Routledge Studies in Religion

FREETHOUGHT AND ATHEISM IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARITY AND NONRELIGION

Edited by

Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík

Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe

This book provides the first comprehensive overview of atheism, secularity and nonreligion in Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries. In contrast to scholarship that has focused on the "decline of religion" and secularization theory, the book builds upon recent trends to focus on the "rise of nonreligion" itself. While the label of "post-Communism" might suggest a generalized perception of the region, this survey reveals that the precise developments in each country before, after and even during the Communist era are surprisingly diverse.

A multinational team of contributors provide interdisciplinary case studies covering Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria. This approach utilizes perspectives from social and intellectual history in combination with sociology of religion in order to cover the historical development of secularity and secular thought, complemented with sociological data. The study is framed by methodological and analytical chapters.

Offering an important geographical perspective to the study of freethought, atheism, secularity and nonreligion, this wide-ranging book will be of significant interest to scholars of 20th-century social and intellectual history, sociology of religion and nonreligion, cultural and religious studies, philosophy and theology.

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Edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík

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1 Studying freethought and atheism in Central and Eastern Europe

An introduction

Atko Remmel, David Václavík and Tomáš Bubík

> The Communist experience aside, how does thinking about religious phenomena – for want of better English words – in various Eastern European contexts differ from thinking about them in Western Europe and North America? . . . The iron curtain is indeed open, and in that, we can rejoice. In significant respects, however, it still remains unfortunately closed.
>
> – Gregory Alles (2018)

On the topic and the general context

In the study of religion and its role in modern society, there has occurred a recent, increasingly influential change in its focus. A great many of the earlier discussions had secularization theory for their backdrop, and scholars either wrote in favor of or against it or proposed alternatives. A change that perhaps can be termed a "nonreligious turn" has led many scholars to become interested in the "shadows" of religion. Instead of following lines of secularization theory and studying how religion gradually fades away or what nonreligion lacks in comparison with religion, this new approach is interested in nonreligion itself, focusing on what it does offer as a (positive) alternative to religion regarding worldviews or "existential cultures" (Lee 2015). Therefore, nonreligion and religion do not necessarily have to be (significantly) at odds. They are only different.

Stemming from similar interests, this book[1] studies "the decline of religion" or "religious change" from the perspective of "the rise of nonreligion" in a particular region, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), in the countries that shared a mutual experience, especially with the Soviet antireligious policy. The volume includes chapters about Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine.[2]

On the goal of the book

The book covers diverse positions of nonreligion and the inclusion of their concepts or ideas into society. It also identifies some crucial figures in the 20th and 21st centuries and characterizes their views on unreligious forms of life and society, their interconnectedness and cooperation, both national and within the Eastern and Central European framework. The goal of our book is threefold.

First, we would like to begin filling the lacuna in research literature by providing the first comprehensive and systematic overview of the general developments of nonreligious traditions in the CEE region. We hope that this book will provide fertile ground for further studies on the developments of both nonreligion and religiosity in the region, also providing comparative data for studies originating from other parts of the world. Without studies on historical as well as contemporary aspects of nonreligion, it is impossible to adequately understand modern societies or the religious scene in Europe since the legacy of the earlier forms of nonreligious thought is apparently still present today and distinctly influences public opinion.

The book does not cover all the countries of the region, either because no relevant studies have been conducted or because no expert interested in preparing a relevant chapter could be found, which is also quite telling concerning the focus of the research of religion in these countries. In some cases, the book project even encouraged researchers to embark on the very first contemporary study on Freethought, atheism or, more broadly, nonreligion, in their respective countries. The majority of CEE countries are included, however, and therefore we have sufficient data to form certain generalizations about the region.

Our second goal is to study the diversity of influences, different cultures and outcomes within CEE, primarily from the perspective of the development of nonreligious ideas. Nonreligious traditions can be associated with nationalism; sometimes they are more or less political or derive from specific cultural or historical influences. They mostly, however, seem to depend on the political history of the particular country.

