

The Metamorphosis of Alexandru Resmeriță. Drawing Professor, Linguist, “Iron Guard Priest”?

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Abstract

This article provides a biography of Alexandru Resmeriță (1866–?), a drawing teacher from Turnu-Severin. It traces Resmeriță’s early nationalistic writings before and after the First World War, and his transformation into an amateur linguist and early “Dacomaniac”. It discusses media response to his linguistic theories, and shows how his proposed Latin etymologies were influenced by his nationalism. Further, it examines his involvement in A.C. Cuza’s antisemitic League for National-Christian Defense (Liga Apărării Național-Creștine), and Resmeriță’s publication of antisemitic texts during the interwar period. Finally, it shows that, through overuse, misattribution, and misunderstanding of a single anecdote, Resmeriță’s name was spread throughout English-language Holocaust historiography, described as a prominent antisemitic or fascist theorist, as an Orthodox priest, or as a member of the Iron Guard. It argues that these assessments are variously incorrect, and analyses how the citation was spread and misinterpreted by historians in different secondary sources.

Keywords: Antisemitism, nationalism, interwar Romania, Dacomania, historiography of the Holocaust

Introduction

An obscure name that is cited with some frequency in English-language Holocaust historiography is an “Alexandru Razmerita”, variously rendered as a “Romanian antisemite”, a “fascist ideologue” or “theorist”, and even an “Iron Guard priest”. This name is frequently referenced in conjunction with an identical citation: “Alexandru Razmerita, *Cum să ne apărăm de evrei: un plan de eliminare totală* (Turnu-Severin: Minerva, 1938), 65-69.” According to most sources, Razmerita was a fascist, an Iron Guardist, and/or an Orthodox priest who proposed that, to solve the “Jewish problem” in Romania, the country’s Jewish population should either be deported to the countryside for forced labor, or drowned en-masse in the Black Sea. However, in searching for this Razmerita, one notices a distinct lack of biographical information, or indeed references in secondary literature outside of this anecdote.

“Razmerita” was, in fact, Alexandru Resmeriță (1866–?),¹ a high school drawing teacher from Turnu-Severin. In the first decade of the 1900s, he also

¹ Sometimes rendered as “Răsmeriță”, “Rēsmeriță”, “Răzmeriță”, or “Rasmeritza”. See: *Bibliografia românească modernă 1831–1918, vol. IV (R–Z)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1996), 78.



worked as an illustrator and painter of nationalistic artworks. After being taken prisoner during the First World War, Resmeriță found a passion for linguistics, and sought to prove that the Romanian language was derived almost entirely from “Daco-Latin” roots. He began to channel his antisemitic and xenophobic beliefs through his amateur linguistic studies, and by the interwar period, he involved himself directly in antisemitic organizations, writing articles for far-right newspapers, and self-publishing standalone antisemitic texts. He was never a member of the Iron Guard, nor was he ever an Orthodox priest.

This study seeks to untangle Resmeriță’s real life from his posthumous appearances in secondary sources. The first half of this study provides a rough biography of Alexandru Resmeriță and a timeline of his career. It is based mainly on articles from the Romanian press (including *Universul*, *Mișcarea*, *Dimineața*, *Adevărul*, *Opinia*, and others) from 1900 to 1945, with specific focus on opinion pieces written by Alexandru Resmeriță himself. It also looks at Resmeriță’s original publications, including his linguistic work and his antisemitic pamphlets, and his articles in far-right or antisemitic newspapers (*Porunca Vremii*, *Sfarmă-Piatră*). Resmeriță’s writings are supplemented by a number of later sources, including articles written by his former students Șerban Cioculescu and Alexandru Dima, and reviews of Resmeriță’s work by Romanian philologists and historians (including Nicolae Iorga, Barbu Lăzăreanu, and philologists of the socialist era). Regarding Resmeriță’s experiences as a prisoner of war, this study draws heavily from Ioana Apostol’s article “George Oprescu. Captive of the Central Powers”, alongside primary documents, reports from co-internees, and articles from the press.

The second half of this study analyses how Alexandru Resmeriță’s 1938 pamphlet *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei* came to be cited in a large number of academic and non-academic texts on the Holocaust. It reconstructs the path taken by the citation through different secondary sources, showing that Romanian historian Radu Ioanid was the first to cite this pamphlet in English-language Holocaust historiography, and that through the re-use of the anecdote in several different publications, it spread. It argues that the proliferation of this anecdote has caused Resmeriță to be mistakenly identified as an influential Romanian antisemite or “fascist theorist”, although he was relatively unknown within Romania and his antisemitic writings did not receive much attention. It also shows that, though Resmeriță is often described in secondary sources as a member of the Legionary Movement, he was in fact a Cuzist. Finally, it demonstrates that, due to the accidental conflation of two disparate figures in the *Final Report* of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, Resmeriță was mistakenly described as an Orthodox priest, and this error has continued to appear in academic works.

As educator, artist, politician, prisoner

Alexandru Resmeriță studied fine arts in St. Petersburg before returning to Romania and settling in Turnu-Severin.² He married Ana (née Cocorăscu), with whom he would have a son, Nicolae, and a daughter, Lucreția (the latter of whom died soon after childbirth).³ As a young artist, he painted a number of icon-like portraits of Romanian national figures (Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Mihai Viteazul, Elena Cuza, etc.),⁴ and contributed illustrations to various publications, all of which showcased his technical skills and a keen interest in Romanian history.

In 1902, he was involved in production of an illustrated "Soldier's Calendar" with nationalistic themes, through which he wished to "instill, at a tender age, a feeling of patriotism in [peasants'] children,"⁵ and in 1906 he released an illustrated book with stories and anecdotes about King Carol I.⁶ Both received some attention in the press, although the latter was panned by nationalist historian Nicolae Iorga as "stylistically without power and, even worse, of a pitiable clumsiness", adding that Resmeriță had "little knowledge" and the book was a "completely pointless compilation that cannot be well-received by any category of readers."⁷

² Șerban Cioculescu, "Idealul nostru", *Orizont*, 20 January 1984, 8.

³ "Ana Al. Resmeriță", *Universul*, 15 April 1929, 11; Șerban Cioculescu, "Idealul nostru (II)", *Orizont*, 24 February 1984, 8.

⁴ See the chromolithographs "Alexandru Ioan Cuza cu principalii săi colaboratori" and "Domnița Elena Cuza" (both 1909) held by Muzeul Național de Istorie a României (Bucharest), as well as the chromolithograph "Mihai Viteazul", probably from the same year; see also "Traian și solii lui Decebal", *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 14 June 1906 (27 June 1906), 3.

⁵ "Dorim ca astă-zî copiii țăranului, când vor veni de la școală, să arate pe acest tablou părinților lor chipurile Domnitorilor, să le spună ce au învățat la școală despre ei, despre războiul neatârării, despre Traian, Decebal, Mircea, Tepeș, Mihai, Matei Basarab, etc., despre Alexandru-cel-Bun, Ștefan-cel-Mare, Petru Rareș, Vasile Lupu, Grigore Ghica, Cuza, Carol I, iar când elevii de astăzi vor ajunge părinți, să poată infila, din cea mai fragedă vîrstă, copiilor lor, sentimentul patriotic..."; "We want the peasant children of today, when they come home from school, to show their parents the faces of the rulers in this painting, to tell them what they learned at school about them, about the eternal war, about Trajan, Decebalus, Mircea [the Elder], [Vlad] Tepeș, Michael [the Brave], Matei Basarab, etc., about Alexander the Good, Stefan the Great, Petru Rareș, Vasile Lupu, Grigore Ghica, Carol I, and when today's students become parents, to be able to instil, at a tender age, a feeling of patriotism in their children." "Cronica artistică", *Universul*, 2 December 1902, 1.

⁶ Alexandru Resmeriță, *Acum 40 de ani. Povestiri despre sosirea M. Sale Regelui Carol I-ii pe pământul României* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură "Minerva", 1906). It appears that he also sought to release a second book of the same genre, as in 1916 he called on readers of *Mișcarea* to submit anecdotes about Carol I for a new book. However, in February 1917 he was taken prisoner, and ceased publishing until after the war; see: "Ecouri", *Mișcarea*, 27 July 1916, 1.

⁷ "Acum 40 de ani [...] e iscălită de profesorul de liceu din Severin Al. Resmeriță. Stilul e fără nici-o putere și, încă mai rău, de o stîngăcie vrednică de compătîmire; știința autorului e puțină. E o compilație cu totul lipsită de rost și care nu poate întîmpina o bună primire din partea nici-unei categorii de cetitori." N. Iorga, "Cronică", *Sămănătorul*, 4 June 1906, 459.



Resmeriță taught drawing to secondary school students from the turn of the century onwards, and was permanently appointed Master of Drawing and Calligraphy (“Maestru de Desemn și Caligrafie”) at Liceul “Traian” in Turnu-Severin in 1905.⁸ The literary critic Șerban Cioculescu, one of his former students, remembered him as “severe teacher, who would sometimes punish us with the ruler, and sometimes with his palm”, but that he was not taken too seriously by students: “Alexandru Resmeriță was called, through an ingenious verbal creation, *Distânțoiul*, because he taught us to draw with a pencil held in our right hands, at a short distance from our eyes, so as to appreciate the proportions of our object of study [...] [While beating us,] his celluloid shirt cuffs would fall to the ground, and we would make fun of him *in petto*.”⁹ In addition to Cioculescu, he taught the sculptor Gheorghe Anghel and the literary critic Alexandru Dima.¹⁰

As early as 1899, Resmeriță wrote op-ed articles and standalone texts about what he saw as gaps in the educational system, as well as moral, cultural, sanitary, and financial crises amongst the student population.¹¹ Both his artwork and his writings showed strong nationalist tendencies, and he believed that Romania was threatened by internal and external forces that could be fought against through strict education, hygiene, and the cultivation of militarism amongst Romanian youth. In a 1906 *Universul* article, he defended the implementation of military instruction in schools, which had already been a feature of the Liceul “Traian” curriculum but was now being implemented widely. He argued that, while militarism might offend intellectual types, and though the Western nations were calling for general disarmament, it was necessary to prepare “future defenders of the homeland” (“viitorii apărători ai patriei”, i.e. Romanian students) in order to protect “the honor of the nation and the safety of the country” (“cinstea neamului și siguranța patriei”).¹² In 1913, he warned against the proliferation of “vice and disease” (“vicii și boale”) in schoolchildren, and suggested that a tax of 5 lei per month be levied upon parents in order to hire a school doctor for regular check-

⁸ See: Alexandru Resmeriță, *O mică lacună a Învățământului Secundar* (București: Minerva, 1899); “Turnu-Severin. Un proces”, *Adevărul*, 20 September 1903, 4.; “Ultime informații”, *Dimineața*, 17 March 1905, 2.

⁹ “Alexandru Resmeriță îi spuneau elevii, printr-o creație verbală ingenioasă, ‘distânțoiul’, pentru că ne învăța la desen, cu creionul ținut la mică distanță în mîna dreaptă și în dreptul ochilor, să apreciem proporția față de obiectul de studiu [...] Era însă un dascăl sever care ne sancționa cînd cu linia, cînd cu palma, și atunci îi cădeau la pămînt manșetele de celuloid, atașate cămășii, iar noi făceam *in petto haz*.” Șerban Cioculescu, “Idealul nostru (II)”, *Orizont*, 24 February 1984, 8.

¹⁰ Nicolae Chipurici, “Oameni ai acestor locuri. Gheorghe Anghel”, *Orizont*, 28 September 1984, 12.; Al. Dima, “Amintirea lui Ronsard”, *Cronica*, 22 November 1974, 10.

¹¹ See: Alexandru Resmeriță, *O mică lacună a Învățământului Secundar* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1899).

¹² Al. Resmeriță, “Instrucția militară în școală”, *Universul*, 31 December 1906, 1.

ups and close observation of students.¹³ This proposal generated some discussion: Virgil Tempeanu, a professor in Fălticeni,¹⁴ responded warmly to Resmeriță and added that, like in Germany, such a change should be further accompanied by home inspections to “investigate the conditions of hygiene, morality, etc.” within students’ families.¹⁵ Two years later, Resmeriță published another article in *Universul* that suggested the use of prizes (books, money, clothing, etc.) in order to incentivize students to do well in school, with the aim of strengthening the Romanian nation.¹⁶ By 1913, Resmeriță had been named “Inspector Școlar” (“School inspector”) in at least two different delegations.¹⁷

Following the 1907 peasants’ revolt and prior to the First World War,¹⁸ Resmeriță published several articles concerning agricultural reforms and the Romanian peasantry. In one 1914 article, he called on King Carol I, who he said “[worked] tirelessly, in the most persistent way, in the wisest and most fortunate way”, to not just supply peasants with funding, but to train them in their field and to form agricultural councils, which he considered an effective solution for the peasants to be able to lift themselves out of poverty, be better organized and self-sufficient, and to produce more goods for sale.¹⁹ A few months earlier, he had written an article defending Romanian peasants, and argued for the forced expropriation of land from boyars and Turks.²⁰ He also gave lectures calling for the canalization of the Danube in order to import and export goods from Romania.²¹ These self-

¹³ Al. Resmeriță, “Sănătatea școlărilor”, *Universul*, 18 December 1913, 1.

¹⁴ Virgil Tempeanu (1888–1984) was a teacher at Liceul “Nicu Gane” and a translator of German literature.

