An important segment of the Romanian people lived and live today in Transylvania, a province in northeastern Romania between the Carpathian Mountains and the Tisza Plain. In 1900 there were approximately 3 million Romanians out of a total Transylvanian population of 10.5 million. After the Hungarian conquest of Transylvania in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Romanians were continually under foreign domination—the ruling class being either Hungarian or Magyarized. In the sixteenth century, after the conquest of Hungary by the Ottoman empire, Transylvania was an autonomous principality; by the end of the seventeenth century the Habsburg empire annexed this principality, which nonetheless retained a certain measure of autonomy. The Hungarian revolution of 1848-49 failed to unite Transylvania with Hungary; unification occurred, however, in 1867 as a result of the Austro-Hungarian compromise.

At the outset of the eighteenth century, the Romanians—who were considered “tolerated” in an area where they constituted the absolute majority of the population—began under the leadership of some intellectuals and clergymen widespread national movement which increased in magnitude in the nineteenth century and culminated in the revolution of 1848. In the two decades following the revolution, and especially in the years 1860-65, the Transylvanian Romanians succeeded in attaining some rights. For example, they achieved the establishment of a Romanian Uniate (Greco-Catholic) metropolitanate in 1853 and the Astra literary society in 1861; the election in 1863 of the Transylvanian Diet in which a relative majority of the deputies were Romanians; the proclamation by this Diet of the equality of the three languages—Romanian, Magyar, German—spoken in this province; and the foundation in 1865 of the Orthodox metropolitanate.

This relatively favorable evolution, which was indeed a beginning, was, however, brusquely interrupted by the installation of Austro-Hungarian dualism. Between 1867 and 1918 the situation of the Transylvanian Romanians, now an integral part of the Hungarian state, significantly worsened. Although they constituted the majority of the Transylvanian population and, in 1910, 14.1 percent of all the people

1. Today Transylvania includes both the former Principality of Transylvania and adjoining provinces to the west: Banat, Crișana, Maramureș. In all, this region comprises an area of 102,000 square kilometers, compared to Romania’s 237,000 square kilometers, and contains about one-third of that country’s total population.
in Hungary, the Romanians remained in an inferior position, practically excluded from the conduct of public affairs and able only with difficulty to develop a national life through their few cultural institutions, schools, and newspapers.2

In face of the de-nationalization policy, the Transylvanian Romanians organized themselves into two national parties founded in 1869—one in Transylvania itself and the other in the Banat—as well as in two national churches—the Orthodox and the Uniate—which controlled at the beginning of the twentieth century a network of approximately 2,500-3,000 elementary schools and 5 high schools. A significant role was also played by cultural societies, banks (the first Romanian bank, "Albina," was founded at Sibiu in 1872) and newspapers. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were in Transylvania and Hungary over twenty Romanian newspapers and reviews with a total circulation numbering in the tens of thousands.

Almost all Romanians resisted the national oppression of the dualist Habsburg regime, but resistance tactics divided this consensus. Some, the so-called passivists, believed Romanians should not participate in any way in the political life of the state, thereby not recognizing changes made without consultation. They opposed any participation by Romanians in elections and parliamentary life. Others, the activists, considered that no successful opposition could develop outside the existing constitutional frame; they favored participation in elections and the entry of representatives of the Romanian people into Budapest's parliament.

In the years following the dualist compromise of 1867 both currents—activist and passivist—emerged simultaneously. Passivism held sway in Transylvania proper and activism in the Banat, Crişana, and Maramureş. Later, with the creation of a single National Romanian Party in 1881, both currents freely continued within that party. The increasingly difficult entry of Romanians into parliament, however, led the party conference in 1887 to opt for complete passivity. The passivists would dominate the political life of the Transylvanian Romanians until the beginning of the twentieth century; their main achievement was the great "memoranda" of 1892-94 and the conclusion in 1895 of an alliance of Romanians, Slovaks, and Serbs who lived in Hungary. As years passed, however, passivism did not yield the expected results, for the position of the Romanians continually worsened. In these circumstances, activist ideas reappeared. A collision occurred between the two currents in the last years of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the

2. For example, in 1918, of 5,294 town officials in Hungary, only 41 were Romanians (there were 178 Germans, 122 Serbs, 4 Slovaks); of 2,646 judges, again, only 41 were Romanians. No state schools taught in Romanian; the great majority of the Romanian schools were church sponsored. A peculiar electoral situation existed in Transylvania; the percentage of persons having the right to vote was 5.4 percent in Hungary, 5.8 percent in Hungary excluding Transylvania, and 3.3 percent in Transylvania itself. For statistical data see Zenobius Păclişanu, La politique minoritaire des gouvernements hongrois (1867-1914), (Bucureşti, 1945); and Eugen Brote, Die rumänische Frage in Siebenburgen und Ungarn: eine politische Denkschrift (Berlin: Puttkammer and Mühlbrecht, 1895).