Finally, the third objective is to address contemporary forms of atheism and secularity in the CEE countries under review. Few studies have addressed these phenomena following the political and social changes associated with the collapse of the so-called Soviet bloc. Most studies focus on the phenomenon of religious revival, which occurred in most CEE countries in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. At this point, we would also like to focus on the specificities that are typical of contemporary atheism in the CEE and which distinguish it from the forms in Western Europe and the United States of America. One of the most visible differences is that after the fall of Communism, pluralism of nonreligious attitudes became common. Nevertheless, various forms of nonreligion and religious indifference are not always defined in opposition to religion, and many people who

currently live a nonreligious way of life do not do so because of a rejection of religion and religious belief. From a historical perspective, this phenomenon can be considered a very new one in the CEE countries and can be seen as a result of a lack of socialization into religion.

The primary focus of the book is on a presentation and analysis of new empirical material. The methodology applied in the research mostly combines the principles of intellectual and social historiography and historical sociology in order to explain atheism and nonreligion as a historical, social and cultural phenomenon of modern society. This research has also systematically sought to elaborate the habitual phenomenon in the historical perspective of the 20th and 21st centuries. Standard methods of social and cultural history have been used, predominantly the so-called direct and indirect historiographic method for gaining historical facts by examining (studying) primary and secondary historical sources, including archive materials such as newspapers, documentaries, posters, promotional materials, letters etc. In addition, the historical-comparative method was also applied. Its aim was to compare statistical data and also the development, dissemination and adaptation of nonreligious ideas in the newly formed states of CEE, although the setting was originally religious, including studying the influence of nonreligious ideas on the transformation of religious thought, the religious life of individuals and state and church institutions. In order to interpret our findings, a chronological analysis was considered optimal, as it is able to link the individual phases of the development of the ideas studied over a longer period of time. It is suitable for following their transformation from the past to the present to trace their origin, development and extinction in a historical and social context.

On the terminology

To begin with, our usage of the term *nonreligion* needs to be defined. *Nonreligion* is often used in various languages to demarcate a difference from religion. It is therefore frequently used as synonymous with *secular, irreligious, areligious, faithlessness* etc. The underlying assumption is that nonreligion is something homogeneous, a lack of something (often belief) when compared to religion.

In academic usage, however, there is a growing body of literature that attempts to conceptualize religion's "others" while at the same time recognizing its variety. Quack (2014) provides, for example, the following definition: " 'Nonreligion' denotes phenomena that are generally not considered religious but whose significance is more or less dependent on religion". Lee (2015, 32) has adopted a similar "relational" approach, where nonreligion is conceptualized as "any phenomenon – position, perspective, or practice – that is primarily understood concerning religion but which is not itself considered to be religious". To acknowledge the diversity of nonreligious positions, Lee (2015, 39) has further differentiated between

nonreligious and *secular*, the latter being "phenomena – objects, spaces, people, and practices – for which religion is no more than a secondary concern, reference point, or authority". In contrast, Ribberink et al. (2016) use *nonreligion* in its "conventional sense, to indicate the general absence or irrelevance of religion". Thus, there is no uniform understanding of nonreligion (and secularity).

We have therefore decided to respect the ambiguity in the usage and understanding of the terms, especially since the primary intention of the volume is to focus on an empirically based analysis of the origins, transformations and specificities of these phenomena in CEE region. In addition to the inherent diversity of nonreligious positions and traditions, there are also temporal and spatial differences. Therefore, one can instead talk about "multiple secularities", which should be analyzed regarding their cultural underpinnings (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012). Secularity (in our usage of terms, synonymous with nonreligion) in Muslim-dominated areas in the 19th century is consequently different from nonreligion in the Czech Republic at the beginning of the 21st century, while the latter also differs from nonreligion in the Czech Republic 100 years ago. The cultural context and (non)religious situation are just too different to yield similar kinds of results. Indeed, certain strands of nonreligious thought (for instance, secular humanism) have a long tradition in Western Europe and the US but are scarcely present in CEE, depending on the country, or have very low visibility. We therefore focus on the most important and well-known nonreligious traditions in the region: hence the words *atheism* and *Freethought* in the title of the book.

When we look at some of the definitions of atheism, Cliteur (2009) understands atheism as the denial of theism, identified with the Abrahamic religious tradition of one personal, almighty and perfectly good God. Thus defined, atheism is not necessarily against religion as such, but only against a specific kind of religion. Atheism is a "negative doctrine" and means "nothing more than the denial of the claims of theism" (Cliteur 2009, 5).

