is available to anyone interested, I can assure the readers of this book that my daughter has never lived in a social flat, as the newspapers would have it, and that neither has my son got any villa or flat of his own to live in.

I do possess a private property plot of land at Bancasa – which I have mentioned in my declaration of property, published in all the newspapers in Romania ever since 1996. What is not true is that I should have taken possession of this piece of land as a revolutionary, as they have claimed, or that I should have got it by transfer from another zone, or that I should have bought it. I actually have inherited it from my father. He was an agricultural engineer. Between the two world wars, agronomy was a highly appreciated field of activity, so that my father could afford to buy himself this plot of agricultural land at Baneasa, meaning to cultivate it after having retired. But the communists took it away from him, as they did to so many others. Then I recovered it under perfectly legal circumstances. Now my father's agricultural piece of land is extremely valuable, as it is placed in the neighborhood of the Nightingales' Park, where plenty of luxurious vil-

las have been raised. The land has been divided between my family and that of my sister's. We have got our land today exactly where it once used to be, according to all the clues my father left us. And, moreover, to do away with all other possible suspicions, I will repeat here that at the time when I got this plot of land back, according to the law, I was not a president.

I may insist on the fact that the salary I had as a president of Romania, this is the lowest degree of emolument when it comes to comparing it to the level of payment granted to other states' presidents. My salary ranged between \$300 and \$600. Toward the end of my term, my salary rose up to about \$550. When the law of high officials' salaries got promulgated, as I could not restore it to the Parliament – who had almost unanimously been in favor of it, so that two thirds of the Parliament could have defeated my decision – I publicly disagreed with this decision of the Parliament. I thought – none the less – that everyone must act according to one's beliefs. I decided not to take advantage of this raise of salary and I also asked my counsellors if they agreed to donate the supplementary amounts resulted from the raise to a humanitarian fund. I was extremely pleased to see that all the presidential and state counsellors, who – as high officials – could have benefited from this raise of salary, eventually agreed to renounce it. The raise would have been quite substantial, of almost 45%, so that, in a couple of months a 120 – million lei fund got raised. I called it the Fund of Honour, because I was naïve enough to hope that other high officials would do the same and donate their money to this fund. I announced it publicly to all the ministers, members of Parliament and other high officials who would be willing to donate at least part of their salary increases to this humanitarian fund. It is needless for me to add that not one of these joined us, so that in September 2000 I asked the councillors to give up the idea. But I myself continued to donate. At the end of my term I had a net salary of 14 142 212 million lei. All through my term I had no other sources of income.

In accordance with the Education Law, which stipulates that high state officials may keep their employment previous to their undertaking their public duty, I have kept my appointed job of a university professor with the Department of Mineralogy of the University of Bucharest. The salary for this job was used to pay my colleagues' replacing me at my classes. Whenever my time allowed me, I held my classes and continued my activity as a doctoral dissertation supervisor. Once my presidential

term was over, I returned to my job, thus being paid accordingly.

At the close of my presidential term I made public my Declaration of private possessions, in accordance with the law. Every one of my assertions can be put to the test. What really annoys me is that they are not put to the test.

The Bill of Costs

As a president, as it was but natural, I benefited from the official protocol. I asked though that difference should be made between the official protocol, i.e. providing for the official persons invited or participating, and my personal and familial necessities. I also required that accurate inventories should be done everywhere I lived, so that my personal belongings should be distinguished from those of the State Protocol Administration, lest there should be any doubt at all. All the suits I wore as a president were made in Romania, out of Romanian materials, by an old tailor who had also worked for the former president – as I considered that tailoring and politics had nothing in common. I also went for the excellent Romanian shirts. Now, when I have more spare time to watch video tapes and photos, I can say that I was one of the best dressed presidents of my time.

Everything I used I paid for and – as I have noticed that even my closest acquaintances considered this absolutely unusual – I have kept all the receipts.

What Did He Get from it?

September 1960, Calea Victoriei

I have just taken my degree in law and my first graduate appointment and I'm getting ready to leave for Ploiesti. My colleagues and I will part now, leaving for various places to all the points of the compass. We are having a last meeting at the *Law Students'* hostel, in Doamnei Street, to say good-bye to each other and to all the friends we leave in Bucharest. The main personality of the group is warrant officer Gica from the Traffic Department, commanding over the Republicii – Calea Victoriei crossroads. A luxurious appointment. When he is working at the crossroads he looks like a conductor or a dancer, but when he is in his *jar* near the "Compescaria" shop, he presses his light buttons much like a hydro-electric power plant engineer. When his shift is over, he comes to the hostel, smokes his ciga-

rette, and has a drink from students' supplies. His utmost way of having fun is encouraging us in our *affairs*. Whenever he sees us with a new girl-friend on the side-walk, he whistles, emphatically stops all traffic, and invites us to cross the street. Success is guaranteed. We keep on teasing him telling him – again and again – the joke with the foreign tourist who stops in front of the traffic *jar* – where the traffic supervisor stands with his child – and asks the officer in all the possible languages the way to Ploiesti. The traffic officer shrugs his shoulders all the time, until the tourist leaves in disappointment. The child tells him: “Did you see, daddy, just how many languages this gentleman could speak?” “And what did he get from it?” – the traffic supervisor replies.

Gică has no child of his own, but he enjoys the joke. So do we.

The policeman's reply comes to my mind now: “And what did he get from it?” But it does not sound funny any more today.

As we forgive...

I cannot forget it: when the presidential elections results were announced on 17 November 1996, when the University Square got filled up with so many happy people and I was called to talk from the balcony of the University, I looked at that enthusiastic mass of people and I remembered the hundreds of thousands of people whom I had met all along the latest years. Thinking of all those people I said then that “the people had sacrificed themselves enough, it was time now for the ruling forces to sacrifice themselves.” It was sheer rhetoric. Later I realized that it was not *sacrifices* that we needed in the first place on behalf of the ruling forces, but competence and devotedness. But, of course, some modesty is implied here, as well.

