

Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović, *The Untold Journey of the Nazarene Emigration from Yugoslavia to North America*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2024, 150.

It is both plausible and substantiated to assert that the history of migrations in the North Atlantic region is intricately linked to religious motivations. From the expulsion of Spanish and Portuguese Jews to South America to the exodus of the Huguenots to the United Kingdom and German territories, and subsequently the migration of English nonconformists to the Thirteen Colonies—later the United States—forced religious migrations have been a significant component of Europe’s early modern history. The phenomenon of Nazarene emigration is meticulously examined in Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović’s seminal work, *The Untold Journey of the Nazarene Emigration from Yugoslavia to North America*. Đurić Milovanović, a principal research fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Belgrade, Serbia), has extensively researched this subject. Her scholarly pursuit commenced with a dissertation on Romanian neo-Protestants in Vojvodina and has since expanded to include Serbian-Romanian relations, interreligious dialogue, and the study of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as multilingual Christian communities in the Balkans and the United States.

Although among Serbian scholars initial recognition of the Nazarene community primarily stemmed from the work of Bojan Aleksov, Đurić Milovanović’s research illuminates the broader context of religiously motivated migrations in Southeastern Europe. She emphasizes the complex nature of migration processes, encompassing decision-making, preparatory actions, settlement, initial

adjustment, adaptation, integration, and transnational interactions.

Đurić Milovanović’s research, grounded in ethnographic fieldwork involving 25 oral history interviews with respondents from Ohio and California and supplemented by archival materials from the Virginia Historical Society, Archives of Yugoslavia and State Archives of Serbia, stands as a pioneering contribution to the study of religiously motivated migrations in Southeastern Europe. Her study addresses pivotal questions: What instigated Nazarene emigration from Yugoslavia, and what were the migrants’ recollections of their journey? How did their religious identity influence their migration experience? What was the ethnic composition of the communities they integrated into? How did their religious community evolve in the English-speaking world? What were the distinctions in religious practice compared to their homeland communities? And how did relations with the “old homeland” endure over time? The author reveals that the central narrative among the descendants of these migrants revolves around memories of persecution in Europe. However, her research aims to transcend a mere historical account of migration, seeking to understand the development and transformation of the Nazarene community’s identity through migration and integration into a new societal framework.

In the initial chapter, “The Swiss Neutäufer or Evangelical Baptists: The Emergence and Development of a New Religious Community,” author details the origins of the Nazarene community in Switzerland. Established in 1830 in Leutwil, Canton Aargau, by Samu-

el Heinrich Fröhlich—a Calvinist pastor influenced by Anabaptists and German Pietists—this community emerged from Fröhlich’s spiritual transformation and his subsequent rejection by official authorities over his views on infant baptism and military service.

The second chapter, “Nazarene Beginnings: Changing Religious Landscape at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” surveys the development of the Nazarene community within the Habsburg Monarchy and the Principality of Serbia prior to World War I. It highlights the spread of Nazarene beliefs among Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs, and Romanians, despite persecution. Đurić Milovanović draws on Aleksov’s research to illustrate Nazarene’s appeal among disenfranchised groups and notes the Orthodox Church’s antagonism in Serbia. Key figures such as Francis H. Mackenzie, who was instrumental in the spread of the Nazarene community in Serbia, are also discussed.

In “First Wave Refugees: Narratives on Migration and Community Change” chapter, Milovanović explores the evolving status of the Nazarenes in Yugoslavia and their quest for religious recognition amidst changing political circumstances. The restrictive environment under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, coupled with the Nazarenes’ passive resistance, precipitated significant emigration to the United States and Canada. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, neo-Protestant communities did not enjoy the same privileges as the established religious groups, which included the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Eastern Catholics, Reformed Christians, Lutherans, Jews, and Muslims. The Nazarenes faced particular difficulties due to their pronounced passive resistance to governmental authorities. This resistance manifested not only in their refusal to participate in military service but

also in their refusal to swear allegiance to the monarch. The institutional persecutions they endured precipitated substantial emigrations to the United States and Canada, continuing a pattern that had commenced prior to 1914. In the United States, German immigrants initially established their communities in New York and Ohio during the 1850s under the name Apostolic Christian Church. A notable wave of Nazarene emigration occurred during the 1940s, when Germans from Vojvodina left their homeland in significant numbers.