Similarly, Smith (1979, 9) defines atheism as the "absence of theistic belief", whereby theism is "belief in any god or number of gods". Similarly to Cliteur, he emphasizes that atheism in its basic form is not a sort of belief (typically in the nonexistence of god or gods), but the absence of belief. Smith also distinguishes between two broad categories of atheism: implicit and explicit. Implicit atheism is characterized by the absence of theistic belief without its conscious rejection. Explicit atheism, in contrast, is described as the absence of theistic belief as a consequence of its deliberate rejection. Smith does not understand the related term *agnosticism* as "a third alternative" or "a middle-way between theism and atheism", but as a position associated with a different problem than the existence of god/gods. Agnosticism "refers to the impossibility of knowledge about a god or supernatural being" (Smith 1979, 10), which can have either a theistic or atheistic form (Vido et al. 2016, 207).

It is therefore apparent that all these terms are ambiguous and overlapping. Unlike Cliteur or Smith, we do not stick to any analytical definition of atheism. Since atheism is a culturally constructed phenomenon (Bagget 2011), always depending on time and place, and the term is often used as a proxy, we are rather interested in phenomena that have been described as "atheism" by others. Therefore, for us, *atheism* is a descriptive term, a "meeting point" of different ideas, practices and attitudes that somehow revolve around the absence of belief in god(s). Freethought can be regarded as a certain representation of "atheism", which has a strong tendency towards institutionalization and a close link with political and cultural secularism.

As is the case with most collective works, the authors provide different descriptions, adopt diverse approaches to the subject and even use different English terms to refer to the same problems. Regarding *atheism* as a descriptive rather than analytical term, the editors decided not to intervene into the terminology our colleagues used and synchronize them, since the individual chapters are concerned with different countries and discuss a variety of historical periods and geographic areas, often incomparable with one another. A number of authors use *atheism* as a central term, and it is interesting to see how differently it can be understood. The usage of terminology also reveals something about the perception of nonreligious phenomena in a particular cultural context.

On the perception of CEE

The emergence of the study of nonreligion has usually been associated with the high visibility of the so-called New Atheism movement, originating in the Anglo American context. This has also determined scholars' geographical focus since the majority of the studies on the varieties of nonreligion stem from the transatlantic context. Despite often being regarded as a distinct European region with a history of Soviet "forced atheization", scholarly accounts on nonreligion in the CEE region are difficult to find – perhaps a result of the same Soviet period that has given the topic of "atheism" negative connotations lasting even until the present.

The Soviet experience often determines the general perception of CEE through the label of "post-Communism"; that is, the entire region is described in terms of a common experience with a certain ideology and therefore as sharing the same characteristics – a contemporary equivalent of the medieval cartographer's label "*Hic sunt leones*" written all over this part of Europe. Nevertheless, studies about the Soviet antireligious policy have long indicated that the situation in different parts of the Soviet empire was not as monolithic by far as the Soviet government envisioned. There is therefore no logical reason to assume that the situation in the region has developed uniformly after the demise of the empire. This also stands true for nonreligion – i.e., understanding nonreligious thought in the region only through the representation of Soviet atheism is an oversimplification.

The current volume indicates that, although the region has undergone a similar historical experience and although nonreligion has been "filtered" somewhat through Soviet atheism, the respective developments are diverse, not only before and after the fall of the Communist bloc, but even during the Communist era. This is not only because various nations and ethnic groups inhabit this part of Europe, but also due to the background formed by the varying dominant influences of Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy or Islam. Some countries of the region have historically been part of Western culture while others have belonged and still consider themselves as part of Eastern culture and heritage. Some countries, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, even followed mutually opposing trends in terms of the influence of religion on society: on the one hand, the growth of nonreligion in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Bulgaria and on the other, the decline of nonreligion and rise in religiosity in Slovakia, Romania and Russia.