Those who could only remember this piece of rhetoric I can only remind now that on that occasion everybody present prayed together with Father Galeriu: “...forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

A LETTER TO THOSE WHO CAN RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES IN IT***Moved to Another Address***

March 2002, Romania

These following lines are not meant for communist or neo-communist scribblers neither for any older or more recent member of Ceau^oescu's Securitate, apparently more alive & kicking than ever; nor for the employees of press empires of the great transition profiteers.

They are meant for you, the others, whom I do not know what to call. I cannot call you anti-communists, for, in fact, you are no longer interested in this so very outdated thing. I feel embarrassed to call you democrats, having seen you so pathetically craving for a firm iron hand in a velvet glove. I cannot call you the opponents of the Constantinescu regime, since you have opposed anyone and anything. I just think that, for a while, I have offered you a target for your hatred, suspicion, frustration to attack – all of which you have grown up with and cannot do without. I can see now I have made your lives miserable. You would have felt much better with an illiterate for president, whom you could have easily ridiculed, with a president whom you could have made a fool of in smart “witty dialogues”, with a corrupt president whom you could have unmasked, or with a president who would take advantage of privileges to help you feel disappointed. It is not my actual mistakes – which I have made trying to maintain a poor balance in moments of crisis, which you have, anyway, regarded from a superior witness position – that have disturbed you, but the mistakes I “*have failed to make*”, which your perverted minds expected me to make. It is my having failed to break the law, to get rich over night, to take advantage of my position to threaten or bribe my enemies, that has upset you. You reproach me not having run for presidency again? When all you would be waiting for was accusing me I was hankering after power? Where were you when democracy or reform were under attack?

You Have Spat Here

Between 1996 and 2000, eagerly following the urge to “*Spit here!*” published in the *Romania Mare* newspaper, you chose for targets particularly those state institutions which had finally become, democratic after half a century. You carried out Vadim’s urge eagerly and enthusiastically.

After December 2000 you have made a point of complaining for the Romania Mare Party’s success in the elections, and of accusing the 1996 – 2000 regime of having made this disaster possible. As if you had had no part to play in increasing the credibility of national-communists, whose attacking the ruling parties you took for granted and conducted with craftsmanship, talent, and, I must admit, with evident pleasure. This job of undertaking, processing and credible diffusing on a large scale of all the attacks launched by C. V. Tudor – except for those concerning you personally – actually generated a paradoxical situation. In 1996, C. V. Tudor was managing a newspaper with an impressive circulation, and leading an obscure party. In 2000, thanks to you, he could only manage a newspaper with an unmentionable circulation, and lead an important party. His reasons to owe you some gratitude are good enough.

Actually, the present regime, after 2001, is very much to your liking. You can be now what you never managed to be in the times of Ceausescu: opponents. Some opponents – I must say – too much aloof for any risks, who can fake courage at a time for subtle negotiations, when the political power offers you opportunities of clever barter, not in order to reinforce its positions, as it has its own people hired for the job, but in order to annihilate its potential rivals – the kind of job you are really fit for. The people who hold the power now know you quite well, they can manipulate you quite comfortably. They don’t even have to offer you anything in exchange, since the job you’re doing comes from your own convictions. You are the precious instruments of the PD and PRM, though you eagerly abuse them. For, unlike their older or more recent devoted servants, you are more credible in your efficient swearing at all those who might or could ever oppose them. You can destroy anything, even the hope for a real opposition, before it is even born.

No one and Nothing

You can stand up for no one and nothing. For no one! You are unable to stand up for anything to the end. Anything. For you trust no

one and nothing. The worst villain of you all has at least had the guts to start his TV show with the confession of his life: "I can trust no one." That's my very point: you can trust no one. Not even yourselves.

Your sterile and confused agitation gives the impression of a false opposition, which the present regime so badly needs, an opposition of paper and on paper only. This agitation against what is there now, what has been, or what could ever be, offers you an alibi to conceal your great secret: you can stand up for no one. Maybe only for those in your little group, provided they are not above the level of interests and gossip you cultivate. And you are unable to stand up for anything to the end, except for your petty personal or group interests. You may – at the best – sustain some abstract ideas, as abstract and utopian as possible, which should not get you involved in anything. If you should ever stand up for anyone, I know for sure that you do it only because you've been paid for the job, or in order to hurt someone else. You can only become violent when you get personally attacked. Then you would bark angrily and frightened, with all your might.

A Blues at the Graveyard

You are Romania's grave diggers. You are not even those who rob, rape, or slowly kill Romania. You are just those who will bury it, so beautifully, in an almost touching way. After all, jazz is the invention of Louisiana Afro-Americans on their way from the cemetery to the pub downtown, isn't it? And is jazz not beautiful? In a country famous for its commemoration services, I am certain that your mourning will sound wonderful and you will congratulate each other for its perfection. You can be so convincing when you swear, so artistic when you curse: you should be charming enough when you mourn, if this is required.

I'm writing this to say good-bye to you forever. I cannot say I'm sorry to have ever met you. It's been an interesting experience. Some of you I even loved, because you deserved it at the time; some others I loved because of my naiveté or stupidity. I neither hate you, nor despise you. In your own way, you have made a livelier picture of this country. I'm only glad that – for a while – I do not have to see you, hear you, or read you anymore.

THE READING BOOK

Father of Democracy

July 2000, Mangalia

The couple of days when I hoped to be able to really get some fresh air to breathe are getting wasted in pointless talks, without giving me any hope for a homogeneous group of democratic forces to be established till this autumn. I am trying to relax walking down the beach with Cristian Preda. The young sociologist makes me consider one of Karl Popper's most interesting hypotheses, placing the birth of democracy in the year 507 B. C., when the first *book market* appeared in Athens – in fact, they were manuscripts copied on papyrus – a *book market* that generated the development of a self-conscience, indispensable to democratic life.

Developing his theory, the same philosopher notices that, in the 15 century, Gutenberg's invention, i.e. printing, favoured the birth of Humanism and Reform, which further generated – in some intricate but undeniable way – the two revolutions: the French one and the English one, and, finally, the democratic evolution of the continent. To sum it up, this is how the modern political world came into being, by allowing individual access to the text and by pushing the people of that century in full swing, first to revolution and then to evolution.

It is the birth of a book market, the free circulation of ideas that led to the acceptance of the principle of a peaceful change of rulers. "Without a book market, without the possibility to let ideas circulate, no individual has any reasons to doubt, simply because he has no possibility to choose."