¹⁵ “Directorul, medicul, secretarul, diriginții și la nevoie și profesori, sunt datorii să cerceteze condițiile de igienă, moralitate, etc. în cari trăesc elevii *acasă*.” Virgil Tempeanu, “Sănătatea școlărilor”, *Universul*, 30 December 1913, 5.

¹⁶ Al. Resmeriță, “Școala și națiunea. Progresul școlăriei este însuși progresul neamului”, *Universul*, 30 June 1915, 4.

¹⁷ See: “Delegațiuni pentru inspecțiuni școlare”, *Dimineața*, 12 April 1913, 7; “Informații”, *Evenimentul*, 7 September 1913, 8; “Comisiile pentru examenele particulare”, *Universul*, 14 October 1913, 4.

¹⁸ From February to April 1907, Romanian peasants engaged in a series of revolts in protest of unequal land ownership and dependency on lessors. Some of these actions took on an antisemitic character. The revolt was quashed by the Romanian army, with an uncertain number of peasants killed and around 10,000 people arrested. For context, see: Irina Marin, *Peasant Violence and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹⁹ “A îndeplinit o misiune grea în această țară M. Sa Regele, muncind fără preget, în chipul cel mai stăruitor, în chipul cel mai înțelept și cel mai norocos.” Alex. Resmeriță, “Cu privire la reforme”, *Universul*, 27 June 1914, 1.

²⁰ Alex. Răsmeriță, “Boerii și țaranii”, *Universul*, 31 January 1914, 1.

²¹ “Mișcarea fraților din România liberă. Marele meeting național din Craiova”, *Tribuna* (Arad), 30 October 1908 (12 November 1903), 3.



described “patriotic” proposals were aimed at consolidating (ethnic) Romanian capital, reducing local reliance on imports from other countries (Turkey, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, etc.), breaking up concentrated pockets of non-Romanian landowners, and investing in Romanian industry.²²

Not only did Resmeriță write opinion pieces, but he also channeled his suggestions into full-fledged political activity: he had been a member of the Turnu-Severin branch of the Conservative-Democrat Party (“Partidul Conservator-Democrat”, PCD) since at least January 1910,²³ and had participated in country-wide party meetings as a delegate from Mehedinți county.²⁴ The PCD had drawn up a new political program in November 1910 which leader Take Ionescu described as a “modest conservative program” of agrarian reform, new pensions for retired workers, and other budget adjustments, which generally aligned with the ideas presented by Resmeriță in his opinion pieces.²⁵ In the 1911 General Elections,²⁶ Resmeriță ran as a PCD candidate in Mehedinți, gaining a total of 206 votes and coming in third place.²⁷ This did not translate into further political activity with the PCD, but it did convince Resmeriță to write a pamphlet in which he stated that Romanian electoral law was corrupt, that his supporters had been told not to travel to the polling stations, and that electoral proceedings specifically disadvantaged the peasantry. He continued by saying that, after being bribed with alcohol and food, his supporters were convinced to vote for different candidates or even chased from the polls by police.²⁸ He vowed not to run in future elections until electoral law was completely overhauled.²⁹

A unique publication amongst Resmeriță’s pre-war writings was a book titled *Marchizul de Ronsart. Adevărata să origine românească* (“The Marquis of Ronsard. The truth about his Romanian origins”), which appeared in 1915. Dedicated to the Plenipotentiary of France to Romania, the short book attempted to prove, through literary and linguistic analysis, that French poet Pierre de Ronsard was ethnically

²² Răsmeriță, “Boerii și țaranii”.

²³ “Țara întreagă sărbătorește triumful nostru”, *Opinia*, 19 January 1910, 2.

²⁴ “Meetingul conservatorilor-democrați în sala Eforiei”, *Dimineața*, 9 February 1910, 1.

²⁵ “Interview cu d. Take Ionescu”, *Adevărul*, 29 November 1910, 3.

²⁶ In 1911, the Conservative-Democrat Party was under the leadership of Take (sometimes Tache) Ionescu, but ran in a united opposition slate alongside the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național-Liberal) under leader Ion I. C. Brătianu.

²⁷ According to *Dimineața*, he gained only 97 votes and came in 5th of 6 candidates: “Alegerile de eri”, *Dimineața*, 22 February 1911. However, *Mișcarea* reported 206 votes: “Alegerile legislative. Colegiul al III-lea. Rezultatul din toată țara”, *Mișcarea*, 22 February 1911, 3.

²⁸ Alexandru Resmeriță, *Cum votează Colegiul al III-lea* (Turnu-Severin: Luiza I. Cuțui, 1911), 3-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-15.

Romanian.³⁰ Resmeriță was neither the first nor the last to suggest this: historian and translator Jean-Alexandre Vaillant wrote in 1844 that Ronsard's grandfather was probably Romanian,³¹ based on a verse in the latter's 1544 poem "A Rémy Belleau" (sometimes known as "Elégie XX"), wherein he fantasized about being the descendant of a Thracian ancestor.³² Poet Vasile Alecsandri added further to this claim, suggesting that Ronsard was a descendant of Banul Mărăcine³³ in his 1855 poem "Banul Mărăcină", despite the fact that the two figures lived at approximately the same time.³⁴ Alecsandri's Mărăcine theory would eventually be criticized by Nicolae Iorga as "youthful folly" ("prostie de tinereță"), but Iorga affirmed his belief that Ronsard may have still had Thracian ancestors.³⁵

Resmeriță's *Marchizul de Ronsart* built upon Alecsandri's theory, but added to the myth by suggesting that "Ronsard" was actually a Romanian name, derived from "Râmnicul Sarat". He argued that Ronsard or his ancestors were natives of Râmnicu Sărat, and that through a series of shortenings and mispronunciations (being difficult to pronounce by native French speakers), the name was reduced from "Romn. Sarat" to "Ron-sart".³⁶ He further stated that Ronsard's baptismal name of Baudouin, though apparently non-Romanian, was based on the Latin Emperor Baldwin II, who was seen as a "protector of Byzantine Orthodoxy", and thus it was logical that an ethnic Romanian would be baptized as such.³⁷ Resmeriță used these theories to transform the "tall, proud, and handsome" Ronsard from a French cultural figure to a "Romanian from the Carpathians", and therefore an example of Romanian literary prowess, adding that Ronsard could easily "distinguish himself, through his natural qualities, even in the midst of a people

³⁰ Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585), French poet and diplomat, born to a noble family in current-day Loir-et-Cher.

³¹ Jean-Alexandre, Vaillant, *La Romanie ou histoire, langue, littérature, orographie, statistique des Romans*. Tome III. (Paris: Libraire de la Société de Géographie, 1844), 161.

³² The verse is: "Or quant à mon ancêtre, il a tiré sa race / D'où le glacé Danube est voisin de la Thrace: / Plus bas que la Hongrie, en une froide part, / Est un Seigneur nommé le Marquis de Ronsard / Riche d'or et de gens, de villes et de terre." "A Rémy Belleau", in Pierre de Ronsard, *Les poèmes de P. de Ronsard, gentil-homme Vandomois*, vol. III (Paris: Gabriel Buon, 1560), 44.

³³ Banul Mărăcine (or Mărăcină, ?–1565) was a historical figure in Wallachia who claimed the title of "domn", and who is mostly remembered through folkloric accounts, place names, and because of the contested Ronsard connection.

³⁴ "Uimit regele-atunci zice: / 'Bun sosit la noi, voinice! / Spune nouă, cine ești? / În Carpați cum te numești?' / 'Eu sunt banul Mărăcină, / Cărui Oltul se închină.' / 'Ține spada mea în dar, / Brav marcheze de Ronsar!'" (from Vasile Alecsandri, "Banul Mărăcină", 1855).

³⁵ N. Iorga, *Despre preclasicism. Conferință la Institutul Frances* (Vălenii de Munte: Datina Românească, 1938), 7.

³⁶ Alexandru Resmeriță, *Marchizul de Ronsart. Adevărata să origine românească* (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice SOCEC & Co., 1915), 45-49.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-59.



superior in culture, like the French.”³⁸ Future historian of religion Mircea Eliade, writing in 1923, repeated Resmeriță’s “Romn. Sarat” and “Baldwin” theories, spreading them to a younger audience.³⁹ Though an outlier amongst Resmeriță’s earlier writings, this book was the precursor to much of his later work.

In February 1917, following the outbreak of the First World War and the subsequent occupation of Oltenia by German troops, Resmeriță was arrested alongside thirty other professors and prominent figures in Turnu-Severin, among them his colleagues George Oprescu and Petre Sergescu.⁴⁰ Over a period of 18 months, Resmeriță and his fellow detainees — now reduced to a group of ten, held on suspicion of stoking anti-Central Powers sentiments — were interrogated, shuttled between different places of imprisonment, spied upon, and maltreated. First interned at Turnu-Severin’s “Traian” Hotel, the ten hostages were moved to Tismana Monastery, and then back to the hotel, where they were meant to be shot in retaliation for local anti-German uprisings. This action was not carried out, but the group — Resmeriță included — was then deported to Bulgaria, where they would remain in worse conditions (often without food or winter clothing, and with outbreaks of malaria, typhoid, and dysentery) until their release and repatriation in the summer of 1918.⁴¹ According to internee Ioan Ștefan Paulian, Resmeriță

³⁸ “...Frumoasa poezie a lui Alecsandri este menită să ne dea portretul exterior al celui tânăr nalt, mândru și frumos care în timpurile acelea îndepărtate duce faima neamului său tocmai în țara menită să devie facla civilizației europene, făcând dovada că românul dela Carpați se putea distinge, prin calitățile lui firești, chiar în mijlocul unui popor superior în cultură, cum eră poporul francez încă de pe atunci.” Ibid., 63. Resmeriță’s marked Francophonic tendencies sometimes outshone his Romanian nationalism. See also his remarks on an experience in Versailles in Alex. Resmeriță, “Limba română”, *Universul*, 12 October 1923, 1. For some examples of French influence on Romanian nationalism and antisemitism, see: Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew. Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 106, 182–184, 235, 240, 257, and 414.

³⁹ Mircea Eliade, “Marchizul de Ronsart, poetul Ronsard, și Banul Mărăcine”, *Universul Literar*, 18 October 1923, 5-6.

⁴⁰ George Oprescu (1881–1961), historian, was headmaster of Liceul “Traian”; Petre Sergescu (1893–1954), mathematician, was a professor and secretary at the school. A list of internees is included in Ioan St. Paulian, “Din sbuciumul vremurilor de jertfe și biruință”, *Foaia diecezană. Organul eparhiei ortodoxe române a Caransebeșului*, 5 November 1933, 5.

⁴¹ See: Ioana Apostol, “George Oprescu. Captive of the Central Powers. From Turnu Severin to Golemo Konare and back (1917–1918)”, in *Războiul în fiecare zi. Viața cotidiană în tranșee și în spatele frontului în Primul Război Mondial (1914–1919)*, ed. Bogdan Popa and Radu Tudorancea (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2018), 265–280; Șerban Cioculescu, “Amintiri muzicale”, *Flacăra*, 16 June 1973, 26; C.A. Protopopescu, “Episoade din lupta maselor populare din Oltenia în perioada ocupației germane 1916–1918”, *Inainte*, 28 July 1967, 2; “Declarația lui Alexandru Resmeriță”, in *Documente ale municipalității severinene (1916–1920)*, vol. V, ed. Tudor Rățoi and Nicolae Chipurici (Craiova: Editura ALMA, 2009), 275-276; Ioan St. Paulian, “Din sbuciumul vremurilor de jertfe și biruință”, *Foaia diecezană. Organul eparhiei ortodoxe române a Caransebeșului*, 5 November 1933, 5; 19 November 1933, 5; and 24 December 1933, 7.

also suffered from leg and foot injuries in captivity, worsened by poor nutrition.⁴² Șerban Cioculescu later recalled that Resmeriță returned to teaching after the war as "a shadow of a man", but that he "recovered in a short time".⁴³ In any case, Resmeriță took a hiatus from publishing, and by 1922, when his name reappeared in the press, his attention became almost entirely devoted to linguistics.

As dilettante philologist

Following the end of the First World War, Romania gained large swathes of territory, including Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. With the redrawing of borders also came a sudden "influx" of new residents on Romanian soil, including many who now found themselves to be ethnic minorities within a Romanian state. While Jews were not the largest ethnic minority within Romania's new borders (that being Hungarians), they comprised 756,930 people, or 4.19% of the total population, by December 1930,⁴⁴ and were even higher in concentration in some areas (in Bukovina, Jews represented 10.8% of the population).⁴⁵ This sudden shift in population figures, as well as the redrawing of international political alliances and the imposition of a treaty on minorities, was a thorn in the side for many Romanian nationalists.⁴⁶

Resmeriță's nationalism, already apparent in the pre-war period, began to manifest itself in new ways: whereas previously his articles were focused on constructive-but-adulatory praise of King Carol I or education-related issues, his focus now rested almost entirely on disproving foreign influence on the Romanian language. This interest was probably fostered in German captivity, as co-detainee Oprescu had brought several volumes of Latin literature and a Latin-Romanian dictionary with him to Bulgarian imprisonment.⁴⁷ However, the early stages of Resmeriță's pseudo-historical, protochronic nationalism could already be seen in his Ronsard publication, as could his tendency to defend Romania from apparent foreign influence or moral-cultural crisis through his opinion pieces.

⁴² Ioan St. Paulian, "Din sbuciumul vremurilor de jertfe și biruință", 24 December 1933.