On the lacuna

While in the Western context, the scholarly interest in forms of nonreligion began with a focus on "secularism" in the mid-1990s and extended to the study of "secularity", "atheism" and "irreligious" and "nonreligious" cultures from the mid-2000s onwards (Lee 2016); studies concerning CEE countries date back to the Communist period, when they were studied under the label of "scientific atheism". Ideological needs overwhelmingly determined the focus of the studies, and consequently, the research was mostly concerned with three main topics: research on the history of nonreligion in a particular country in order to prove its long-lasting tradition, the study of contemporary forms of atheism in order to assess the development of "forced secularization" and the interest in "indifference" in the late years of the Soviet empire as an intermediate position between religion and atheism, studied as the result of the insufficiency of atheist propaganda.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the study of nonreligion in the CEE region, as mentioned earlier, has been far from widespread for a number of reasons. First, scholarly interest after the reestablishment of the study of religion, understandably, has mostly dealt with filling the gap in the study of different religious denominations that were almost nonexistent or ideologically biased during the Communist period or has focused on the results of the intermediate "forced secularization" from the perspective of classical secularization theory or its alternatives.

Second, reinterpretations of national identity are often associated with religion, which renders the study of nonreligion in a particular national context somewhat irrelevant or problematic. Another facet of the same aspect is that studies about the elements that constitute local identity – or oppose it – are primarily regarded as important for the local nation itself, either for strengthening its national identity or deconstructing the myths surrounding it. Studies on local forms of nonreligion, even if they exist, are therefore

often published in native languages and do not reach the wider academic community.

Third, since academic and education systems have also been reestablished, this being a process that takes a long time, studies of religion have often been supported (and influenced, in one way or another) by local churches, which are more interested in the developments within their denominations than in their "others". Nonreligion, from this perspective, is a residual category.

Finally, due to the close connections with Soviet ideology, "atheism", for many, still has negative connotations and is often understood within the framework of church-state relationships, persecution and criticism of religion and seen as the primary cause for the current rise of nonreligiosity in post-Communist countries. This discourse still often prevails in the academic milieu as well as among the general population. Perhaps the current volume can be seen as an indicator that enough time has passed for a next generation of scholars to appear who have greater distance from the previous political period and therefore can take on research into this as-yet stigmatized topic.

Notes

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2 The chapters on individual countries are presented in alphabetical order.

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2 Bulgaria

Freethought and atheism in the shadow of ethnophyletism

Dimitar Denkov, Georgi Vulchev and Valentina Gueorguieva

Conceptual and historical background: ethnophyletism and forms of atheism in the new Bulgarian state (1872–1944)

Ethnophyletism or phyletism is a relatively new term describing an old phenomenon in religious life: the belief in the benevolent attitude of deities or god to a particular genus (γένος) or tribe/nation (εθνοσ, φυλή), according to which this nation is godly chosen in a special way and is closest in language, tradition, morality and even laws to the divine order. In an individual manifestation, such a faith can be interpreted in a dual way: both as God's grace and as a delusion. The term describing this religious attitude was first used during the preparation of the Great pan-Orthodox Synod in Constantinople in September 1872 to condemn phyletist religious nationalism and to oppose the schism of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church whose representatives had begun to preach in Bulgarian ten years earlier and no longer recognized the supremacy of the Ecumenical Patriarch (cf. Orthodox Christian Laity 2012). The whole process of this struggle is carefully detailed in Zhechev's (Жечев 1975) *The Bulgarian Easter or Bulgarian Passions*. Adopting the name and the spirit of this book, Bulgarians who had enjoyed economic success abroad since 1989 created the political movement "Easter for Bulgaria" in 2000.

Originally addressed to the Bulgarians and therefore called the Bulgarian heresy, similar to the Bogomil one, the term *ethnophyletism* began to apply to every attempt at national ecclesial autonomy, especially in Eastern Orthodoxy.[1] Its dual interpretation oscillates between God's grace and a nation's illusion of historical glory that lightens its present. This duality also plays a significant role in the manifestations of atheism and freedom of thought. On the one hand, the ethnophyletic church and religion are very instrumental in the construction of national identity and unity. Thus, any attempt at atheist liberalism can be represented as antinational, nonpatriotic and antistate when the traditional religion is codified in the Constitution of the state. This is the case with the Constitutions of Bulgaria from 1879 to 1947 and the current one from 1990. On the other hand, religious belief and the national church can be seen as a special form of freedom of thought,

an oppositional attitude towards internationalism or the historic victory of Communism under the leadership of the Communist Party. This is the case with the two Constitutions of socialist Bulgaria – from 1947 to 1966 and from 1966 to 1989. This often leads to paradoxes: sometimes church figures become advocates of freethinking, and other times leaders of antireligious movements, parties and even the socialist state turn into defenders of the church and guardians of religious traditions.