If this is true, what was the result of the mass-media explosion in the latter half of the 20 century? I wonder to what extent the abandon of books in favour of television, radio, newspapers does not result in the decay of self-conscience – among other things – , as we seem to let rather information than ideas circulate today.

Nevertheless, I still hope and believe that, as Daniel Chirot noticed, "literature, as it is written for only what seems to be a small

group of people, is a much better measure of the true spiritual condition of a society than public opinion investigation, economic statistics, or outright political behaviour can ever hope to be. To a certain extent, in their writings, in their small groups of debates, those who have written for the few have imagined a future which the majority could not clearly perceive and which nobody really thought possible."

This is what I believed in, what I hoped for.

So far, for the year 2000, I have been wrong.

Protocol Furniture

November 1996 – November 2001, Cotroceni

For the first time after having won the elections for president, I am at Cotroceni. The current president has invited me to discuss the protocol of the transfer of power. He is waiting for me on the Palace main entrance steps and he kindly shows me around the place. The first room whose door he opens is to the right of the entrance: "This is the library." I can recognize it from the television images. It is an important parlour of the presidential protocol, which I would use, too, and where the farewell encounter usually takes place at the change of rulers, as well as encounters with presidents and high officials of foreign countries, first visits of ambassadors and other important guests in a less formal atmosphere.

Having now for the first time the opportunity to take a better look at the parlour, I had a shock noticing that its name comes from a splendid furniture carved in wood, meant to suggest old age, covering the walls almost up to the ceiling in mock classic style. There is no book in this entire *library*. One of the first things I did in the early full and confusing days of my presidency was filling up the shelves with books, the first of which I brought from my own home.

After the state dinner King Carlos of Spain gave to crown the NATO Conference in Madrid, the dinner proper being just over, to reach the parlor where coffee was served, we had to walk all through the sumptuous Royal Palace. I decided to change the protocol of high officials reception in Romania, so that they should also see a significant part of the Cotroceni Palace. To choose the way I visited the old part of the Palace. Then I first saw King Ferdinand's library, which also includes the high table on which he signed, standing up, all royal decrees. I had to notice – with the same bewilderment – that neither did this room contain any book, although its original furniture had been recovered. With the kind help of professor Gabriel Ștrempel, Head of

the Academy Library, and of the generous Mrs. Nora Cofas, Chief Custodian of the Cotroceni Museum, I managed to recover, from the storehouses where they had been kept, the original copies of the volumes in King Ferdinand's library, which now bestow their warmth and nobility upon the presidential parlour.

I was lucky to spend my childhood in a room with walls covered up with books; later in my life, wherever I lived, be it in narrow garrets, bachelor rooms or small block-of-flats apartments, I have had the same problem: how could I find more room for books – on cupboards and cases, on tables or in piles all around the walls. I have kept a funny habit – which is now too old to change – to look for the library first thing when I enter an unfamiliar house and then search the host's books, no matter how rude this may seem. Although displaying the volumes does not necessarily mean also reading them, I can still get a first impression about the books' owner whose guest I happen to be.

In the autumn of 2001, on the occasion of the state dinner given in President Shevarnadze's honour, as a guest at Cotroceni, I felt relieved to notice that not only had they not changed the way to go all through the Palace for the foreign guests, but also that all the books I had left in the two libraries were still at their places.

At least the books.

Lead Soldiers

September 2001, 44 Elefterie Street

Before starting to write my own memoirs, I gathered in my library books written by the protagonists and actors of the first post-communist decade, or by the survivors of the former regime. Some shelves have thus been filled up with volumes of the participants in the Revolution, the books of former prisoners, of anti-communist resistance, of former dissidents, memoirs recently published by ex-communist leaders, or even confessions of a former torturer. Here they are all together, sharing the same library shelf. The books' are lined up like the soldiers of the buried army at Xian – speaking of soldiers of former wars. Unless they are opened, they remain as neutral and inexpressive as the covers' libraries of the newly rich. How many people may have read these confessions of the same age in our history, reflected in so various life-experiences: victims, executioners, witnesses? My private research, undertaken among acquaintances and strangers, in ever wider social zones, proves that only too few have done so.

Irrespective of my feelings or resentments, I have read them all with the greatest attention. As I respect books in principle, I have refrained from making my notes directly on the books' pages, using instead paper stripes on the tops of which I noted some things which I thought to be significant.

The library looks now much like a living forest, young trees having just sprouted.

Lawns in the Desert

January 1988-January 2002

I took advantage of Nicolae Manolescu's son Andrei – formerly a student of Geophysics – and I sent the literary critic and professor an invitation to a dialogue with geology undergraduate students at the University Club in Brezoianu Street. Although the room was awfully cold and we were shivering with our coats on, the talk soon became lively. Finally a student asked Nicolae Manolescu, her voice trembling with emotion: “Professor, do you think anyone could live without poetry?” “Of course they can” – the distinguished literary critic answered her. “As long as they don't know there is such a thing as poetry.”

As I grew up amidst them, the books of my adolescence were to me much like that wonderful California in John Steinbeck's book *Pastures of Heaven*, which no one can leave anymore, under the spell of the land's gift of life. This is why I have felt that – during the last ten years – I have passed through the desert of political life very much like a camel, feeding myself from old supplies stocked up in the days of my youth. This does not mean that, reading only what I had to, I have forgotten what I love.

During the decade of my undergraduate studies, whenever I had to learn by heart texts from the bulky dry volumes of Roman Law, Civil Law, Crystallography, Mineralogy, or Paleontology, written as if in funny foreign languages, I was always tempted to read something else. Later on, as a researcher, whenever I finished some scientific work in which I had been engrossed, I would offer myself – as a prize – the chance to read the books I loved and which I had had to stay away from for quite a while. In recent years I have but rarely offered myself this prize, mostly after having come over a conference or a speech. As time went by, the number of these books of “forbidden joy” has decreased, and my selection has migrated from the fundamental questions of my youth and the great novels of my middle age to some jewels which I

open to read from just before I fall asleep. Some of these are: *The Arabian nights, the books and the night, the story teller and The rozal Way*. Just like any return to the music of Mozart or Vivaldi, this means to me a sweet return to the stories of my childhood, under the spell of some magic formula uttered just before sleep.