Đurić Milovanović’s examination of the Nazarenes in post-1945 Communist Yugoslavia in section “Nazarenes as a Whole: The Pacifist Christians in Communist Yugoslavia” underscores the intense scrutiny and persecution they faced due to their pacifism and opposition to collectivization and other communist policies. This led to internal divisions within the community and an increase in illegal migration, particularly to Germany and the United States. The support of international organizations like HILFE and the World Council of Churches was vital in assisting Nazarene refugees. The Displaced Person[s] Act of 1948 and the assistance of the Swiss organization Hilfe were crucial in facilitating this migration.

In the chapter titled “Apostolic Christian Church: Nazarene Understanding of Community Transformation in a New Setting,” the experiences of Nazarene members in North America are explored. This analysis draws upon anthropological research on other communities, such as the Roma, where networks of solidarity and mutual understanding are pivotal. Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović has identified similar phenomena among the Nazarenes who integrated into a distinct community. Their post-migration experiences were characterized by solidarity, support from the local community, and a shared sense

of belonging through language and, most importantly, faith. Despite their ethnic diversity, the Nazarenes exhibited strong cohesion due to their religious affiliation. However, variations existed among different Nazarene groups. Newly arrived communities demonstrated differing expressions of belonging; for instance, Yugoslav Nazarenes were notably more conservative in their dress, gender relations, and practices, such as abstention from dancing, smoking, and drinking. Additionally, differences were evident in liturgical language, Bible usage, and the incorporation of the piano in church services. The anthropological concept of “home away from home,” which pertains to the formation of migrant identities, is particularly relevant in this context, especially given the intense modernization and Americanization faced by the newly arrived Nazarenes. The introduction of Sunday schools, a concept absent in Yugoslavia, and church camps—where community members could socialize and find potential marriage partners—represented significant novelties. Moreover, the study reveals transgenerational differences within the Nazarene community. Older migrants maintained conservative European traditions, while a generational divide emerged in the 1960s between progressives and modernists. Modernists embraced contemporary music, fashion, and modern Bible translations, though they still upheld values of modesty. New organizations emerged with distinct names to differentiate themselves from the conservative groups. The research also highlights a contrast between the narratives of Nazarenes who migrated before World War I and those who came from communist countries, particularly regarding their memories of government repression.

The final chapter, titled “Transnational Religious Networks of the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarenes),” underscores the significance of transna-

tionalism, as elucidated by Đurić Milovanović. Transnationalism, in this context, refers to migration as a multifaceted process that maintains and facilitates connections between the host country and the country of origin. The Nazarenes exemplified this transnational engagement by preserving strong ties with their homeland through various channels, including correspondence, humanitarian assistance, travel, and missionary endeavors. Under new circumstances, the Nazarenes extended their missionary activities beyond traditional boundaries, undertaking missions to South America, particularly Brazil. Additionally, they expanded their outreach to other regions, including Paraguay, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, and Zambia, thereby broadening their religious impact on a global scale. Considering that the predominantly Serbian academic community primarily focuses on the study of traditional religious communities, notably the Orthodox Church, Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović’s book *The Untold Journey of Nazarene Emigration from Yugoslavia to North America* constitutes a significant advancement in the scholarly examination of neo-Protestant communities and religious minorities within the context of Southeastern Europe. Methodologically, Đurić Milovanović adeptly integrates both anthropological and historical approaches. Her research encompasses not only an extensive analysis of archival documents and relevant literature but also engages with the complexities of oral history and community narratives. This work thus represents a crucial and successful progression in the interdisciplinary collaboration between anthropology and historiography, offering a model for future scholarship in transcending disciplinary boundaries.

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