⁴³ "Cel mai slăbit dintre toți, profesorul nostru de desen, Alexandru Resmeriță, părea o umbră de om, dar și-a revenit în puțină vreme..." Cioculescu, "Idealul nostru (II)".

⁴⁴ *Anuarul Statistic al României. 1939 și 1940* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1940), 71. In 1899, before the annexation of Dobruđa, the population of Jews in Romania was 266,652 people (4.48% of the total population): *Anuarul Statistic al României* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1912), 20. Compare also with Hungarians, who numbered 1,425,507 people (7.89%), or Germans (754,421 = 4.13%): *Anuarul Statistic al României. 1939 și 1940*, 58.

⁴⁵ *Anuarul Statistic al României. 1939 și 1940*, 59.

⁴⁶ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 8–16.

⁴⁷ Apostol, "George Oprescu. Captive of the Central Powers", 280.



This “protochronism” (or, more pejoratively, “Dacomania” or “Thracomania”)⁴⁸ had much earlier been pioneered by figures like the philologist B.P. Hasdeu,⁴⁹ and persisted in the wider consciousness through works like Nicolae Densușianu’s posthumously-published *Dacia preistorică* (“Prehistoric Dacia”, 1913), but was not necessarily taken seriously beyond circles of nationalists and amateur historians.⁵⁰ While it would see new manifestations in the late interwar period, especially surrounding the Zalmoxis “cult”, and fueled by increased nationalism,⁵¹ the type of linguistic “Dacomania” that Resmeriță sought to popularize — the idea that, through some historical fluke, the modern Romanian language derived almost completely from “Daco-Latin” or Greek vocabulary, with next to no outside influence from neighboring Slavic languages, Hungarian, Turkish, and so on — was not widely adopted, and Resmeriță was essentially a standalone figure in this period.⁵² While there were attempts to publish new etymological dictionaries in the early 20th century, such as I.A. Candrea and Ovid Densușianu’s *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii române. Elemente latine*,⁵³ Resmeriță took this to unrealistic extremes

⁴⁸ The term “Thracomania” was introduced in a 1941 article by Resmeriță’s former student Șerban Cioculescu. See: Șerban Cioculescu, “Un nou fenomen mistic: tracomania”, *Revista română* 2 (1941), 229; Nae Antonescu, “Publicații din trecut. Revista română (1941–1942)”, *România literară*, 26 June 1969, 12.

⁴⁹ Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1838–1907) was a Romanian writer and linguist whose work was dominant in the late 19th century. Much of his writing focused on Romanian protochronism, Dacian/Thracian history, and in arguing for a greater dominance of Latin vocabulary (versus Slavic terminology) in the Romanian language.

⁵⁰ Nicolae Densușianu (1846–1911) was a Transylvanian ethnologist and historian. His work, especially *Dacia preistorică*, has drawn criticism for being imaginatively ahistorical; the historian Lucian Boia quotes Vasile Pârvan as describing it as a “fantastic novel” (“roman fantastic”): Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (București: Humanitas, 2011), 164–166. However, Densușianu was frequently featured in the Romanian press, proving that his ideas — even if disputed — permeated the wider consciousness; see, for example: Miss[irlău], “Sendința dela Academie”, *Dimineața*, 25 May 1912, 2; Dr. Al. Tălășescu, “Organisarea noastră sufletească”, *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 29 April 1919, 2.

⁵¹ Though it was not always based in ethnic nationalism; a variety of writers from the right, the left, and from different ethnic minorities toyed with the Zalmoxis theme. See for example: Lucian Blaga, *Zamolxe. Mister pământ* (Cluj: Ardealul, 1921); Henric Sanielevici, “‘Miorița’ sau patimile unui Zalmoxis”, *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*, 5 July 1931, 1, and continued in issues published 12 July 1931 (1-2) and 19 July 1931 (3-4); Mircea Eliade, ed., *Zalmoxis: revue des études religieuses* I, (1938); George Acsinteanu, “Chemarea lui Zalmoxis”, *Universul Literar*, 18 November 1939, 3-4; etc. For an overview of this topic see Dan Dana, *Zalmoxis de la Herodot la Mircea Eliade. Istorii despre un zeu al pretextului* (Iași: Polirom, 2008).

⁵² Resmeriță was an amateur and, as is shown later in the article, was treated as such. At the time, Romanian linguistic studies were dominated by figures including Alexandru Philippide (1859–1933), Ion Aurel Candrea (1872–1950), Ovid Densușianu (1873–1938), and Sextil Pușcariu (1877–1948).

⁵³ A. Candrea and Ovid Densușianu, *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii române. Elemente latine* (Bucharest: Librăria SOCEC & Comp., 1907).

by insisting that even clear Slavic or Turkic loanwords hid secret Latin roots.⁵⁴ Beginning in 1923, Resmeriță published a series of articles in *Universul* about archaeology, focusing mainly on artefacts relating to Roman presence in Dacia found during excavations at Liceul "Traian".⁵⁵ He published another article stating that, based on Latin inscriptions on artefacts dug up in Soroca (Bessarabia), it was clear that the Romans had not yet left Dacia for at least two years following invasions and the Aurelian retreat.⁵⁶ His writing took on a pseudo-mystical tone, and he preached that "the paths taken by our ancestors [were becoming] more and more clear", and that Romanians must "seek to understand their wise whispers."⁵⁷ Accompanying these exhortations was a persistent focus on supposed Latin etymologies of Romanian place names. He argued that B.P. Hasdeu was wrong in asserting a Tatar etymology for the name "Chișinău", and that it actually stemmed "from the Latin *Qui-sig-neo* = 'I who give the sign', because Chișinău gave the first signal in case of barbarian invasion."⁵⁸ In one article in *Lupta*, he proposed Latin etymologies for place names such as Mehadia, which he claimed was derived from a shortened prayer to Hercules, "Me. He. deus."⁵⁹ He also authored an article disputing that Dimitrie Cantemir had Tatar roots,⁶⁰ arguing that the surname Cantemir did not have a Turkish or Tatar etymology ("kan"/"кан" meaning "blood", and "demir"/"тимер" meaning "iron"). Instead, he argued that Cantemir's ancestors were "pure Moldavians" ("moldoveni neași"), that the surname derived from Daco-Latin, and that it was a Turkified derivative of "Cantea".⁶¹

Resmeriță's general anti-foreign attitude also prompted attacks on Romania's ethnic and linguistic minorities. In October 1923, he opened an article on the front page of *Universul* with the statement: "Our minorities do not like the Romanian language." After waxing poetic on what he saw as uniquely-beautiful features of the language, he asked: "So why don't minorities like it? Because it

⁵⁴ Later works which are not discussed here, but which follow the same general "Daco-Latin" thesis, are: Prof. Alex. Resmeriță, *Quelques noms des anciennes pratiques de guérison chez les Roumains* (Turnu-Severin: Tipografia "Minerva", 1932); and Alexandru Resmeriță, *Graiul pă-mântului al munților și al râurilor* (Turnu-Severin: Tipografia "Minerva", 1937).

⁵⁵ Al. Resmeriță, "Adâncul trecutului", *Universul*, 1 June 1923, 2.

⁵⁶ Alex. Resmeriță, "Inscripția latină dela Soroca", *Universul*, 7 September 1923, 2.

⁵⁷ "Drumurile bătute de strămoși ni se arată tot mai lămurit, iar șoapta lor înțeleaptă să căutăm a o pricepe." Al. Resmeriță, "Adâncul trecutului".

⁵⁸ "[Chișinău], pe care Hașdeu o credea numire tătarească, pe când ea este latinescul *Qui-sig-neo* = care dau semnal, pentru că Chișineul da prima semnal în caz de năvălire barbară." Alex. Resmeriță, "Inscripția latină dela Soroca".

⁵⁹ Alex. Resmeriță, "Mehadia - băile Herculane", *Lupta*, 16 July 1922, 2.

⁶⁰ Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), voivode of Moldavia and writer on a number of topics, including ethnography, music, philosophy, and history.

⁶¹ Alex. Resmeriță, "Cantemir a fost tătar?! O lămurire asupra numelui acestui mare cărturar și domn moldovean", *Universul Literar*, 3 February 1924, 7.



doesn't have mile-long words like German or Russian? But in Romanian, just as in Italian and French, you can say the most refined thoughts. We don't have a rich literature, because we have always stood with our hand on the gun, not on the pen, to defend the land on which these minorities live today."⁶² Resmeriță's writings clearly hinted at the belief that ethnic minorities should be grateful to Romania for allowing them to remain there — presumably in contrast to deporting them or otherwise suppressing them from public life.⁶³

In one self-published work titled *Înălțarea limbii române. Rectificarea unor erori academice cari înjosesc vorba, cugetul și sufletul românesc* ("The Elevation of the Romanian language. Rectification of some academic errors which demean the Romanian speech, thought, and soul"),⁶⁴ Resmeriță self-confidently assured the reader that "professors of Romanian will have a word to say about what I present here, but professors of Latin and Greek (and those who know any Slavic language) as well as professors of history will be able to verify my statements", adding that the pamphlet was particularly dedicated to bishops, pastors, lawyers, soldiers, and youth possessing "vigor and national consciousness."⁶⁵ He then launched into diatribe against non-Romanians, including Slavs ("the Orthodox Church was the gateway for the Slavic wolf to enter the Romanian flock"),⁶⁶ Hungarians, and Turks ("a warlike and uncivilized people").⁶⁷ He also attacked Jewish linguists by referring to them by their Jewish, rather than Romanianized, surnames.⁶⁸

⁶² "Atunci de ce nu place minoritarilor? Pentru că n'are vorbe chilometrice ca germana sau ruseasca? Dar în românește se pot rosti cele mai rafinate cugetări ca în italiană și franceză. N'avem o literatură bogată, pentru că am stat tot cu mâna pe armă, nu pe condeiu, ca să apărăm pământul pe care locuiesc astăzi și aceste minorități." Resmeriță, "Limba română", *Universul*, 12 October 1923, 1.

⁶³ In Resmeriță's Turnu-Severin, ethnic Romanians comprised around 90% of the population by 1930 (18,904 people of a total population of 21,107): Dr. Sabin Manuila, ed., *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. II: *Neam, limbă maternă, religie* (București: Monitorul Oficial/Imprimerie Națională, 1938), XXXVI. For further on the idea of Romanians having to live with their "hand on the gun", and Romania as the frontier of Western civilization in the face of the Orient, see: Boia, 256.

⁶⁴ In 1920, Resmeriță became a member of the Administrative Council of Banca Comercială din Turnu-Severin ("The Commercial Bank of Turnu-Severin"), which may have provided additional income to cover publishing costs. He remained in this position until his resignation in October 1936. See: "Banca comercială din T.-Severin", *Monitorul Oficial* 269 (26 March 1920), 13417; "Banca comercială din T.-Severin", *Monitorul Oficial* 237 (30 January 1921), 10081; "Rezultate de Adunări și Consilii", *Argus*, 21 April 1923, 4; "Rezultate de Adunări și Consilii", *Argus*, 12 April 1929, 4; "Rezultate de adunări și consilii", *Argus*, 3 October 1936, 3.

⁶⁵ "În deosebi d-nii profesori de limba română vor avea un cuvânt de zis asupra celor ce voiu expune; iar d-nii profesori de l. latină și greacă (și cunoscătorii de vre-o limbă slavă) cum și d-nii profesori de istorie, vor putea verifica afirmațiunile mele." Alexandru Resmeriță, *Înălțarea limbii române. Rectificarea unor erori academice cari înjosesc vorba, cugetul și sufletul românesc* (Turnu-Severin: [No publishing house], 1923), 3-4.

⁶⁶ "Biserica ortodoxă era porțiță nimerită să între lupul slav în turma românească." *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁷ "Turcii, popor rășboinic și nu de civilizație aleasă, cum au fost Arabii..." *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁸ "Anume Lazăr Șeineanu (sau Șaim)..." *Ibid.*, 9. Lazăr Șăineanu (1859–1934) was indeed Jewish,

In early 1924, Resmeriță published a call in *Universul Literar* asking for “the [financial] support of some chosen soul, a good Romanian, eager for the elevation of our language”, through which he would publish a new Romanian dictionary. He pleaded that the claim of Romanian vocabulary having foreign (Slavic, Turkic, Hungarian, etc.) etymologies was due to general “ignorance of the Dacian language”, and that most words had their roots in Latin, Ancient Greek (“the Dacians also spoke a variety of Ancient Greek”),⁶⁹ or even Sanskrit. He added that he had sent a brochure on the topic (probably *Înălțarea limbii române...*) to various intellectuals, and that he was encouraged to continue with his work.⁷⁰ It appears that his call for support was sufficiently heeded, as he published his *Dicționarul etimologico-semantic al limbei române* (“Etymologico-semantic dictionary of the Romanian language”) that same year.⁷¹ Later, he would also promote his dictionary through a new pamphlet, wherein he accused Romanian universities, “foreign” philologists, and the Romanian Academy of purposely suppressing discussion of “Dacian” etymologies in the Romanian language.⁷² Once again he took aim at Jewish linguists,⁷³ stated that the Romanian language was an “essential element of the nation” borne of “defending the land at the cost of blood”,⁷⁴ and used the remaining pages to advertise his dictionary.

Both the dictionary and Resmeriță’s other linguistic work did end up gaining him some attention (or notoriety), and he became an occasional target of ridicule in the Romanian press. In particular, the Romanian-Jewish literary historian and linguist Barbu Lăzăreanu publicly lambasted his dictionary several times over the

but was born *Eliezer Schein* or *Şain*, not “Şaim”. He made significant contributions to Yiddish and Romanian philology.