The great books of mankind focus on fundamental life experiences, just as the food of astronauts synthesizes in some pills all the essential nutritional elements. Just as these pills cannot fully replace real food, not even the most profound of books can substitute direct life experience, with all its trivialities and stupidities. But, as they say, getting books' knowledge is useful, since it gives us the feeling of something *déjà vu* or *déjà imaginé*.

Unlike the stories in a book, no incident or story of our lives is final. It is only movies and books that can afford an ending. In real life, it is only The Almighty who can say when the story ends.

Writing books is something like an initiation, a form of expressing respect.

Why do I read? Because I find in this a way of living the life I was given and discovering its roots at the same time.

Why do I write? Because it is a way to link the present to some future, and also because, finally, each of us is responsible for their deeds with their tiny chance to immortality.

The Farce of the Unborn Ones

The 4 March 2002, Popa Petre 6

Discreet launching, in an intimate circle, of Mihai Manutiu's books, *Intimate Scenes, Mass Scenes, and Say Scardanelli*. Two tiny jewels for close circuit. In *The Book of Favorite Chimeras*, as Manutiu describes it in the dedication he writes to me on the front page, I find a text typical of his anxiety: "On a year, the unborn ones meet in a certain space, a precise but non-spatial space, to see each other and have fun. In the non-spatial-space there is more life than everywhere else where there is or one thinks there is life. For this very reason, out of excess, the unborn ones play a gigantic trick on us. They pick randomly one of their group and they mark him with a fatidic sign so that the chosen one has to get born willy-nilly. Although unborn it is as if he were born. Once a year, because of this the world balance is disturbed."

It is the hour and the day completing twenty-five years since the earthquake that devastated Bucharest.

Manutiu's text seems to me a fantastic analogy to the earthquake theory, constituting a part from the geology of hazard. The devastating earthquake from 1977 was the result of an accumulation of energy in the curvature Carpathian area. This energy is occasionally released. Only sometimes, nobody knows when, if there is a large quantity of energy accumulated, the terrestrial tide caused by the moon can act as a detonator. Those of us who went through the experience of March 1977 in the capital can not forget the huge full moon shining in the sky in the unreal warm night. We go out – there is a full moon and it is warm. Maybe it is because of the wine. This night the fragile balance of the world has not been disturbed.

Inside the Drawer there was a Round of Applause

After 1989 it was proved that there was no drawer literature. To paraphrase the title of a book by Ana Blandiana, inside the drawer there was just a round of applause.

Presidential Nightstands

18 July 2002, *Pictor Mirea 4*

On Saint Emilian's Day Radu F. Alexandru brings me as a gift a booklet from the collection *The Night Stand Book*. Those delicate books "you almost fall in love with, you think you have forgotten them, but you miss them so much." Now I have again the opportunity to have them, to caress and love them.

I am thinking of a President's nightstand. Next to the table lamp telephone sets, notebooks, a glass of water, but no books. Presidents seldom read anything except for official or confidential documents. Their job makes them talk extensively. Some of them write, if they did it before their mandate, because you do not discover the art of writing as a statesman. Reading little he perceives this activity as special, as a way of escaping the stress of the texts becoming later resolutions. If they have the time to finish a book – or at least a few chapters – they develop a special relationship with that book, so rare with academics for whom reading is routine daily activity. A scientist approaches systematically a certain theme and covers it at least in two or three books and ten to fifteen articles. He can not afford to get excited for every book or article. Quite often he scans the text reading for the gist. We academics act the same way here, irrespective of our area of educational expertise.

Those who did not read all educative literature during their adolescent years will remember a book they liked for along a time. Tempted to use this piece of direct information, so rare for them, in front of their interlocutors they will often mention this book. It happened to me, during a *diplomatic dinner*, to listen to people discussing passionately an eventful book.

One knows quite well how influential was *Red Horizons* for Ronald Reagan. After reading it Reagan wished to meet Pacepa and showed a lot of interest in the role played by the *Securitate* in Romania. Due to this attitude his assistants increased this kind of connections and looked for the priest Calciu-Dumitreasa who, in his turn, was received by Ronald Reagan, and remained an interlocutor listened to by the presidents' advisors'. It was a happy occurrence for Romania. It is true that Ceausescu was a well-known character in the West and the secret life of the dictators always fascinate the democrat leaders, limited in their prerogatives. I am, however, obsessed by a certain question. I wonder if Ceausescu has ever finished a book. And if he did it, what was the book? As he surely did not lack books with dedications.

THE STORY OF MY BOOK

A Bamboo Pipe

June 1994, Writers' Association

At the traditional *vin d'honneur* which follows a book launching at the Universalia publishing house, Doina Uricariu suggests I should write a book on my civic and political experiences after 1989. I don't credit stirrup cup projects. I tell her I'll give it a thought.

The experience of writing a book is not new to me. I have already published seven. Some are leafy, maybe much too leafy. Others are award-winning. A few are to be found on the card indexes of many world libraries. I am well accustomed both to the ordeal and the pleasure writing implies. I know how much one needs, to the purpose of writing a good book, competence, imagination, creativity, and, above all, integrity. But there is more to it this time: the audacity of changing the reference domain. It would mean leaving aside minerals and rocks and start talking about me. About myself and the others. Who, unlike minerals, have opinions and self-pride.

After 1990, writers fell in love with politics and politicians started writing books. I cannot tell to what extent we can put to good use such volumes signed by people daily seen on TV or newspapers.

Politicians' life-style is more and more connected to the obsession of the public image. It invades private life, tyrannically oppressing it and cosmetically brushing it up so that any trace of individuality and personality (if any) is annulled. Image campaigns depend on the professionalism of political life. By means of such campaigns a limited group of specialists decide what is good and what is wrong, what needs presenting and what needs avoiding, what needs inventing and what needs mystifying. Confronted with such a propagandistic avalanche, what real chance of deciding for himself does the citizen have?

To comply with people's desire to know details about public personalities' private lives, they invented biographies, interview volumes, more or less genuine diaries, memoirs, confessions.

