

PART ONE

**THE
EUROPEAN
CHALLENGE**



1

**From Crisis to Crisis,
from Transition to Transition**

In his speech *Coming out of the Labyrinth*, held after receiving the *Doctor Honoris Causa* degree from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, Professor Emil Constantinescu talks about the necessity of carrying out a National Project for Romania. This subject is one of our constant concerns, translated in a series of texts under the heading: *A Project for Romania*. Nevertheless, we are not trying to arrogate any sort of merit to ourselves, we are merely expressing our satisfaction in discovering that this subject is not just a projection lost in the chaos of the current Romanian subjects, but an idea which others are concerned with as well; in this case, one of the others is a former President of Romania, an active personality of the civil society and of the public life.

In our opinion, the accomplishment of a Project for Romania represents the least of our nation's priorities. Romania currently finds itself in a time of crisis, and we are not talking about the economical crisis – which, we are told, is drawing its last breath these months – but about a structural crisis, a complex and profound one, which may affect the country's present and future existence. From a chronological point of view at least, the transition is over. What is next? Another transition, it seems, similar to a wandering through mist, through a labyrinth from which nobody seems to know the way out. A nation going from one transition to another cannot hope to build anything. At present, Romania is a place torn by poverty and suffering, a disunited nation, which is able to voice out its frustrations and desperations, but unable to draw together around a concept or an ideal. The political confrontation has long been merely a battle of interests, power, and finances; the debate of ideas, merely a ridiculous show of divergent and conflicted mediocrity, a true circus of semi-knowledgeable people. Our society has become a mass with no identity or opinion. A vague sense of

solidarity, lacking any force or direction, only appears at times of extreme need, when things become unbearable... But even then, the protest gets stuck at the slogan: "Get out, you filthy mutt!" Remaining within the mythological atmosphere of the opening speech held by the former President, we can easily picture the enraged society, fretting in Constitution Square, embodying a collective Theseus, calling out, using the words mentioned above, at the Monster, at the Political Beast, hidden inside the People's House, a sort of Labyrinth of Power, with no way out, with no hope... Not even anger or desperation can hold people together. After the shouting and booing, the crowd becomes disunited, the protesters scatter into parks, on boulevards, inside stores... Could the ridiculous be a trait of our nation? One attitude tends to define our entire society on every level: nobody seems to care about anything when it comes to common subjects and projects of social, community, educational interest, when it comes to getting involved in order to change the things that require change. The area of concern for Romanians, from day laborer to politician, is strictly limited to the individual's interest.

A Project for Romania means a chance we must give ourselves as individuals and as a nation, especially for the generations to follow. Living randomly, from crisis to crisis, from transition to transition, Romania will only have the fate of a marginal country, the same marginal country in Europe that it is today. A project of this nature should aim to recover our identity and our dignity, which were lost in the tsunami of transitioning from one political system to another, in the depression caused by a chaotic evolution; it should aim to regain the national pride, the pride of a country which holds some importance in the history, culture, science and knowledge of Europe (even before the continent existed) and of the world. The project must identify the meaning of the evolution and development of Romania during the

upcoming decades; it must support its promotion and affirmation in Europe and in the globalized world, through its values and creativity, through its never-ending resources of intelligence (which are usually passed on from one generation to another). The mark of the present's wretchedness should not weigh heavily on the future of today and tomorrow's generations. The project in question must create the proper conditions for individual and community growth, for the transformation of Romania from what it is today – the poorest country in Europe (even if it has countless resources, like no other country on the old continent) – into a country that is prosperous, dignified and respected by the world.

Who can create such a project? Professor Constantinescu leaves it to the elites. But who and what are the elites? The same image of dissolution, discord and disunion just like the rest of society... What is left from the idea of "an elite" is more of an attitude: elitism, sometimes lacking any axiological or ethical basis, many times anchored to biased interests, more or less disguised. Could the Romanian Academy be a solution? It is possible. But the political class cannot be excluded, since it is the one called upon to endorse the Project, to establish it and set it as a foundation for the future. The first step could be a Pact for Romania, following the idea, but not the example, of the National Pact for Education. The adhesion to this concept – of a National Pact – in order to create a Project for Romania could be the last chance for the Romanian political system to rehabilitate itself in the eyes of the nation it has betrayed, deceived and humiliated countless times. There is a precedent in this major attempt, one which we should reflect upon: the enactment of the National Day of Culture goes to prove that elites can cooperate with politicians. But the greatest difficulty only now emerges. We require a genius architect, a visionary like Daedalus, as well as a man of action like Theseus, so that our nation will be able to find its way

out of the labyrinth of transition, out of the depressing mediocrity and marginal condition, out of the obscure world of suffering, frustration and hopelessness.