⁶⁹ “...Şi dacii vorbeau un dialect din greacă antică”, Alexandru Resmeriță, “Nouile cercetări în domeniul limbii române”, *Universul Literar*, 4 February 1924, 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Alexandru Resmeriță, *Dicționarul etimologico-semantic al limbei române* (Craiova: Institutul de Editura “Ramuri”, 1924).

⁷² “Totuși nici Universitatea Română, nici Academia Română, nu a pus chestiunea aceasta a graiului Dacilor, nici a prezenței în număr destul de mare a elementelor clasice grecești în limba română [...] Aici încurcătura a fost și mai mare, căci prejudecata a ținut loc de riguroasă cercetare științifică. În adevăr filologii streini ca și cei români, când întâlneau un cuvânt românesc, măcar ceva-ceva asemănător cu vre unul slav, unguresc, sau turcesc, nici o clipă nu mai stăteau la îndoială, ci decretau: *cuvânt slav, unguresc, sau turcesc*, în limba română.” Alexandru Resmeriță, *Discuțiuni privitoare la limba română. Cu prilejul unui nou dicționar* (Bucharest: Tipografia Geniului, [1927]), 5-7.

⁷³ He again attacks Lazăr Şăineanu’s etymologies: “Iată și un alt cuvânt, de astă dată turcesc (!..) *ocaua* — pe turcește *oka*, însă *oca* moldovenesc, zice filologul Şăineanu (Şaim) cel laudat de Hajdau, ar veni dela Ruși...” *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁷⁴ “Dacă pământul și-l apără o nație cu prețul sângelui, apoi *limba* este element esențial al națiunii.” *Ibid.*, 1.



following decade, even devoting a chapter in the third volume of his *Cu privire la: gramatică și vocabular* (“Looking At: Grammar and Vocabulary”, 1938) to Resmeriță’s “completely fanciful etymologies” (“etimologii cu totul fanteziste”).⁷⁵ One point of frequent amusement was Resmeriță’s attempt to create a purely Latin etymology for words borrowed from Turkish, like “baclava” — which he said stemmed “from the Latin *bacca* (fruit) and *lavare* (to soak)”.⁷⁶ Lăzăreanu, in a 1929 *Adevărul* article, quipped: “Intelligence is not only required for well-established etymologies, but also for fantastical ones [...] What intelligence Resmeriță must have had to discover a ... *Latin* origin for the following Turkicisms: *baclava*, *balamuc*, *ceacâr*, *marafet!*”⁷⁷ In 1930, Sandu Manoliu, the President of the Educational Committee of the Teachers’ School in Năsăud, joked on the front page of *Dreptatea*: “The Latinist Prof. Alexandru Resmeriță says in his Dictionary that *Năsăud* stems from the Latin ‘*Ne se uda!*’, meaning resistant to floods. Bah, but it is wet, Mr. Professor! Because every 2-3 years both Valea Caselor and the Someș overflow and flood the peaceful Năsăud.”⁷⁸ Seven years later, Lăzăreanu stated that the invented Latinisms of Resmeriță and similar amateur linguists were simply “mental gymnastics” (“*gymnastica mentală*”),⁷⁹ sarcastically conceding that they did indeed “have their place and purpose: in games of charades and in didactic fun, providing, for studious youth, mnemonic material.”⁸⁰

By 1938 Resmeriță’s name appears to have been sufficiently infamous — at least amongst philologists — to be cited in *Viața Românească* as the quintessential example of Dacomanic linguistic work “done under the imaginative impulse of [some] dilettantes”.⁸¹ However, his work wasn’t universally panned, being

⁷⁵ Barbu Lăzăreanu, “Carnetul meu. Nod in papură?”, *Adevărul*, 23 July 1936, 1; see also chapter “Un precursor al etimologistului Alexandru Resmeriță”, in Barbu Lăzăreanu, *Cu privire la: gramatică și vocabular*, vol. III (Bucharest: Cultura Românească, 1938).

⁷⁶ Resmeriță, *Dicționarul etimologico-semantic al limbei române*, 41.

⁷⁷ “Nu numai pentru etimologiile pe deplin confirmate — în orice caz bine și temeinic sprijinite — dar și pentru cele fanteziste, trebuie inteligență. [...] Câtă inteligență a trebuit să desfășure d. Resmeriță pentru a descoperi o ascendență ... *latină* următoarelor turcisme: *baclava*, *balamuc*, *ceacâr*, *marafet!*” Barbu Lăzăreanu, “Genealogiștii cuvintelor”, *Adevărul*, 9 March 1929, 1-2.

⁷⁸ “Profesorul latinist Alex. Resmeriță zice în Dicționarul lui că Năsăudul vine dela latinescu ‘*Ne se uda!*’ adică loc ferit de inundații. — Ba se udă, d-le profesor! Căci la fiecare 2-3 ani și Valea Caselor și Someșul se umflă și inundează liniștitul Năsăud.” Sandu Manoliu, “Năsăudul”, *Dreptatea*, 6 August 1930, 1. Manoliu was earlier quoted in Barbu Lăzăreanu, “Pe marginea vieții. Unei școli normale”, *Adevărul*, 4 August 1930, 2. The quote was taken from Sandu Manoliu, *Icoana unei școli dintr’un colț de țară românesc* (Năsăud: [No editing house], 1930).

⁷⁹ Barbu Lăzăreanu, “Un precursor al etimologistului și semasiologul Alexandru Resmeriță”, *Adevărul*, 25 October 1936, 1.

⁸⁰ “Ba cred că am arătat chiar oarecare bunăvoință amuzată față de niște etimologii cari își au locul și rostul: în jocurile de șarade și în didactica hazlie furnisoare, pentru tinerimea studiosă, a unui material mnemotehnic.” Barbu Lăzăreanu, “Carnetul meu. Nod in papură?”, *Adevărul*, 23 July 1936, 1.

⁸¹ “Cuvintele pe care specialiștii le explică prin slavă, maghiară, turcă etc., devin, sub impulsul imaginației acestor diletanți, latine, sau cel mult greco-latine ori greco-dace. Cunoaștem astfel

embraced by some nationalists and laypersons: one I.C. Ticu, writing for *Vreamea*,⁸² called his dictionary “of undeniable importance”, and suggested that readers attend a series of 15 lectures he was to give in Turnu-Severin.⁸³ He was also given some praise by one of his fellow WWI detainees, who argued that his work helped to combat a moral and cultural crisis in Romania, showed that the language was an essential element of the Romanian nation, and proved the connection “between land and fatherland”.⁸⁴ Undeniably, Resmeriță’s work had an audience — he frequently published articles on the front page of *Universul*, he hosted public lectures,⁸⁵ and he continued to send his work to various intellectuals and linguists — although it is unclear the extent to which he had positive responses.⁸⁶ Even after his death, his work was the subject of ridicule: one 1970 article by philologist I. Mării described Resmeriță’s dictionary as “monstrous”,⁸⁷ and in a 1973 issue of the journal *Studii și Cercetări Lingvistice*, it was listed humorously as an alternative to “serious dictionaries” by linguist Mioara Avram.⁸⁸ Resmeriță’s former students also remembered him as an eccentric: Șerban Cioculescu recalled him as the

Dicționarul etimologico-semantical d-lui Alexandru Resmeriță, Logogeniad-lui Cocuz și altele., in Al. Graur, “Cronica lingvistică. Metoda istorică și comparativă” *Viața Românească* 3 (1938), 92.

⁸² *Vreamea* (1928–1944) was edited by Vladimir Al. Donescu and published out of Bucharest. Though it ran articles by contributors across the political spectrum, by the 1930s had become an outlet for writers associated with the far-right, as well as articles praising National Socialism and the Iron Guard (see for example: Emil Cioran, “Impresii din München. Hitler în conștiința germană”, *Vreamea*, 15 July 1934, 3; and the majority of articles in the 16 January 1938 issue, which is devoted to the deaths of Legionnaires Ion Moța and Vasile Marin.)

⁸³ “Este de remarcat că d-sa este autorul unui dicționar al limbei române, care a apărut acum vreo 4 ani și care este de o netăgăduită însemnătate.” I.C. Ticu, “Orașele noastre. Știri dela corespondenții noștri. T.-Severin.”, *Vreamea*, 14 November 1929, 4.

⁸⁴ C.N.S., “Puterea limbei române”, *Epoca*, 29 December 1929, 2.

⁸⁵ In 1929 he hosted a series of pseudo-mystical, nationalistic lectures about the development of the Romanian language and nation. In one lecture he stated that the Romanian language had been suppressed by Serbs because “the Romanian language is so beautiful, [Romanians] wouldn’t [want to] learn Serbian anymore”, and that foreigners have tried and failed to speak the language “because they did not know the Romanian soul, nor the make-up of our nation”. See: “Activitatea culturală la T.-Severin. Conferința lui d-lui profesor Al. Resmeriță despre ‘Limba română’”, *Universul*, 5 December 1929, 4.

⁸⁶ The author’s copy of Resmeriță’s pamphlet *Discuțiuni privitoare la limba română cu prilejul unui nou dicționar* (Bucharest: Tipografia Geniului, 1927) was mailed and inscribed to “Mr. Professor of Romanian at Liceul ‘Coriolan Brediceanu’ în Lugoj” (“D-sale D.lui Profesor de Limba Română la liceul ‘Coriolan Brediceanu’ la Lugoj”). A further example of his campaigning can be seen at the Caransebeș division of Romania’s National Archives, in a letter sent to the Prefect of Caraș County regarding his dictionary; see: Serviciul județean Caransebeș al Arhivelor Naționale, fond Prefectura Caraș (inv. 115), folder 151/1926–1927, file 2.

⁸⁷ I. Mării, “Istoria lexicografiei române”, *Tribuna*, 26 February 1970, 7.

⁸⁸ Mioara Avram, “Prepoziții neologice în limba română contemporană”, *Studii și Cercetări Lingvistice* 3 (1973), 244.



author of “a fantastic dictionary of our language in which every, absolutely every one of our words derives from Latin”,⁸⁹ and Alexandru Dima described him as a “passionate amateur”, recounting that in his work about Pierre de Ronsard, he had “pleaded, with patriotic ardor, the Romanian origins of the sonnet writer.”⁹⁰

As antisemite

Antisemitism has long been a feature of the Romanian political landscape. The first Romanian Constitution of 1866 barred non-Christians from acquiring Romanian citizenship,⁹¹ and by the end of the century, Romania saw the foundation of organizations with antisemitic programs. One significant figure in the history of Romanian antisemitism was A.C. Cuza (1857–1947).⁹² Cuza, who had previously occupied some local governmental positions,⁹³ founded the League Against Alcoholism (“Liga contra alcoolismului”) with historian A.D. Xenopol in Iași.⁹⁴ On 8 May 1897, the League published an open call warning that alcoholism was the driving force behind the degradation of the Romanian people, that it would cause the spread of poverty, and that cities would fall into the hands of “foreigners” who would replace the Romanian population.⁹⁵ The danger of alcoholism was a long-standing fixation for Cuza, but in reality his warnings about “foreigners” and ethnic replacement were plain antisemitism. Already in 1895, Cuza had published a text titled *Monopolul alcoolului* (“The Monopoly on alcohol”), wherein he argued that Jews had a higher birth rate relative to Christians,⁹⁶ and that they were

⁸⁹ “Alexandru Resmeriță [...] pictor și mai tirzie autorul unui fantastic dicționar al limbii noastre, în care toate, dar absolut toate cuvintele noastră derivau din limba latină.” Cioculescu, “Idealul nostru”.

⁹⁰ “..în 1915, profesorul meu de desen din Severin — Al. Resmeriță — pasionat amator de lingvistică și istorie literară — publica un ‘studiu’ pledînd, cu ardoare patriotică, originea românească a sonetistului.” Al. Dima, “Amintirea lui Ronsard”, *Cronica*, 22 November 1974, 10.

⁹¹ “Înșușirea de Roman se dobandesce, se conserva și se perde potrivit regulilor statornicite prin legile civile. Numai streinii de rituri crestine pot dobindi impamentenirea.” From “Constituția Principatelor Unite Române din 30 iunie 1866”, republished in *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 142 (13 July 1866), article 7.

⁹² A.C. Cuza was born in Iași on 8 November 1857 to a family of boyars and was baptised as Orthodox later that month. He died and was buried in Sibiu in 1947 (see grave no. D37 G11-12, Cimitirul Central din Sibiu; Serviciul județean Iași al Arhivelor Naționale, Collection “Stare civilă Oraș Iași” no. 2252, *Mitrici orașul Iași. Registre mitricale ale Parohiei Buna-Vestire*, inv. 1/1846-1865, record no. 240/1857).

⁹³ “Consiliul Comunal din Iași”, *Curierul. Foaea Intereselor Generale*, 14 (26) November 1890, 1; “Stiri”, *Universul*, 24 October 1890, 3;

⁹⁴ “Ecouri”, *Opinia*, 4 May 1897, 3; “Cronică. Ligă contra alcoolismului”, *Tribuna*, 18/30 May 1897, 439; Rep., “Liga contra alcoolului”, *Evenimentul*, 17 May 1897, 1.

⁹⁵ A.C. Cuza, “Apelul. Ligei romine contra alcoolismului”, *Ecoul Moldovei*, 8 May 1897, 3.