An ancient Chinese proverb says that, when you look at a leopard through a bamboo pipe, all you see is a spot. You may believe that the

same animal is dark-coloured or, on the contrary, light-coloured. But, mainly, you won't be able to see its movements, you won't be able to know its force or weaknesses. People who elude traditional patterns are all the more running this risk. Perhaps the ones truly interested in politicians' integrity and value are entitled to seeing a personality on the political arena in its entirety. Unfortunately, with us, information about a politician's way of thinking or private life is filtered mainly through the ongoing attacks of political adversaries or scandal-mongering tabloids.

May 1995, the University

At a cultural event, Doina Uricariu comes with the idea of an interview selection. Her new idea seems more attractive to me. It's about taking pleasure in intelligent discussions. After December 1990, Romanian society lost much of the appeal of friendly dialogue, more or less enthusiastic. Formerly, this was a habit that used to be the salt-and-pepper of Romanian life-style. As for me, having been forced by the workings of life or destiny to speak for larger and larger groups, I have gradually lost the pleasure of familiar discussions. Strangely enough, Doina Uricariu imposes two amazing conditions: my interlocutor should not be a woman and he should not use a pseudonym. I accept, thinking that this interview formula is more appropriate. When you write a book by yourself you can detour all delicate points, which is a must in an electoral year, when what matters is not what you say but mainly what you don't. I choose Bogdan Teodorescu as my interlocutor because he made a good impression when he interviewed me for *Tele 7 ABC*, asking tough and uncomfortable questions, but preserving the goodwill of the journalist who genuinely wants to know what you think and feel.

I trust that Bogdan Teodorescu will push me obstinately and will take advantage of the instinct, which was formed by my students, of directly answering questions, instinct that did not work in my favour during the 1992 electoral campaigns but which can prove beneficial for the book. There is something else which I find attractive at this interview formula. While talking to Bogdan I can pretend that I'm informally talking to my friends and why not, to each reader of my future book, without feeling the need to present myself in a different manner. The first recording lasts for several hours and the very next day he sends me a typed text.

September 1996

While looking for the material for the campaign, I come across the text of the 1995 interview, which stopped at its page 13, because my time, restricted by the confines of being the president of CDR, a professor and a university rector, did not allow me to continue.

A Soldier's Confession

This book is not the confession of someone who has been defeated; it is the confession of a warrior who lost and won battles, but who will not cease fighting, as long as the war against lying, racism, violence, vulgarity, obtuseness, and theft is still necessary. The reason for my writing is telling the ones in doubt and fear that this war can be won and that it is worth fighting for. I'm writing to say I won't stand being lied to, deprived and cheated. I call on those who, in their turn, will not stand being lied to, deprived and cheated, to join me and fight together. If they falter, out of self-pride, cowardice or indolence, I will keep on fighting because I am convinced that only love, faith, truth, justice and freedom give a meaning to our lives on earth.

Memoirs of a Cavalier

May 2001, Elefterie 44

Searching for a style adequate to describe some special events I took part in, I reread Winston Churchill's *Memoirs*, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955. The *Memoirs* elude both the temptation of extravagance and the aridity of scientific and philosophical works. When the events you take part in or which you influence are serious and bear on other people's destinies, a description closer to the truth, even if seemingly cynical or offending, is the most honest solution. In the preface to the first edition, published three years after the end of the Second World War and at the same time three years after losing the position of Prime Minister of Great Britain in July 1945, Winston Churchill reveals that he approached the great political and military events of the time by means of personal experience and not as a history of that time, which is the task of another generation, but still considering his memoirs to contribute in the future to the writing of that history.

This contribution of the main political actors to a future history by means of relating personal experience is not free from danger. It upset me – the British politician confesses – to record the misunderstandings

with so many people I liked and respected, but it would be wrong not to take into account the lessons of the past. Nobody should despise the ones whose deeds are described in these pages without doing their own soul-searching, without reviewing their public activity and applying the lessons of the past to their future conduct. Nobody should assume

Churchill continues – that I expect everybody to agree with what I'm saying. I give my confession according to my guiding lights. My concern was to verify the facts but there are many others that surface today from previously unknown documents or revelations that may lend a different aspect to the conclusions I draw. I truly hope that studying the past can provide helpful for the coming days. It will allow a new generation to rectify some of the errors of years past and thus govern the scene of the unfolding future in accordance with man's needs and for the purpose of his glory.'

An Appeal to Memory

September 2002, 4 Pictor Mirea

Churchill confesses that for his book he followed, the method Defoe used in *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. Maintaining proportions and following up his warning, I cannot but hope that the persons mentioned in this book will not be satisfied only with searching the Index for their names and will read the depiction of a controversial period as my own experience has shaped it. For twelve years, I contended myself with making general and more or less official declarations. I considered that the moment of action has to be severed from that of explanations or disputes. And I let time take care of it because time can tell the truth from falsity and the essential from the conjectural. I was wrong. As if being tried in my absence, having a rather absent counsel for the defence, I got all the passive. In the trial of the first post-communist decade, which I am re-opening now, I will take turns to be witness, culprit, prosecutor, lawyer, judge, a member of the jury, clerk of the court, and bailiff. The verdict is, as usual, for the posterity to give.

We all Know the Answer, What is the Question?

19 April 2002, Bucharest

The cell phone on the nightstand starts vibrating, twitching and vigorously playing an Irish song. I hold out my hand and I take a look at the watch. It's nine o'clock sharp. I can hear Alina saying: 'Welcome. I'm calling to let you know that a gentleman, George

Cannon, is here with me, and he says you know him and he wants to talk to you. He's been looking for you the whole time you were in the United States. He should have returned home but he postponed his departure for tomorrow hoping to be able to have a talk with you. He is 86, he doesn't know if he ever gets the chance of coming back to the country again and he told us that, before he died, his ardent wish is to meet with you. We are all touched by his story and perhaps, although we know you are tired, you'll want to see him.'

I was, indeed, exhausted. I had just returned, the night before, after an eleven-hour flight from New York and, accustomed to the Atlantic Time, I continued working at home, to get finished what I had started while on the plane. Although I can feel my eyes burning with lack of sleep, I tell Alina that I'll see the gentleman in my office in two hours' time.

