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ALEKSANDRA DJURIĆ MILOVANOVIĆ, *THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE NAZARENE
EMIGRATION FROM YUGOSLAVIA TO NORTH AMERICA.*

Lanham, MD, USA: Lexington Books, 2024, 131 p.

*Reviewed by Joseph Pfeiffer**

In her new book, Dr. Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović tells the heretofore *untold* story of the Nazarene emigration from Yugoslavia to North America. The word *untold* is indeed quite fitting to describe the recent contribution of Serbian scholars to the history of the Nazarenes over the last two decades.

The first two chapters of the book orient readers to the historical origins and emergence of the Nazarene movement in its 19th-century European context. Chapter 1 succinctly narrates the emergence of this new radical, renewalist, Neo-Protestant and specifically Neo-Anabaptist movement in Switzerland and the German-speaking world under the charismatic leadership of its founder, preacher Samuel Heinrich Frohlich. Chapter 2 examines the appeal of the movement as it spread into the multicultural and multi-lingual context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In Chapters 3–6, the author brings the reader to her own particular focus on the subject of the reasons for, and the consequences of, the emigration of the majority of Nazarenes from their Eastern European homelands, especially to North America. The book highlights the themes of the dynamic tension between the strict non-conformity of the Nazarene community and social and political pressures they faced from the majority populations of their homelands, especially on the Nazarene convictions of non-violence, and their refusal to swear oaths and take up arms in military service, and the severe consequences the community faced for holding

to their religious convictions. In Chapter 3, drawing from her own extensive ethnographic interviewing of North American Nazarene descendants of the “first wave” of immigrants to North America, the author reconstructs the story of Nazarene religious refugees who sought religious freedom in the first part of the 20th century, and their struggle to adapt and integrate into their new homeland. Chapter 4 details this continuing struggle, as well as new challenges the Nazarenes of Yugoslavia faced during the Communist regime, documenting, through both extensive archival research and first-hand accounts, the harrowing experiences of intense persecution and the rising desperation of Yugoslav Nazarenes to escape the increasing hostility they faced in their homeland. Chapter 5 continues this narrative to the other side of the Atlantic and describes in detail Nazarene efforts to rebuild their communities in North America, and to develop advocacy and support networks for their persecuted brethren remaining in Yugoslavia. Finally, in Chapter 6, the author brings the narrative to a conclusion by describing the transformative effects of the experiences of transnational migration of the Nazarene community, changing it into an outward-focused, global missionary movement, in contrast to the isolated and closed community that

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persisted among the remnant of Nazarenes that remained in Yugoslavia.

To situate Dr. Djurić Milovanović's contribution, I suggest that this book completes a three-part "series" by a new generation of Serbian scholars that tells the *untold* story of the Nazarenes.

Dr. Bojan Aleksov's (Aleksov 2006) contributions tell the untold story of the origins and emergence of the Apostolic/Nazarene people as a multi-cultural religious movement in 19th-century Eastern Europe, in the context of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire. The recent translation and publication of Dr. Branko Bjelajac's doctoral thesis (Bjelajac 2019), tell the untold story of the trials and tribulations during the 20th century under both the Kingdom and Socialist State of Yugoslavia. Finally, Dr. Djurić Milovanović's contributions bring the "untold story" to the present day, with an incisive ethnographic documentation of the analysis of the resolution to this quandary through mass migration to North America, as well as the subsequent effects on both Nazarene emigrants and the remnants that have remained in Serbia to the present day.

To say that this "Untold Story" has finally been told is indeed not to say that "stories"—and here I emphasize the plural against the singular—have not been told. Like many other descendants of the Nazarene immigrants, I heard numerous stories told by my family members related to life, faith, and struggles both in Yugoslavia before, during, and after World War II and in the new struggles of adapting to a new country, language, and culture in North America. Most of these stories were told orally, while some were written down, published, or recorded on audio and video for subsequent generations.

What remained untold, however, was how these individual stories fit into a larger collective story that could be critically analyzed and understood within the broader global history that both shaped the Nazarene identity, as well as their own collective contributions to that wider history.

Through painstaking archival research, and ethnographic interviewing and analysis, Dr. Djurić Milovanović has made an important contribution to this gap. What she has done here is to collect the various stories and identify key themes that finally tell that collective story, in a manner that represents a whole greater than merely the sum of its parts.

To this end, Dr. Djurić Milovanović, as an apt ethnographer, provides a double service, both to the academic community and to Nazarene community and their descendants; for she is both telling the story of Nazarene migration to the wider world, as well as telling that larger story back to the many story tellers that have informed her work, and situating it within a broader historical, social, and ethnographic interpretive context. As I read Dr. Djurić Milovanović's work, I hear echoes of those same stories my grandmother used to tell me. I understand better the context of my own family history and how this has shaped my own identity as a third-generation descendant of Yugoslavian Nazarene immigrants. The eager and welcome reception of her work among the North American Apostolic Christian/Nazarene community that I have witnessed, as well as the scholarly and academic rigor that the author has painstakingly woven throughout the book, attests to the technical validity of her interdisciplinary ethnographic methodology.

This book's thorough documentation of first-hand accounts comes at a critical time for many of the immigrant generation, including some of Dr. Djurić Milovanović's own informants, who have already passed from the earth. It is at just such times that many of the descendants in subsequent generations, myself included, seek a coherent narrative for understanding this legacy for their own identity.

To this end, these Serbian scholars, especially Dr. Djurić Milovanović, have provided the foundations by which the untold story can be told to the world in coherent form and help to make visible what has largely been invisible. Moreover, these works provide an invaluable resource, a mirror of sorts, by which the continuing Nazarene faith communities and their descendants can continue to reflect on their own collective history and identity in relation to the wider world, past, present, and, perhaps, even future. The book raises important ongoing questions for both the Nazarenes and similar

communities, especially the importance of understanding the ongoing effects of generational trauma on these communities and their descendants, even many years after the facts described, and the persistence of transnational communities even in the face of rising nationalism. As a unique study of a timeless phenomenon in the human experience, this book will have a long shelf-life as a valuable resource on the shelves of academic libraries for scholars of multiple disciplines, as well in the home libraries of Nazarene descendants, passed down as an heirloom for generations.

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IEMIMA PLOSCARIU, *ALTERNATIVE EVANGELICALS: CHALLENGING NATIONALISM IN INTERWAR ROMANIA'S MULTI-ETHNIC BORDERLANDS*.

Brill Schöningh, Paderborn, 2024, 221 pp.

Reviewed by Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović*

Iemima Ploscariu's monograph is a very well-researched and conceptually rich contribution to the social and religious history of interwar Romania. Drawing on archival sources from Romania, Moldova, Denmark, Sweden, and the United States, as well as a wide range of evangelical periodicals and police surveillance reports, the book reconstructs the multi-ethnic, multilingual, and socially diverse evangelical

communities that emerged in Greater Romania after 1918. In doing so, it challenges dominant narratives that portray the interwar religious landscape as a binary opposition between the Romanian

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