⁹⁶ A.C. Cuza, *Monopolul alcoolului. Discursuri. Rostite în ședințele Adunării deputaților din 7 Martie și 22 Noembrie 1894* (București: Imprimeria statului, 1895), [43-44].

spreading alcoholism in order to slowly weaken, kill, and replace Romanians.⁹⁷ In 1899 the League published a pamphlet titled *Victimele alcoolului* ("Victims of alcoholism") which compiled news reports and documents on the rise of crime, violence, and "cases of insanity", which it blamed on alcohol.⁹⁸ By 1900 Cuza was campaigning under an entirely antisemitic platform which sought to exclude Jews from all public spaces and impose a monopoly on alcohol.⁹⁹

Following the First World War, and after many changes of alliances, Cuza founded the League for National-Christian Defense (Liga Apărării Național-Creștine, LANC) alongside the physiologist Nicolae Paulescu in 1923.¹⁰⁰ LANC was the latest outlet for Cuza's antisemitism, which now attracted a younger membership, including university students. In the 1920s, Cuza began to campaign for a *numerus clausus* in Romanian universities, in order to limit the number of Jewish students.¹⁰¹ This call was heeded by thousands of students, including figures like Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899–1938, the future Legionary Movement leader),¹⁰² and sparked brutal reactions against Jewish students and cultural organizations, including assaults, arson, looting, and even the temporary

⁹⁷ Ibid., [17].

⁹⁸ A.C. Cuza (preface), *Victimele alcoolului. Documente sociale* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1899). The League produced several other similar pamphlets, including among others: A.C. Cuza, *Lupta în contra Alcoolismului în România* (Iași: Tipografia H. Goldner, 1897); A.C. Cuza, *Ce-i alcoolismul?* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1897); A.C. Cuza, *Comerț liber sau monopol?* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1897); and A.C. Cuza, *Monopolul Cîrcumelor la sate și Monopolul Vinzării Alcoolului* (Iași: Tipografia Națională, 1900).

⁹⁹ "Candidatul grupului antisemit din jurul 'Ecouli Moldovei este Cuza C. Alex.," *Ecouli Moldovei. Ziar antisemit*, 27 May 1899, 1. The 21-point platform called for the exclusion of Jews from all state functions, the prevention of Jews from settlement in rural communities, the deportation of all Jews who had recently settled, the barring of Jews from schools, the end of "itinerant trade" in villages, and a tax on Jews, among other points. See also Philippe Henri Blasen, "A.C. Cuza, German Antisemitism, and the Swastika", *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai - Historia* 67, no. 1 (June 2022), 25–26 and 32; Horia Bozdoghină, "A. C. Cuza — politicianul antisemit", *Archiva Moldaviae* IX (2017), 142.

¹⁰⁰ Nicolae Paulescu (1869–1931) is now better recognized for his contributions to the discovery of insulin, but he was heavily involved in antisemitic politics, co-leading LANC and publishing a number of antisemitic pamphlets. These included *Degenerarea rasei jidănești* ("The degeneration of the Jewish race", 1928); *Sinagoga și Biserica față de pacificarea omenirii* ("The Synagogue and the Church in the face of the pacification of mankind", 1923); and *Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc-Masoneria* ("The Hospital, the Qu'ran, the Talmud, the Cabal, Freemasonry", 1914). See also: "Întrunirea partidului naționalist creștin din Iași", *Universul*, 7 March 1923, 2.

¹⁰¹ See: A.C. Cuza, *Numerus clausus* (Bucharest: Editura Ligii Apărării Naționale Creștine, 1924).

¹⁰² Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and his father Ion Zelea Codreanu were both affiliated with Cuza and LANC. At the time, the younger Zelea Codreanu was a student of law in Iași. Both were speakers at the party's founding meeting; see: "Întrunirea partidului naționalist creștin din Iași".



closure of some universities.¹⁰³ Cuza's ideas spread and LANC membership grew, with violent results.

Resmeriță, whose linguistic pamphlets were already riddled with attacks on both Jewish philologists and other ethnic minorities, now too sought to tackle the "Jewish question" outright. The extent to which Resmeriță had day-to-day personal interactions with Jews, beyond occasional anecdotes in his work, is uncertain.¹⁰⁴ The census of December 1899 counted only 4 Jews per 100 residents in Mehedinți County, wherein Resmeriță lived and taught, or an approximate 3.8 Jewish men and 4.8 Jewish women for every 100 residents of Turnu-Severin proper.¹⁰⁵ By 1930 there were only 390 Jews (by "neam", or "nation") in the entire county, with 388 of them living in Turnu-Severin,¹⁰⁶ another count (by religion) places the county's Jewish population at 448, with 446 in Turnu-Severin.¹⁰⁷ The total population of Turnu-Severin at the time was 21,107 people, meaning that Jews only accounted for about 2% of the city's residents. However, the small number of Jewish co-residents — whom Resmeriță wildly overestimated as comprising "about 1500" people in 1926 — did not stop him from campaigning against them.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (London/Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 28-31; Carol Iancu, *Les Juifs de Roumanie et la solidarité internationale (1919–1939)* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 2006), 19-35.

¹⁰⁴ Resmeriță claimed, for example, that his antisemitism was confirmed and justified in 1906, when he witnessed two young Jewish boys place excrement on the steps of the newly-erected Traian monument in Turnu-Severin: Alexandru Resmeriță, *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască. Origini, aspecte, soluții. Sine ira* (No publishing house, 1926), 38. He more often employed anecdotes which took place in other regions: in the same text, he recounted being "blinded by the hostile gaze" of a Jewish baker somewhere in Bukovina in 1913 ("eram fulgerat de privirea dușmănoasă a evreifului." *Ibid.*, 27), and that Jews had overrun the Moldavian city of Roman and put all Romanian families out of business (*Ibid.*, 15). Contradictory to his usual ideas of Jews disrespecting or being ungrateful towards Romania, he also recalled meeting a Jewish woman on a train in Bessarabia who "spoke Romanian well". Upon asking her why she was returning to Bessarabia after emigrating to the United States, she told him that America was "nothing" to her compared to Bessarabia ("... am întrebat-o de ce n'a ramas în America și vine iar în Basarabia? — 'Ce spui d-ta de America? da așa bine și frumos ca la noi în Basarabia, nu-i nicăeri.'" *Ibid.*, 18.).

¹⁰⁵ In terms of those of "Mosaic" (i.e. Jewish) confession. L. Colescu, ed., *Recensământul general al populațiunei României din decembrie 1899* (București: Institutul de arte grafice „Eminescu”, 1905), XLVI–XLVII.

¹⁰⁶ Manuila, *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. II, XXXVI–XXXVII.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXVIII–XXXIX.

¹⁰⁸ Resmeriță claims that one single unnamed Jewish merchant from Turnu-Severin had children who were now "multi-millionaires", that the city had "about 25 Jewish companies", and that there were about 1500 Jews in the city. He further stated that Romanians did not have a high enough birth or migration rate to account for this, and that "the Romanians multiplied only in a proportion of 60 to 1, versus the Jews in a proportion of 1500 to 1." Resmeriță, *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască*, 15.

In 1926, Resmeriță self-published a pamphlet titled *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască. Origini, aspecte, soluții. Sine ira* ("Preliminary studies on the Jewish question. Origins, aspects, solutions. *Sine ira*"). In it, Resmeriță presented very typical antisemitic rhetoric, couched in claims of neutrality and the assurance that the pamphlet was written "without hate or enmity" ("fără ură și fără patimă", a claim already present in the pamphlet's title).¹⁰⁹ "Jews," he stated, "are also human, and have the right to live in the world like all humans."¹¹⁰ However, he then immediately categorized Jews as communists, as hoarders of money, as allies of Freemasons and occult societies working against Christianity, and as beneficiaries of war.¹¹¹ Making reference to both Biblical history and contemporary politics, Resmeriță claimed that it was due to their "wandering" in the diaspora that the Jewish people were forced to enter "dishonest" professions, and that they now wandered through other nations "in search of prey" ("de cautarea pradei"). He argued that Jews settled in Germany due to German industriousness and excess, which benefited the Jews and allowed them to avoid manual labor. He said that in the case of England, the weakening of the Catholic Church allowed Jews to immigrate and become rich, but added that, "if the English have always defended themselves from this crowd, from the gaggle of Jews through which the destructive virus is spread, and by which [English] vigor is sucked by the mouths of leeches, then England is just now beginning to see what Israel wants and what it is capable of."¹¹²

Resmeriță believed that Jewish presence and immigration to Romania was part of a larger plot against the Romanian people devised by Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Russia, in order to inundate Romania's cities with "foreigners" and weaken Romanian culture. Repeating ideas from A.C. Cuza, who himself peddled ideas already widespread in Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia for several decades,¹¹³ Resmeriță argued that Jewish-owned bars spread alcoholism amongst Romania's peasantry, and that this was part of a larger plan to steal poor Romanians' property from them.¹¹⁴ He further claimed that Jews would bribe

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁰ "Evreii sunt și ei oameni și au dreptul să trăiască pe lume ca toți oamenii." (Emphasis in original). Ibid., 7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 5-10.

¹¹² "Dar dacă Englezii s'au apărat mereu de mulțimea, de plevușca evreiască prin care virusul distrugător se propagă în popor și prin care vloga este suptă cu guri de lipitoare, apoi în ultimul timp au început și Englezii să vadă ce vrea și ce poate *Israelul*." (Emphasis in original). Ibid., 7-13.

¹¹³ Andrei Oișteanu notes that legislation aimed at barring Jews from the alcohol trade was passed in Transylvania as early as 1801, in Moldavia in the 1840s, and then in the United Principalities in the late 1800s: Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew*, 180-181.

¹¹⁴ This essentially follows the same narrative presented by Resmeriță in his pamphlet about the 1911 election, *Cum votează Colegiul al III-lea*.



officials to enter Romania via Moldavia, that they made pacts with local police officers, and that these secret pacts were the reason why “some students from Iași, after demonstrating against the Jews, [were] tortured, as [was] the case with Corneliu [Zelea] Codreanu” (the student Zelea Codreanu, then a LANC member, had been arrested the year prior for killing the police prefect C.G. Manciu and wounding two others).¹¹⁵

Resmeriță’s pamphlet featured the usual antisemitic tropes: that Jews controlled the Romanian media, that they sought to usurp the Orthodox Church,¹¹⁶ that they prevented peace with neighboring nations, and that they were causing the collapse of Western cultures.¹¹⁷ He attacked various public figures, such as Nicolae Iorga,¹¹⁸ Iuliu Maniu, and the latter’s National Peasant Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc) as having hidden financial relationships with Jews, and evoked the idea (like Cuza) of implementing a *numerus clausus* in Romanian universities.¹¹⁹ He also stated that Jews were responsible for the mass deforestation of Palestine, that they left it “a dry and barren land”, that they now sought to do the same to Romania’s forests, and that when they had plundered Romania of its natural resources and deprived Romanians of economic opportunities, they would flee to another country.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ “Aceste vechi și tainice legături ale unor polițiști cu evreii, explică pentru ce erau torturați unii studenți la Iași, când manifestau contra evreilor, aici are explicarea și cazul lui Corneliu Codreanu.” Ibid., 14-17. For Zelea Codreanu’s arrest, see: Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2015), 229-230; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, vol. 1 (Sibiu: Editura “Totul pentru Țară”, 1936), 224-234; Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 49-51.

¹¹⁶ “Destul este să aibă banul. Iată de pildă, bancherul Finkels a acaparat un bun număr de acțiuni ale societății ‘Universul’ și pe baza lor este cenzor la această societate. Când am văzut dăunazi, ca ziarul ‘Universul’ își clădește un nou și măreț palat, iar pe actul de fundație iscălit în cap Patriarhul, iar la sfârșit evreul Finkels, m’am gândit: cam cât timp îi va trebui acestui din urmă să ajungă în frunte!” (“It is enough to have *money*. Here, for example, the banker Finkels grabbed a good number of shares of the Universul company and, based on this, he is the censor of this company. When I saw the other day that the newspaper *Universul* was building a grand, new palace, and that on the foundational act the Patriarch was [listed] at the top and the Jew Finkels at the end, I thought: how long will it take for the latter to get to the top?!”) Resmeriță, *Studiu privitor la cheștiunea evreiască*, 32-33.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 42-45.

¹¹⁸ Iorga too led an antisemitic political career and was an early collaborator of A.C. Cuza, with whom he co-founded the Nationalist-Democrat Party (Partidul Naționalist-Democrat) in 1910, formed around a group of collaborators from Iorga’s nationalist periodical *Neamul românesc* (“The Romanian Nation”). See: C. Zotta and N. Tulceanu, *Partidele politice din România. Istoricul și programele lor* (București: Librăria Culturii poporului, 1934), 50.