A well-groomed nice person. George Cannon doesn't ask for anything, doesn't want anything, doesn't have any personal dissatisfaction. He just wants to tell me the story of his life. A very interesting story, resembling that of other tens and hundreds of Romanians who left for America. His job is that of hairstylist and wig-maker. He used to own a studio before the communist period, then worked for many theatres and earned a good living even for that time. He made an adventurous emigration to America, where he became an accomplished man. In Hollywood he specialised in hairstyling well-known film stars. When he retired, John Wayne took him to a bank and, although having paid him every time, transferred a nice sum into his account. Even now he has faithful clients. He shows me some photographs: United States relatives, his children. He came to see his Romanian relatives in Ploiesti – well-off people themselves. Several years before he saw his relatives in Basarabia, near Chisinau. During the Second World War he was a senior sergeant male nurse on the front. He shows me a copy of his war veteran brevet that bears my signature. He only has one complaint: someone snatched the decoration from his chest in New York and he wants to know if there is any chance to get another. I answer that there is. He also carries with him photos he took of me during a conference I delivered at Columbia University in New York. He tells me he knows details of everything I have done since 1992 to 2002. He knows about the accident I had in the Andes and he asks about my leg. At a certain point, he says: 'How could Ceausescu accomplish so many things and now it isn't possible anymore?' 'Accomplish what?' – I ask. 'Buildings, factories. Basically,

there was much more certainty and he could have done whatever he wanted' 'Why did you leave, then?' 'Because I couldn't take it any longer.'

I am stupefied. I felt as if I were listening to a tape on which there is a fragment from a different recording. When he leaves he tells me again how much he loves me and how much he respects everything I have done.

Whom for? What for?

18 April 2002, New York

The East-West Conference is over. I have another three hours till the plane takes off. I am to see Mona Vrabiescu-Klekner and her husband, Ruddy Klekner.

During the ten days I spent in the United States I had meetings, in Washington, at the State Department, the State Council for National Security, the Congress and many a think-tanks (non-governmental institutes and organisations) which prepare the line of United States politics. Since 1991, when I first was invited to the State Department, I have noticed that Romania is much better known and is of a much larger concern than eleven years ago. They also know details and the appreciation of what I accomplished during my term of office was a great joy because I could feel it was not just a formalism but it was grounded in the knowledge of the facts, figures, documents and information, which in the country, are either inexistent or of no interest. Of all discussions I understood that what was appreciated was mainly the way in which a radical change was accomplished by observing democratic laws and principles.

I suggest to Mona Vrăbiescu-Klekner and to her husband that we should talk at the Morgan Library, only two steps away from Union Club League, where I used to live. After ten days of ongoing conventions, discussions and meetings, I am feeling relaxed and getting ready for a pleasant walk down the memory avenue. Mona Vrăbiescu-Klekner is a truly wonderful person and her husband is, in his turn, a very special man. Her life-story resembles a novel. A month ago, while passing through Craiova, the curator of the Art Museum showed me the portrait of Mona's mother, who was part of one of the most famous noble families of Craiova. A jurist, she was forced, because of *unwholesome origin*, to work in remote villages, until she was off to America. For many years she worked for the Library of UN and various American institutions. She was one of the most active people from

the Diaspora, as she never ceased writing to congressmen and senators in order to denounce Ceausescu's crimes. Together with Ștefan Issărescu, the former husband of Princess Ileana, she set up an association, *Acord*, which managed to gather many worthy people from the Diaspora. She supported me during the electoral campaign by organising many of my meetings with Americans of Romanian descent. After the 1996 success, I asked her to come and help me. Being an American citizen, she could not fulfil a position in the Administration, at any level, but she offered assistance as a personal counsellor, without being paid. She never tried to get the slightest advantage, as she was energetic and ready to put her abilities to work in the others' interests. She intensified order and discipline at Cotroceni and she managed to make friends with different people, which is a very uncommon thing. Having an untarnished reputation and prestige, she transferred something of this prestige onto the presidential apparatus. From the money she had earned while in the United States she bought an apartment in Bucharest, thus being now constantly on the road between Romania and the United States. When she reclaimed her family's possessions, she granted them, so that she could obtain money for the villagers, and she offered her former manor to the village, feeling that she should have done something for the people who could not enjoy life as she did.

We order fruitcake, coffee and mineral water. I find out that she monitors the entire Romanian press on the Internet and that she knows everything that is going on in Romania. And suddenly an unexpected reproach: 'What a shame that back then, in 1996, you did not replace everyone from the old regime, everyone who used to belong to the Securitate or to the Administration, and that you did not incarcerate the corrupt, who had been stealing until then.'

'And what else was I supposed to do?' I ask in amazement.

'When Băsescu and the others started the scandal, you should have ousted them from the Government'.

I cannot believe my ears.

'And how was I supposed to do that?'

'By means of presidential decree', comes the prompt answer.

'Have you read the Constitution of Romania? Do you know the domains where the president can act and what kind of decrees he can sign? Did you know that to replace the director of the Romanian Information Service one needs a decree of the Parliament and that the President cannot replace the ministers unless the Prime Minister nominates them?'

'I do but the judges should have been replaced'

'How come, when they had just obtained the right to irremovability?'

'They should have been replaced', she answers firmly.

'Mona, you are a jurist', I try to tell her, 'don't you think that I had to observe the separation of state powers, of the Parliament, the Government and the judicial power? And that this is precisely what the president should ensure? How could I have done all these? And who could I have replaced them with, all of a sudden?'

'It doesn't matter, there are plenty of them', she answers.

I have heard this kind of answer many times before 'anyone would do'. But when this anyone was about to get a name, a surname and a face, he could no longer be found.

'Mona, you used to work for the UN and the American Administration. Don't you think that if I had done what you are telling me now, I would have been a kind of Mobutu Sese Seko? And don't you think that, if I had done only 1% of what you said, no one from the American Administration would have accepted to talk to me? Could I still have been looked upon as a democratic president?'

I am less tense than before. After finishing our coffee, we walk to Bryant Park. On the benches, along the alleys or on the chairs surrounding little tables laid directly on the grass, people of different ages are talking quietly and in a low voice. I don't think that anyone of the many who sit there, basking in the sun, is discussing politics. Many of them learn by heart the eight chapters that have formed, since 1787, The Federal Constitution and they start with the words 'We, the People'. But I think that almost everyone knows that those who are chosen to lead them might be making mistakes, but they will never break the fundamental rules of the Constitution and the state's laws without being punished.

George Cannon, a simple man, a virtual stranger, Simona Vrăbiescu, an educated woman, a jurist with a lot of experience in American and international institutions, who used to work for the Presidential Administration at the Cotroceni, a calm person and close friend. I cannot help wondering: both of them love and appreciate me. Who do they appreciate in reality? And why?

Communicating Vessels

June 2000, at the National Theatre

From time to time I take refuge in the Cultural Department. Sorin Alexandrescu and his colleagues have made my life beautiful, even if

rarely have I been able to accept their suggestions of my taking part in the cultural events they would sneak in my agenda.

'At the National Theatre there is a Camilian Demetrescu retrospective, you cannot miss it!'

It is true – I know both his name and works. In Italian academic circles I was admiringly told about this great artist and I had the opportunity of seeing some of his fabulous tapestries and sketches.

Being out of Bucharest. I cannot take part in the opening but I go one quiet afternoon when the ado of the visitors has calmed down. The maestro and his wife are there and they show me about the exhibition, which is a privilege because only in this way can I find out about the turmoil of creation. And it is quite a turmoil...

Although the book is still a vague project, I always think about it as a whole, from the epigraph to the cover. I have the strange feeling that Camilian Demetrescu's tapestries also express the profound mystery of my thoughts. I ask him if he would agree to my using some of the tapestries for the cover. The process of working on my book is a process of understanding other tapestries, and I do not know if, in this dialogue in space and time, Camilian Demetrescu's works are illustrations for my books or whether my books tell about his tapestries.

PAINT WHILE THE WALL IS STILL WET

Light and Heat

21 December 2000, Bucharest

Should it be a mere coincidence, or a game of the destiny of a society still under the impact of lying, intolerance, and despair? Eleven days after the anniversary of the Romanian Revolution I handed over my presidential mandate – during a solemn ceremony – to the newly elected president. The same president of the years 1990-1996, who defeated me in 1992, and whom I defeated in 1996. A double alternation, the proof of a democratic system allowing for the peaceful deliverance of power tensions.

During my last day of presidency I bestowed on all the ambassadors accredited to Bucharest *The Gold Medal of the Romanian Revolution*, which had been previously offered – on behalf of our state and the Romanian people – to George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev, Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, His Sanctity Pope John Paul, and, post mortem, to François Mitterand. They are the eight people who had a deep impact on the history of Europe and of the world at the end of this century; without their involvement, the fight for democracy and freedom in the countries of the communist side of the world would probably have been not successful at all, or at least of a belated success, paid for by many more sacrifices.

In the cold indifferent December night, the official car runs along the main avenue of the capital, under the lively light of shop-windows, decorated for Christmas. The Europe of the full shop-windows is now at home here. The shops boast luxury goods and the expensive cars glide up and down the avenue. I reach the University Square. Multicoloured light is shed over the buildings and the street. Eleven years ago the only lights were those of bullets and of lamps on tanks and cisterns throwing heavy splashes of water on us. I take an absent-minded look at my wristwatch. About this time – eleven years ago – my son and some of his student-colleagues were collecting the

smashed bodies of the young people shot by guns and tanks. It is also here, in the University Square, that Diana, the high-schoolmate of my daughter, was killed by a bullet shot in her head by the Securitate troops facing the young people, who were shouting "We will die and we'll be free! God is with us!". A couple of months later, the University Square would be lit by the candles and torches made of newspapers of those manifesting for democracy to join the fate of freedom. Then again the Square was filled up with the red flames of buses set on fire and the blood of the victims of the miners called by the neo-communist rulers, to defend them against uncooperative intellectuals, who had now become the enemies. It is also here that the great outburst of enthusiasm occurred in 1996, when the democratic forces won the elections for the first time.

It is still hard for me to accept the fact that – for more and more people – all this is but the scenario of a film about an already obsolete history.

I take a look at the University balcony, under which I can see the windows of my old office, to which I am returning tomorrow morning, and I ask the aide-de camp officer to drive to the Cemetery of the Martyr Heroes of the Revolution.

God Is with Us

While we are driving farther and farther away from the city center, the lights turn paler and paler. To the left of the highway we pass by the massive cold building of the Crematorium, where, in December 1989, the bodies of the revolutionaries shot in Timișoara were brought, burnt up, and then thrown down to a drain canal, so that any trace of murder and repression be smoothly removed. In the cemetery, geometrically lined up, the white marble crosses of those killed in Bucharest, in December 1989, shine in the pale moonlight. The cold snap made by the guardian soldiers' boots presenting me the military salute suddenly breaks the stream of my thoughts. I walk on the main alley, at the end of which I can see a light through the door left ajar of the church of the martyr heroes. In the narthex, Professor Cioran, a department colleague of mine from the University and the president of the Association of the relatives of the dead in the Revolution, is talking in a low voice to the artist painting the interior walls of the church. The painter invites me up the wooden ladder till we almost reach the high

vault where his painting has reached now. The fir tree beams we tread on squeak under our feet and the old watchman by the church door looks smaller and smaller. We discuss materials and money. Before I leave I light a candle for the dead and one for the living – according to the old custom – in the plate iron box by the gate. Their flames tremble in the wind, which rolls along the side-walks the street dirt and some scraps of election posters. “We will die and we’ll be free!” would shout at this hour of the evening all those whose names are now inscribed on the white marble gravestones. They died their deaths: are we free now?

Eleven years ago the streets were dark, but there was a great light in our souls. It was dreadfully cold in our houses, but our hearts were warm with hope. The words of the Old Testament come to my mind: “I let my heart know wisdom and learning, madness and foolishness – and this is also blowing in the wind; for the richness of wisdom is richness of knowledge, and the more we know, the more it hurts.”