¹¹⁹ Resmeriță, *Studiu privitor la cheștiunea evreiască*, 35-36.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 33-34. Actually, deforestation and soil erosion occurred throughout the Roman Empire, not just in Palestine, due to urbanisation and other factors (use of wood for fuel, house- and

Resmeriță claimed that he had forgiven every Jew who had ever personally done him wrong, but that “no matter how good and friendly some of the Jews appear, deep down, they hate Romanians.”¹²¹

Resmeriță closed his pamphlet by promoting Cuza's LANC, arguing that its foundation was the natural outcome of the sudden increase of Jews in Romania and to Jewish “aggression”. He stated that LANC served a higher purpose, namely “to educate and prepare all spirits [...] for the salvation of the nation and the homeland from the Jewish danger.”¹²² He called on any “good Romanian, from any political party — if he understands [LANC's] mission — [to] support the League in word and deed.”¹²³

In addition to LANC, Resmeriță was also an early financial supporter of the fledgling Legionary Movement, formed around Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927. The Legion of the Archangel Michael (“Legiunea ‘Arhanghelul Mihail’”, also known as the Iron Guard) was a violently antisemitic organization founded by several young members of LANC who had split from Cuza.¹²⁴ Beginning in August 1927, the Legion published a bimonthly magazine, *Pământul Strămoșesc* (“The Ancestral Earth”), from their student center in Iași.¹²⁵ For 140 lei *per annum*, readers would receive a large selection of ultra-nationalist, conspiratorial, and virulently antisemitic articles. The first issue of *Pământul Strămoșesc* alone ran articles which suggested that “the Unitary Politics of Judaism” (“Politica Unitară a Iudaismului”) was conspiring with the international “Yid press” (“presa iudovească”) to desecrate Christian holy sites,¹²⁶ and that in Bessarabia, which was “sucked [dry] and deeply tormented by Yids” (“cea suptă și adânc chinuită de Jidani”), ethnic Romanians were being murdered by Jews, “under the cudgel of the red beast” (“sub lovitura de ciomag a bestiei roșii”).¹²⁷

ship-building, agriculture, etc.) See: Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis. An Abridgement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 62-91; Sing C. Chew, *World Ecological Degradation: Accumulation, Urbanization, and Deforestation 3000 B.C. – A.D. 2000* (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2001), 73-97.

¹²¹ “...Atunci vădit lucru că oricât s’ar arăta unii dintre evrei buni și prietenoși, în fundul sufletului lor ei urâsc pe români”. Resmeriță, *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască*, 38.

¹²² “Menirea Ligei este mult mai înaltă și anume să facă teducăție [sic] și pregătirea tuturor spirite-lor [...] în aceasta direcțiune: salvarea neamului și a patriei, de pericolul evreesc.” Ibid., 44-45.

¹²³ “Iată pentru ce, orice bun român din orice partid politic ar fi, dacă înțelege acest rost al Ligei, trebuie să-i dea sprijin cu vorba și cu fapta ca sa și poate îndeplini misiunea.” Ibid.

¹²⁴ For further context regarding the Codreanu-Cuza power struggle within LANC, see: Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 63-71.

¹²⁵ See *Pământul Strămoșesc* I, no. 1 (1 August 1927).

¹²⁶ “Vești din lume. Politica Iudaismului”, *Pământul Strămoșesc* I, no. 1 (1 August 1927), 14.

¹²⁷ “Vești din lume. Cum mor românii”, *Pământul Strămoșesc* I, no. 1 (1 August 1927), 15.



Pământul Strămoșesc soon caught the eye of Resmeriță, who, in January 1928, took out an annual subscription for a donation of 1000 lei — significant compared to the aforementioned annual rate — including with it a “beautiful letter of encouragement” (“[o] frumoasă scrisoare de încurajare”). This gesture was so well-received by the nascent Legion that a special mention was printed in the magazine, alongside a note from editor Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, who responded: “In the name of the Legion, our little group of youngsters, we address you from the plains of Moldova with a greeting full of gratitude.”¹²⁸ Eight years later, Zelea Codreanu mentioned Resmeriță as an early contributor to the magazine in his pseudo-manifesto *Pentru legionari* (“For my Legionnaires”).¹²⁹

However, it does not appear that Resmeriță continued his support of the Legion for long. In the autumn of 1930, Resmeriță founded a Turnu-Severin branch of LANC, in which he served as president.¹³⁰ By this time, the Legion had definitively split from LANC, with Legionnaires having evicted Cuzist students from their Iași student center two years earlier and, after a legal process, having gained firm ownership of it by March 1930.¹³¹ At this point, Legionary students were organizing distinctly from the Cuzists and with their own program; thus, it is safe to classify Resmeriță as a Cuzist. His early support of the splinter group may have also resulted from a lack of communication amongst LANC supporters and members.¹³² Immediately following the foundation of LANC’s Turnu-Severin branch, *Universul* reported that “LANC’s program-manifesto was distributed in the streets, signed by Messrs. A.C. Cuza and Dr. [Nicolae] Paulescu.”¹³³

Resmeriță’s antisemitism became more radical into the 1930s. He began to publish articles in the ethno-nationalist and antisemitic magazine *Sfarmă-Piatra*,¹³⁴ and released a new standalone pamphlet in 1938, titled *Cum să ne apărăm*

¹²⁸ “În numele Legiunii, a mănunchiului nostru de tineri, îi adresăm de pe plaiurile Moldovii salutul nostru plin de mulțumire.” “Informațiuni”, *Pământul Strămoșesc* II, no. 2 (15 January 1928), 15.

¹²⁹ Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 327.

¹³⁰ “‘Universul’ în țara. Turnu-Severin.”, *Universul*, 1 October 1930, 8. It is unclear how long Resmeriță served in this position. He does appear once in *Țara Noastră*, the newspaper of the National-Christian Party, in the context of a 1936 student federation meeting; however, his affiliation with LANC or the Party is not noted. See: “Congresul Federația studențești din Oltenia, jud. Olt și valea Timocului”, *Țara Noastră*, 24 August 1936, 3.

¹³¹ Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 72.

¹³² Roland Clark writes that “not all LANC leaders knew a great deal about the party”, and that non-members were sometimes made regional leaders with little to no training if they expressed interest in the League. See: *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³³ “În localitate, s’au pus din nou bazele Ligii creștine, formându-se un comitet sub președinția d-lui Alex. Resmeriță, profesor de liceu. Azi au fost lipite pe străzi manifeste-program ale Ligii, semnate de d-nii A.C. Cuza și dr. Paulescu.” “‘Universul’ în țara. Turnu-Severin.”, *Universul*.

¹³⁴ Alexandru Resmeriță, “Jidani filologi”, *Sfarmă-Piatra* II, no. 33, 9 July 1936, 9. *Sfarmă-Piatra* (1935–1944) was a virulently antisemitic magazine founded by Nichifor Crainic (1889–

de Evrei. Un plan de eliminare totală ("How to defend ourselves against the Jews. A plan for total elimination"). This pamphlet built upon the stories and tropes used in 1926's *Studiu privitor...*, as well as a pamphlet released in 1932 which, though not explicitly antisemitic, revived Resmeriță's pre- and post-war themes of economic protectionism against "foreign" influence.¹³⁵ In *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*, Resmeriță again praised A.C. Cuza's politics, blamed Jews for issues like deforestation, and warned that Jews sought to replace Romanians economically, culturally, and physically.¹³⁶ This was supplemented by anecdotes about Jewish merchants tampering with meat or grain to the detriment of Romanians, blaming Jews for the Great Depression, and classic antisemitic tropes (e.g. blood libel).¹³⁷ Here, however, Resmeriță sought a definitive answer to the "Jewish question", and made concrete proposals to rid Romania of Jews permanently.

In a chapter titled "Proposed methods for the elimination of Jews from Romania" ("Metodele propuse pentru a elimina pe evrei din România"), Resmeriță condemned those antisemites who sought to make distinctions between so-called "native", "good", and "bad" Jews, and stated that "all Yids must be eliminated, and permanently so" from Romania.¹³⁸ He argued that it was not enough to boycott Jewish businesses, to terrorize them with document checks, to deport the entire Jewish population to surrounding countries, to let them form their own country elsewhere, or even to sterilize Jews by castrating all males at birth.¹³⁹ Instead, he argued, they needed to be eliminated in their totality. However, Resmeriță considered methods proposed by A.C. Cuza and others unrealistic. He also argued against a proposal by an unnamed priest writing for *Porunca Vremii*,¹⁴⁰ who suggested loading the entire Jewish population onto ships and leaving them stranded in the Black Sea: "the Father's method would be good, but we would need thousands of ships and barges, which we have on neither the sea nor the Danube. Where should we get them from, Father? And then, would it be fine to just leave them and lose the

1972). Much of its content sought to crudely target and ridicule Jews and public figures, or to unite the various nationalist movements under the ideal of an ethnocratic Romanian state. It should be noted that neither Cuza's LANC nor Codreanu's Legionary Movement were spared from *Sfarmă-Piatră's* polemic, and that Crainic began a feud with A.C. Cuza and Octavian Goga in 1936. For further context see: Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 196-210.

¹³⁵ Prof. Al. Resmeriță, *Criza și leacul ei. Nu ne trebuie împrumut, nici robie* (Turnu-Severin: Minerva, 1932).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-15.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10-18.

¹³⁸ "Jidan băștinaș, jidan bun și jidan rău, aceasta deosebire trebuie să ne iase din minte. Toți jidanii trebuiesc eliminați și pentru totdeauna!" Alexandru Resmeriță, *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei. Un plan de eliminare totală* (Turnu-Severin: Minerva, 1938), 62.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

¹⁴⁰ A leading antisemitic newspaper, published in Bucharest (appearing inconsistently 1932-1944).



entire fleet? That's like saying, 'let's set the mill on fire to burn the mice to death!'"¹⁴¹ Resmeriță stated that Jews were "driven by laziness and the instinct to live parasitically at the expense of other nations",¹⁴² and that they lacked worth ethic due to rejecting the Bible's teachings and living by "speculating only on the products of other people's work."¹⁴³ He argued that to combat the "humiliation, poverty, and even domination of [the] Romanian country and nation", in an era when work was needed for "countless agricultural, economic, and building projects", a totalitarian-nationalist government should organize a plebiscite that would exile Jewish men from all Romanian cities and force them by law to work in rural communes,¹⁴⁴ while Jewish women could work in craft workshops or as maids, "just as Romanian women have been servants to Jews for decades".¹⁴⁵ No Jews, Resmeriță stated, under any circumstances, would be exempt from this plan — those who attempted to escape should be shot "like [military] deserters from the front", after

¹⁴¹ "Bună ar fi ea metoda părintelui, dar ni-ar trebui cam vre-o două mii de de vapoare și șleपुरi, câte nici nu avem noi pe marea și Dunăre... De unde să le luăm părinte? Și apoi cuminte ar fi să ne părăsim, să pierdem noi toată flota? Vorba aceea: să dăm foc morii ca să ardă șoarecii!" Resmeriță, *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*, 65.

¹⁴² "...duși de lenea de a munci și de instinctul de a trăi parazitator pe socoteala altor neamuri." Ibid., 60.

¹⁴³ "Evreii nu iubesc munca pentru că s'au deprins să speculeze numai produsele muncii celorlalți oameni și au văzut că le merge mai bine speculând, de cât muncind pământul, așa cum poruncește chiar Biblia." Ibid., 66.

¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, this flipped some other nationalist (especially Cuzist) programs, which explicitly sought to remove Jews from rural spaces in reaction to the idea that the Romanian peasantry was suffering under a class of Jewish estate owners, on their head; instead of expelling Jews from rural spaces, Resmeriță proposed keeping them there (and expelling Jews from the cities), to essentially work off a debt owed to the Romanian population through slave labour. For other proposals regarding Jews and the rural space, see for example: Liga Apărării Naționale Creștine, *Călăuza Bunilor Românilor* (București: Tipografia Națională, 1925), 34–35 and 37–39; Stelu Șerban, "Communal Political Cultures in Interwar Romania", in *Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania: Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda*, ed. Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 90–92.

¹⁴⁵ "...cum au fost și româncele zeci de ani servitoare la evrei." Ibid., 67. Issues of gender and sexuality are repeatedly raised in this pamphlet: Resmeriță believed that Jews adulterated alcohol with substances that atrophied the reproductive organs in order to lower the Romanian birth rate (Ibid., 48); that Romanian women in areas with a large Jewish population frequently smoked tobacco, which caused racial degeneration — he pointed to the supposed "degeneration" of the "Gypsy race" as an example of this ("If the Gypsy race is degenerate, it is because Gypsy women smoked"; "Dacă rasa țiganilor este degenerată, este că țigancile au fumat." Ibid., 49); that Romanian women were becoming "enslaved" to Jewish men through sex and mixed-ethnicity pregnancies, in turn causing a rising abortion rate in Romania due to women feeling the "abomination of raising in [their] blood the progeny of a Yid" ("De va rămâne însărcinată, prin instinctul ei de rasă va simți scârba de a crește în sângele ei progenitura jidanului"), and that Romanian women would thus be so physically damaged by abortions that they would be "lost for procreation and for the perpetuation of Romanian blood" ("perdută pentru procreare și pentru perpetuarea sângelui românesc." Ibid., 51).

local authorities and eyewitnesses testified on paper that they had escaped.¹⁴⁶ Resmeriță outlined in great detail the barracks-like accommodation for these Jewish slave laborers, their dress code, the number of workers needed for certain operations, the small number of personal items allowed to be taken by each Jew, the organization of transfers or capital punishment, the storage of tools and supplies (presumably to prevent theft or use as weapons in an uprising), the use of children aged 10 to 18 as "apprentices", the identification of Jewish workers by fingerprint, the payment of Jewish laborers with clothing and food rather than money, the confiscation of Jewish property and the eviction of Jews from their homes, the closure of Romanian borders to Jews, and the sterilization of Jews and prevention of sexual intercourse between couples.¹⁴⁷ Resmeriță advocated for slave labor and the terrorism of the Jewish population in an extreme sense, yet still considered his plan "humane" and argued that, despite "possibly deserving harsher treatment", the proposal did not constitute "revenge or tyranny against the Jews", but was simply a way to balance the Romanian nation and get necessary work done.¹⁴⁸ He further stated that such treatment was similar to the lifestyle of Romanian peasants, whom he considered to be long-oppressed by the Jewish community, and that by allowing married Jewish couples to correspond by letter and the continuation of some cultural and religious activities, the proposal was not as cruel as it could be.¹⁴⁹ He then compared Jews to bed bugs, and called for Romanians to "replant the mountains devastated by Yids, and restore the cities [now] cleansed of Yids".¹⁵⁰ He closed by asking readers to distribute, copy, and sell the brochure, "being [a work] of public interest" ("fiind de interes obștesc").¹⁵¹

Ultimately, it is not difficult to trace the genealogy of Resmeriță's antisemitism. Before the First World War, he concerned himself greatly with what he considered the moral, physical, and cultural degeneration of the Romanian people, especially with regards to students and peasants. This was usually combined with a strong monarchist-nationalist sentiment, which soon morphed into plain nationalism and the apparent urge to guard Romania and its culture from what he saw as aggressive outside influence (specifically with regards to language and trade). Eventually, Resmeriță came to see Romanian Jewry as the main cause of this degeneration,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁴⁷ Resmeriță, *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*, 66-72.