In the dome rising to the sky, the young painter climbed up on the scaffolding lights up the wet plaster with images from the Holy Book, chosen by his mind and soul. Beyond the church walls, the fresco of our lives gets outlined with difficulty, out of our daily toil, sufferance and mud. Who could ever distinguish, under the heavy dust of the years, the beats of our hearts in long-forgotten December, and the swirl of destiny, which then had turned toward us?

ABBREVIATIONS

A

- ApR – Alliance for Romania (political party), 147
ASPEC – Association for Civic Education, 35, 92, 371

B

- BCCC – Central Coordination and Control Board (of the National Cristian Democratic Peasant Party), 287
BNR – National Bank of Romania, 146, 158

C

- CAP – Agricultural Production Cooperative, 44
CDR – Romanian Democratic Convention (political alliance of six parties like PNTCD, PNL, PER, PAR, founded in 1992), 40, 45, 96, 103, 167, 249, 250, 251, 269, 281, 286, 338, 339, 371, 375-378, 391, 392, 397, 400, 402, 408
CNSAS – National Council for Research of the Securitate Archives, 337
COCOPA and COCOPO – Political Coordination Committees of the Romanian Democratic Convention, 270
COMECOM – Commercial and Economic Organisation of the former socialist states, members of the Warsaw Treaty, 21
CSAT – National Supreme Security Council, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 153, 344-345

D

- DFOR – Discouragement Force in Bosnia, 145
DUHR – Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania, 162, 163

E

- ESC – Economic and Social Council, 168

- ESB – Economic and Social Board, 163
EU – European Union, 146, 147, 154, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164, 177, 339, 345, 352-355

F

- FER – Romanian Ecologist Federation (political party), 173
FESAL – Financial and Enterprise Sector Adjustment Loan, 157
FNS – Front of National Salvation, 163
FSN – Front of National Salvation, 29, 338
FYROM – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 153

G

- GDP – Gross Domestic Product, 278
GNP – Gross National Product, 355
GSMA – General Major Staff of the Army, 180

I

- IFOR – International Peace Keeping Force, 145
IMF – International Monetary Fund, 157, 158

M

- MAE – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 137, 182
MApN – Minister of National Defense, 141, 144
MEDIAFAX – Information Agency, 144

N

- NAB – National Audio-Visual Board, 165
NATO, 18, 50, 60, 131, 132, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 147-149, 154-155, 157-161, 163-166, 169-178, 180, 182-188, 261, 267, 288, 291-292, 294-295, 312-313, 316, 339, 353, 404, 405, 406

NDCPP – National Democratic Christian Party of the Peasants, 162
 NGO – Non-Government Organization, 153, 162
 NKVD – People Commissariat for Internal Affairs (Soviet Secret Police Agency, the forerunner of the KGB), 134
 NLP – National Liberal Party, 162, 163, 166
 NPP – National Peasant Party (National Cristian Democratic Peasant Party), 113, 114
 NRB – National Bank of Romania, 165
 NSSC – National Supreme Security Council, 178

O

ONT – National Tourist Office, 32
 OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 154, 180, 261, 317
 OTV – „Oglinda” Television (private tv), 35

P

PAR – „Alternative for Romania” Party, 147, 280, 282, 285
 PCR – Romanian Communist Party, 29, 35
 PCUS – Comunist Party of the Soviet Union, 134
 PD – The Democratic Party, 147, 162-167, 269, 271, 272, 273, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 282-285-286
 PDSR – Social Democracy Party from Romania, 45, 48, 51, 75, 94, 142, 144, 146-150, 153, 156, 158, 174-176, 270, 276, 279, 282-283, 286, 288 –289, 333, 334, 338, 339, 349, 350, 351, 375, 377, 378, 391, 393, 398, 400, 401, 402
 PER – Romanian Ecologist Party, 174
 PFP – Partnership for Peace (PIP), 177
 PNL – National Liberal Party, 29, 147, 148, 174, 277-280, 284, 286, 348, 352
 PNT – National Peasant Party, 29
 PNTCD – Christian Democratic National Peasant Party 146, 147, 269, 272, 273, 276, 277, 278, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285-286-288, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 372, 373, 374, 376, 377, 378, 379
 PRM – România Mare Party, 47, 147, 148, 149, 150, 174, 175, 399, 401

PSD – Social Democratic Party (so named after the merging of PDSR and PSDR in 2001), 335, 336, 339, 341, 342, 370, 377, 397, 398
 PSDR – Romanian Social Democratic Party, 147, 278, 349
 PUNR – Party of Romania’s National Unity, 143, 147, 148, 174

R

RMP – România Mare Party, 167
 RNB – National Bank of Romania, 168
 RPSD – Social Democracy Party from Romania, (PDSR), 164, 165, 167, 171
 RSPD – Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR), 162

S

SACEUR – Supreme Allied Forces Commander for Europe, 183
 SEECP – South-Est European Cooperation Process, 361
 SFOR – Security Force in Bosnia, 145
 SIE – Foreign Intelligence Service, 137, 144
 SPP – Protection and Escort Service, 38
 SRL – Limited Company, 39, 44

T

TAROM – Romania Airline 271
 TVR – Romanian (public) Television, 88

U

UDMR – Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania, 147, 269, 277, 278, 281, 282, 287, 339, 348, 351
 UGIR – General Union of Romanian Engineers, 162
 UE – European Union, 174, 175, 176, 183, 184, 188, 313
 UFD – Democratic Forces Union (political party), 174, 262
 UN – United Nations, 143, 144, 184
 UNO – United Nations Organisation, 174, 312
 USAID – United States Agency for Development, 167
 USD – Social Democratic Union (electoral alliance of PSDR and PD in 1996), 269, 281

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UNIVERSALIA PUBLISHING GROUP



General Manager: Doina Uricariu

24 Neajlov, .1st district, Bucharest, Romania
Tel: 0740.010.901; 0723.527.137

270 Park Avenue, Suite 4D, NYC, NY, USA
Tel 212-979-5057; 212-727-2159
email ldusainst@aol.com

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former Member of the US Congress,
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Emil Constantinescu was born in 1939, in Tighina. He graduated in Law (1960) and Geology (1966). Phd in Geology – Bucharest University, Doctor of Science – Duke University. President of Bucharest University (1992-1996). President of Romania (1996-2000).