¹⁴⁸ "Prin punerea în aplicare a planului mai sus arătat, noi Românii nu urmărim o răsbunare asupra evreilor sau o tiranizare a lor; ci este singura măsură prin care ne apărăm pentru totdeauna de acele atentate plănuite și puse în aplicare de dâșii pentru distrugerea nației noastre. Criminali (cum sunt bolșevicii) și intoleranți sub atâtea raporturi față de noi, cari i-am tolerat 100 de ani, evreii ar merita poate un tratament mai aspru." Ibid., 73.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 73-77.

¹⁵⁰ "Să vină acea națiune să ne replanteze munții devastați de jidani, să ne redea orașele curățite de jidovi și să și-i ia apoi pe toți, dar pe toți!" Ibid., 77.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 81.



aided, in his mind, by conspiracies hatched between the Jewish community, the Romanian authorities, and outside nations (i.e. Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Russia). Many of Resmeriță's talking points — for example, his belief that alcoholism was a Jewish plot — existed concurrently in the wider antisemitic discourse. Thus, it is unsurprising that Resmeriță's focus, which in the pre-war period concerned seemingly any foreign influence (especially Turkish, German, and Hungarian), would settle almost entirely on Romanian Jewry.

Resmeriță's antisemitic publications, including *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*, do not appear to have been commented on in the mainstream press, which was more interested in the work of antisemitic ideologues like A.C. Cuza, Octavian Goga,¹⁵² Nae Ionescu, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and their young “intellectual” followers. The public's overlooking of Resmeriță does not mean that his ideas were harmless, or that they were not shared by others. His name and ideas were present in the wider landscape of antisemitic discourse, and he participated in discussions through his articles in *Porunca Vremii* and *Sfarmă-Piatră*. He directly funded and promoted violently antisemitic organizations, through his early donation to *Pământul Stramoșesc* and his establishment of a new LANC chapter in 1930. Although Resmeriță as one voice may have been ignored or ridiculed in the press, and though his proposals regarding mass-slavery and sterilization were extreme, these ideas were forebearers of what was to be seen in Romania and across Europe during the Holocaust.¹⁵³

Beginning in the late interwar period, Resmeriță also became interested in Christian and theological issues. In 1936, he began to campaign for the unification of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches in Romania,¹⁵⁴ publishing a poorly-informed “Memorandum for the unification of the Romanian churches” the same year.¹⁵⁵ His interest in church issues was at least partially fueled by his antisemitism: in 1941, he wrote an article which advocated fixing the date of Easter, blaming its changing date on Jewish “irregularity” and the adherence of Christians to the Jewish calendar. He added that he directed a memorandum to this effect towards church and political leaders who would “stabilize European and Christian order after the current war” (presumably

¹⁵² Octavian Goga (1881–1938), poet, far-right politician, and co-leader of A.C. Cuza's National-Christian Party (a merger between LANC and Goga's National Agrarian Party).

¹⁵³ See the compilation of documents on Jewish slave labour and “obligatory work” preceding and during the Holocaust in Romania: Ana Bărbulescu and Alexandru Florian, eds., *Munca obligatorie a evreilor din România (1940–1944)* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România „Elie Wiesel”/Polirom, 2013). For more context on antisemitic discourse in the interwar Romanian press, see: Ana Bărbulescu and Alexandru Florian, eds., *Elita culturală și discursul antisemit interbelic* (Editura Institutului Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România „Elie Wiesel”/Polirom, 2022).

¹⁵⁴ “Știri. Pentru unificarea bisericilor române”, *Foaia Diecezană. Organul eparhiei ortodoxe române a Caransebeșului*, 26 April 1936, 5-6.

¹⁵⁵ Alexandru Resmeriță, *Memorandum pentru unificarea bisericilor române* (Turnu-Severin: Minerva, 1936).

against Jewish influence).¹⁵⁶ In 1942 he twice submitted written requests to move the Metropolis of Oltenia (Mitropolia Olteniei) from Craiova to Turnu-Severin, although this was unsuccessful,¹⁵⁷ and he donated money to restore a church in Bârlogu (Stoenești, Vâlcea County).¹⁵⁸

Resmeriță continued to publish antisemitic and nationalistic articles until at least 1943.¹⁵⁹ He also gave lectures on a variety of subjects, including Christopher Columbus (whom he said would be proud of Romania for completing his historical mission: "the crusade dreamed of by Columbus has come true, because Romanians have always fought bravely and pushed Islam from Eastern Europe, where another tyranny now exists: that of the hammer and sickle"),¹⁶⁰ William Shakespeare,¹⁶¹ the secession of Transylvania to Hungary,¹⁶² alcoholism in rural areas,¹⁶³ Romanian folklore,¹⁶⁴ and denying the possibility of Jewish influence

¹⁵⁶ "Neregularitatea provine din faptul că în ajunul Paștilor evreești a fost crucificat și înmormântat Mântuitorul, iar după Paștile evreești s'a produs Învierea, și creștinii s'au orientat după evrei, cari își serbează neregulat a lor Pasa'h [...] Un memoriu documentat și foarte respectuos a fost adresat în acest scop atât Capilor supremi ai bisericilor creștine, cât și marilor Conducători, cari vor statornici ordinea europeană și creștină după actualul război." "The irregularity [of dates] stems from the fact that the Saviour was crucified and buried on the eve of the Jewish Passover, and following the Jewish Passover the Resurrection occurred, and the Christians followed the Jews who irregularly celebrate their Pesach [...] A well-documented and very respectful memorandum for this purpose was addressed towards both the Supreme Heads of the Christian churches, and to the great Leaders who will establish European and Christian order after the current war." Alex. Resmeriță, "Paștile la o zi fixă", *Curentul*, 11 June 1941, 2.

¹⁵⁷ "Supliment", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română: Revista sfântului sinod* 60 (July-August 1942), 9: regarding Tem. Nr. 822/942, and 2894/942.

¹⁵⁸ "Pentru biserica din Stoenești-Bârlog, jud. Vâlcea", *Universul (Provincie)*, 20 July 1942, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Resmeriță argued that the swastika (eg. as used by A.C. Cuza) was a symbol with ancient or folkloric Romanian origins. He also argued that Jews appropriated monotheism from Indo-Aryans. See: Alexandru Resmeriță, "Svastica, semn arian de Slavă lui Dumnezeu, care a făcut pe om și ființele vii", *Porunca Vremii*, 14 March 1943. For further discussion on the supposed "Romanian" origins of the swastika and its use by A.C. Cuza, see: Blasen, "A.C. Cuza, German Antisemitism, and the Swastika", 21-58.

¹⁶⁰ "Dar și cruciada, visată de Columb, s'a împlinit, căci românii mereu au luptat vitejește și au împins Islamul din Europa orientală, unde acum se îndeasă altă tiranie, a ciocanului și secerei." "Reluarea șezătorilor culturale pentru tineret la T.-Severin", *Universul (Provincie)*, 1 December 1942, 5.

¹⁶¹ "Conferința d-lui Gr. Gr. Constantinescu la T.-Severin", *Universul*, 25 January 1936, 13.

¹⁶² Resmeriță believed that Szeklers were Magyarised Romanians, that they would find "a prison" in Hungary, and that they would eventually beg for Transylvania to be reunited with Romania. See: Alex. Resmeriță, "Ardealul se va întregi", *Universul*, 9 September 1940, 1. This belief was not uncommon in the interwar period and was regularly employed for political purposes and to agitate for (Romanian) nationalist cultural policies; see: Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 138-143; G[heorghe] Popa Lisseanu, *Secuții și secuizăa românilor* (București: Tipografia ziarului „Universul”, 1936); Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 84.

¹⁶³ Alex. Resmeriță, "Profesorul T. Costescu. Un mare educator român", *România (Capitala)*, 27 August 1939, 9.

¹⁶⁴ He argued against the influence of Jews in Dacia and the transfer of Jewish vocabulary to the Romanian language, as proposed by a Greek linguist. See: Alex. Resmeriță, "'Valac' și 'Vlah'", *Universul*, 19 March 1939, 5.



on the Romanian language.¹⁶⁵ His name does not reappear in the mainstream Romanian press after 1942.¹⁶⁶

The broken telephone. Resmeriță in Holocaust historiography.

After 1989, Alexandru Resmeriță — until then a rather obscure figure — began to slowly reappear in English-language texts about the Holocaust. In his 1990 work *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*,¹⁶⁷ Romanian Holocaust historian Radu Ioanid outlined the plan presented in Resmeriță's pamphlet, *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*: "In 1938 Alexandru Razmerita, while criticizing the position of a priest who wanted to drown the Jews in the Black Sea, described with great abundance of details 'a plan for the total elimination of the Jews in the cities and their deportation to the countryside to do forced labor.'"¹⁶⁸ Ioanid compared this proposal (quite correctly) to National Socialist concentration camps, and placed Resmeriță within a wider scope of Legionary antisemitic discourse being peddled in interwar Romania, alongside quotations from writings by such figures as Constantin Papanace, Mihail Polihroniade, Traian Herseni, and Alexandru Randa.¹⁶⁹ By 2005, Ioanid had reused this anecdote as a prototypical example of Romanian (or Legionary) antisemitism in at least six different monographs,¹⁷⁰ wherein Resmeriță was variously described

¹⁶⁵ He considered "Miorița" a "Dacian" poem, equal in strength to the Western classics. See: "Miorița" comparată cu 'Iliada' și 'Divina Comedie', *Universul*, 5 April 1940, 11.

¹⁶⁶ The final mention of Resmeriță I was able to locate from during his lifetime in the mainstream press was a report on his lecture about Christopher Columbus: "Reluarea șezătorilor culturale pentru tineret la T.-Severin", 1 December 1942. He appeared slightly later in the antisemitic press: Resmeriță, "Svastica, semn arian de Slavă lui Dumnezeu...", *Porunca Vremii*, 14 March 1943. His exact date of death is unclear.

¹⁶⁷ The work later appeared in Romanian as Radu Ioanid, *Sabia arhanghelului Mihail: Ideologia fascistă în România* (Bucharest: Diogene, 1994).

¹⁶⁸ Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 129.

¹⁶⁹ Constantin Papanace (1904–1985) was an Aromanian leader within the Legionary Movement and, in post-war exile, the rival leader to Horia Sima; Mihail Polihroniade (1906–1939) was a Legionary journalist who edited or contributed to a number of far-right journals, including *Vremea*, *Buna Vestire*, *Cuwântul*, and *Gândirea*; Traian Herseni (1907–1980) was a sociologist and, at the time, affiliated with the Legionary Movement; Alexandru Randa (1906–1975) was a historian, diplomat, and Legionnaire, who fled Romania after January 1941, was imprisoned with the Sima group in Germany for the remainder of the war, and continued his activities in exile.

¹⁷⁰ In addition to those mentioned in previous and subsequent footnotes, this includes: Radu Ioanid, "Extract from 'Characteristics of Rumanian Fascism'", in *The 'Fascist Epoch' (Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, vol. IV)*, ed. Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman (London: Routledge, 2004), 122; Radu Ioanid, "The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard", in *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, ed. Roger Griffin (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 133.

as a "high school teacher",¹⁷¹ a "Romanian fascist",¹⁷² or a "fascist theorist".¹⁷³ It appears that Ioanid's writings were the origin point from which the same citation spread to various English-language works. Many of these subsequent works, mostly academic volumes on the Holocaust in Europe, and occasionally more-specific works on the intersection of religion, nationalism, and antisemitism in Romania, cite Ioanid directly; others cite "Razmerita" himself, or forgo a citation completely. In each subsequent work which cites the pamphlet directly, the same page span (65–69) is given from *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*. In many cases, the anecdote is significantly butchered, and Resmeriță is given a new occupation or political affiliation. In every case, his name is given as "Razmerita", although the pamphlet was published under the spelling "Resmeriță".

In Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt's 2002 monograph *Holocaust: A History*, Alexandru "Razmerita" is described as a "Fascist ideologue", is given equal (or greater) space to prominent antisemites including Octavian Goga, A.C. Cuza, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and his comments about the Black Sea plan and forced Jewish labor are summarized. Dwork and van Pelt cite Ioanid's chapter in the 1996 volume *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* as the source of the Resmeriță anecdote.¹⁷⁴ Beyond the prominence of Resmeriță, the text contains some errors: Goga's name is repeatedly given as "Coga", and clumsy phrasing in the text implies that Codreanu's Iron Guard usurped the National Liberal Party by winning a majority in the December 1937 general elections.¹⁷⁵ The following year, "Razmerita" appeared again in Tatjana Tönsmaier's chapter "The Robbery of Jewish Property in Eastern European States Allied with Nazi Germany", in

¹⁷¹ Radu Ioanid, "The Romanian Press: Preparing the Ground for the Holocaust and Reporting on its Implementation", in *Why didn't the press shout? American & international journalism during the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Moses Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2003), 393-394.

¹⁷² Radu Ioanid, "The Antonescu Years", in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. Randolph L. Brahm (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 121.

¹⁷³ Radu Ioanid, "Romania", in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 230.

¹⁷⁴ Ioanid, "Romania".

¹⁷⁵ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York/London: W. W. Norton, 2002), 119-121. In fact, the election was a turning point for the Legionary Movement (who gained four seats), and the National Liberal Party did lose its majority, but Parliament was quickly dissolved in favour of a royal dictatorship under Carol II, who began a serious wave of repression against the Legion after February 1938, resulting in the murder, arrest, or exile of most of its leadership. For further context regarding the Legion in the 1937 elections and the royal dictatorship, see: Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 210-222; Rebecca Haynes, "Reluctant Allies? Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu against King Carol II of Romania", *Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 1 (January 2007), 105-134; Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the "Archangel Michael" in Inter-War Romania* (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004), 119-129.



Robbery and Restitution: the Conflict Over Jewish Property in Europe, wherein his criticism of the Black Sea plan is recounted, and he is given as a parallel figure to former Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös.¹⁷⁶ Here, Tönsmajer takes the story from Ioanid's article in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*.¹⁷⁷ Another author to take the anecdote from Ioanid's article, this time in a Finnish-language text, was Eero Kuparinen, who used it in his 1999 book *Aleksandriasta Auschwitziin*.¹⁷⁸ There are also those cases where Resmeriță's name is recycled as a prototypical example of a Romanian antisemite, but no sources are cited whatsoever: Rubin Udler, a Moldovan philologist and Holocaust survivor originally from Brăila, names Resmeriță (as Răzmeriță) as a "propagandist of xenophobia and vehement, bestial anti-Semitism", preceding such prominent names as Nichifor Crainic, Octavian Goga, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Radu Gyr, Pamfil Șeicaru, Horia Sima, and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, at least two sources cite *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei* directly, without the intervention of a secondary source (either Ioanid or another historian). Both significantly misinterpret the text of the original pamphlet, and assign Resmeriță a new occupation. One "turning point" in the Resmeriță anecdote was the *Final Report* released by the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (henceforth ICHR). The ICHR was established in 2003 under the presidency of Ion Iliescu, with the intention of investigating the concrete facts of the Holocaust in Romania (and its lead-up and facilitation), and finally to help promote and improve Holocaust education in Romania. The ICHR, chaired by Elie Wiesel and operating as an independent investigative body, included historians and Jewish community figures from across Romania, Europe, North America, and Israel, including Radu Ioanid.¹⁸⁰ The *Final Report* was published in 2005, and appears to be the earliest source that strays significantly from Ioanid's initial anecdote.

¹⁷⁶ Tatjana Tönsmajer, "Der Raub des jüdischen Eigentums in Ungarn, Rumänien und der Slowakei", in *Raub und Restitution. »Arisierung« und Rückerstattung des jüdischen Eigentums in Europa*, ed. Constantin Goschler and Philipp Ther (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003), 80. This text was later republished in English as Tatjana Tönsmajer, "The Robbery of Jewish Property in Eastern European States Allied with Nazi Germany", in *Robbery and Restitution: the Conflict Over Jewish Property in Europe*, ed. Martin Dean, Constantin Goschler, and Philipp Ther (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 87.

¹⁷⁷ Ioanid, "The Antonescu Years".

¹⁷⁸ Eero Kuparinen, *Aleksandriasta Auschwitziin. Antisemitismmin pitkä historia* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 1999). 245.

¹⁷⁹ Rubin Udler, *The Cursed Years. Reminiscences of a Holocaust survivor* (Pittsburgh/Chișinău: Udler R., 2005), 191.

¹⁸⁰ International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (henceforth ICHR), *Final Report* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2004), 7.

In the *Final Report*, Resmeriță’s proposal for Jewish forced labor and exile to the countryside is briefly mentioned. However, he becomes a “Romanian Orthodox priest”, and there is no mention of the original *Porunca Vremii* article that *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei* criticizes, despite the fact that the *Report* cites the pamphlet directly.¹⁸¹ He is still referred to as “Razmerita”, is no longer described as a high school teacher, and is listed alongside Legionary figures as an example of “Iron Guard antisemitism.” This mix-up of details and the presentation of Resmeriță as a priest may stem from two disparate problems. First, having disregarded that his criticism was made in the context of the *Porunca Vremii* article, the authors of the *Report* may have confused Resmeriță himself with the priest he is criticizing. However, this confusion was more likely caused by the fact that, later in the *Report*, the killing of Orthodox priest Fr. Grigore Resmeriță (or Răzmeriță) — who was murdered during the Iași pogrom, either for the sole reason of attempting to protect Jews or because he was also presumed to be Jewish — is discussed.¹⁸² In the *Report’s* index of names, both individuals are conflated into an “Alexandru Razmerita”, and Grigore Resmeriță’s given name is never mentioned.¹⁸³ Thus, the two disparate Resmeriță’s are transformed into one, though this single figure is first described as an antisemite, and later as a citizen who acted in solidarity with the Jewish people. Although in his later life Resmeriță was interested in some theological and church-related issues (specifically the unification of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which was partially fueled by his antisemitism), he never held any positions within the Church and was never a priest.

American historian Paul A. Shapiro was also a member of the ICHR and contributed to its *Final Report*. In his 2007 article “Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church”, Alexandru Resmeriță is cited but not named in the body of the text, again being posed as a priest and a Legionnaire: “Some Iron Guard priests became vocal advocates of radical steps, including imprisonment in labor camps and execution, to cleanse the country of Jews.”¹⁸⁴ Resmeriță, a teacher and LANC member, was thus transformed both politically and occupationally. Shapiro’s article does discuss LANC, as well as its splits and merges with the Legion and other far-right groups, but Resmeriță’s leadership of the Turnu-Severin chapter of LANC is ignored, and he is instead grouped together with Legionary ideologists like Nae Ionescu and unnamed “Iron Guard priests”. While Shapiro cites the Resmeriță pamphlet directly, it is likely that the anecdote was taken from the *Final Report* rather than the original document, and thus the confusion about Resmeriță as “priest” proliferated

¹⁸¹ ICHR, *Final Report*, 49-50.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹⁸⁴ Paul A. Shapiro, “Faith, Murder, Resurrection: The Iron Guard and the Romanian Orthodox Church”, in *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, ed. Kevin P. Spicer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 149.



further. This mischaracterization is repeated elsewhere: citing the *Final Report*, Resmeriță is again described as “a Romanian Orthodox priest” by Ion Popa in his 2017 monograph, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust*.¹⁸⁵ In Andrei-Razvan Coltea’s 2023 book *Complexifying Religion*, he is once more given as an example of an antisemitic priest, though no citation is given; thus, it is unclear from where Coltea took the story.¹⁸⁶ The *Final Report*, Ioanid, and Shapiro do not appear in the book’s bibliography, but Popa’s monograph is cited elsewhere, so it is possible that Coltea repeated the anecdote from the former’s *Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust*.¹⁸⁷

Conclusions

It is clear that Resmeriță’s nationalism, already strong before the war, transformed significantly during his captivity into not only a kind of linguistic ultranationalism, but xenophobia. This xenophobia manifested itself both as hostility to supposedly-“external” cultural influence, and as active cultural, linguistic, and even racial hostility towards Jews. Resmeriță’s antisemitism was already explicit in the 1920s, but grew more virulent into the 1930s, and remained in place after Romania’s entry into the Second World War. His involvement in antisemitic organizations like A.C. Cuza’s League for National Christian Defense (LANC), and his financial support of the nascent League of the Archangel Michael (Iron Guard), was supplemented by his publication of radically-antisemitic texts, including articles in *Sfarmă-Piatră* and *Porunca Vremii*, and the pamphlets *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască* (1926) and *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei* (1938). The latter gave excessive detail on Resmeriță’s plan to draft Romania’s entire Jewish population into slave labor, to terrorize them, and to prevent sexual reproduction within the Jewish community, in order to “eliminate” Jews from Romania. This pamphlet became widely-cited or referenced in English-language Holocaust historiography after the 1990s, and in a “broken telephone” effect, Resmeriță was transformed from drawing teacher, local LANC leader, and relatively-unknown eccentric into an “Orthodox priest”, a Legionary ideologist, and a supposedly-significant name in the history of Romanian antisemitism.

Resmeriță’s antisemitism led to his support of the early Legionary Movement, before settling firmly into LANC. However, it would be incorrect to classify him as a “Legionary thinker”. Beyond his early financial support for *Pământul Strămoșesc*, it does not appear that he was closely involved in Legionary politics. Instead, based on the content of his own antisemitic publications (e.g. *Studiu privitor la chestiunea evreiască*) and the fact that he founded a new branch of LANC as late as

¹⁸⁵ Ion Popa, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 27.

¹⁸⁶ Andrei-Razvan Coltea, *Complexifying Religion* (Singapore: Springer, 2023), 98.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

1930, it is clear that he was, for a significant amount of time, a Cuzist. To classify Resmeriță as an "Iron Guard priest" is thus doubly incorrect — not only because he was never a priest in the first place, but because, though he peddled vitriolic antisemitism and called for violent measures to be taken against Romania's Jews, he was neither a member nor a close associate of the Legionary Movement.

It is correct to describe Resmeriță, as Udler does, as a "propagandist of xenophobia and vehement, bestial anti-Semitism".¹⁸⁸ To describe him as a "fascist theorist"¹⁸⁹ or "fascist ideologue"¹⁹⁰ may appear questionable to the most pedantic of readers — in any case, he was the local leader of the pseudo-fascist, antisemitic League for National Christian Defense in Turnu-Severin, and, as Udler describes him, an "apologist of Romanian fascism",¹⁹¹ having advocated for a "totalitarian-nationalist" state.¹⁹² But it would be incorrect to pose him as any sort of significant figure in the history of Romanian antisemitism. The author of an obscure and extreme antisemitic pamphlet (*Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*), Alexandru Resmeriță wrote during a period wherein a staggering number of antisemitic texts were being published and circulated widely in Romania, and it does not appear that his specific pamphlet — although notable for the sheer violence of its ideas — received much traction from the wider public.

Resmeriță was initially used by Radu Ioanid as an exceptional example illustrating the furthest extremes of Romanian antisemitic discourse. He was a marginal figure in all aspects of his life — in the arts, in politics, in linguistics, and in antisemitism — and his appearance in some English-language works on the Holocaust as a prominent figure (even listed before Romania's far more influential antisemitic and far-right thinkers) is the result of the overuse, misuse, and misunderstanding of Ioanid's example. The wide proliferation of this citation appears to be the result primarily of repetition by Ioanid, and thereafter the reuse of the original citation without citing Ioanid — nor indeed having access to Resmeriță's pamphlet — by certain historians. Further, the error made in the ICHR's *Final Report*, wherein the antisemite Alexandru Resmeriță and the Iași pogrom victim Fr. Grigore Resmeriță were flattened into a single individual, caused Alexandru Resmeriță's story to be further complicated by errors. Thus, Resmeriță has appeared in a wide number of publications since the 1990s, in the meantime metamorphosing from drawing teacher, amateur linguist, and antisemite to "Razmerita", the "Iron Guard priest", and an inaccurate parallel image has made a noticeable mark on English-language Holocaust historiography.

¹⁸⁸ Udler, *The Cursed Years*, 191.

¹⁸⁹ Ioanid, "Romania", 230.

¹⁹⁰ Dwork and Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History*, 119.

¹⁹¹ Udler, *The Cursed Years*, 191.

¹⁹² Resmeriță, *Cum să ne apărăm de Evrei*, 66.

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Rezumat

Acest articol propune o biografie a lui Alexandru Resmeriță (1866-?), un profesor de desen din Turnu-Severin. Articolul analizează scrierile naționaliste timpurii ale lui Resmeriță, apărute înainte și după Primul Război Mondial, precum și transformarea sa într-un lingvist amator și un "dacoman" timpuriu. Textul examinează reacția mass-media la teoriile sale lingvistice și arată cum etimologiile latine propuse de Resmeriță au fost influențate de viziunile sale naționaliste. În continuare, lucrarea examinează implicarea sa în activitatea antisemită a Ligii Apărării Național-Creștine a lui A.C. Cuza și publicarea de către Resmeriță a unor texte antisemite, în perioada interbelică. În fine, articolul demonstrează că, prin utilizare excesivă, atribuire greșită și interpretarea eronată a unei singure anecdote, numele lui Resmeriță a fost răspândit în întreaga istoriografie anglofonă a Holocaustului, acesta fiind descris ca un important teoretician antisemit sau fascist, ca un preot ortodox sau ca un membru al Gărzii de Fier. Autorul susține că aceste evaluări sunt incorecte și analizează modul în care citatul menționat mai sus a fost propagat și interpretat greșit de istorici prin intermediul diferitelor surse secundare.

Cuvinte cheie: Antisemitism, naționalism, România interbelică, Dacomanie, istoriografia Holocaustului

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