It is not surprising that every attempt to resist the Bulgarian championing of ethnophyletism in the Slavic language and in scripture, accepted by both church and secular figures, is regarded as antipatriotic and especially hinders the manifestations of atheism and Freethought. Rather, one can speak of mutually beneficial cooperation between religious and secular figures who have a common purpose – independence, be it ecclesiastical or state independence. From the viewpoint of ethnophyletism, it is not paradoxical that its personifications are often figures who left the church in the name of national liberation. The brightest expression of the historical "symphony" between the religious and secular, characteristic of Eastern Orthodoxy, is the cult to the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius, whose work on the creation of the Slavic script and culture is presented as Bulgarian above all; the Church Slavonic language is also equated with the Old Bulgarian. The tradition interweaving the national and the clerical, still relevant to this day, has a particular historical significance for the Bulgarians that goes back to the 18th century with *Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya*, written by the monk Saint Paisius of Hilendar.

In this mixture of historical fact and mythology, justifying the fight for national independence, one can find the roots of a peculiar atheism which can be called *literary-poetic*. Its bearers are the most influential Bulgarian poets and writers of the time. It is still present in the educational system of today, through the literary canon and the study of national history it forms stable attitudes towards the "Bulgarian as such", regardless of the social structure and ideological postulates of contemporary society.

The forefathers of the literary tradition before 1879 were Bulgarian emigrants in Romania who fought for both church and national independence. One of its most prominent representatives, Lyuben Karavelov, started newspapers bearing the emblematic titles *Freedom* (1869–1872) and *Independence* (1873–1874). From their pages, he openly cast doubt on the importance of religion for the progress and prosperity of modern societies, formulating the widespread popularity of the saying "Freedom does not need an Exarch: it needs a Karadzha". Here Karavelov recalled the heroism of Stefan Karadzha, the leader of a small armed force who died in battle with the Ottoman troops in 1868 and questioned the importance of church independence (won in 1860) for the future political destiny of the Bulgarians living within the Ottoman Empire.

To date, the greatest name among these emigrants is an associate of Karavelov – Hristo Botev. Under the influence of anarchist and early

Communist ideas (for him the most humanist public structures are the Slavic community and the Paris Commune), he published a series of sharp critiques against the retrograde role of religions for the development of modern societies. He wrote a number of fiery philippics directed against the highest Orthodox clergy, which he ranks among the main opponents of the social advancement and development of Bulgarians. He accused the "Byzantine stink" and the "Orthodox brutes" for the long slavery of the Bulgarians under Ottoman rule and replaced the names of church saints and holidays with the martyrs and saints of the revolution in his calendar for 1875, where he published his poem "My Prayer", enshrined in the educational canon and the political rhetoric to this day:

> Oh, you, my God, my fair God,
> who doesn't live in Heaven up,
> but you, who are in me, my God,
> into my soul and in my heart.
> But you, oh, God of sense and mind,
> oh, God, defender of the slaves,
> whose day the people and mankind
> are going soon to celebrate.
> Inspire everyone, oh, God
> with love alive for freedom, then
> each one will struggle as he could
> with all the enemies of men.[2]
>
> (LiterNet n.d.)

The subject of true faith in the name of the people and its liberation is an important part of Bulgarian literature in the works of Ivan Vazov, Geo Milev and Nikola Vaptsarov, in which the refusal of religious order is invariably invoked. It is no coincidence that the main protagonists in their works are former religious figures: the national hero and former deacon Vasil Levski, founder of the Internal Revolutionary Organization that fought for the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule (cf. MacDermott 1967) and the former priest (*pop*) Andrej, one of the heroes of the uprising in 1923 against the military coup d'état and the common worker and peasant revolt whose faith in the working hands, the earth and ordinary people is stronger than his allegiance to the church. This mind-set is heavily influenced by the Russian Narodniki, supporters of the Tolstoyan movement and by the stories of Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky, as well as by the novels of Victor Hugo, especially *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

This peculiar literary-poetic anticlericalism and popular atheism is reflected in poems, stories and novels in which church figures are presented as positive characters, especially through their human qualities contradicting the faithful dogmas. These are reflected, for example, in the characters of Elin Pelin's stories in the cycle *Under the Monastery's Vine*, while

others, faithful to the church, are usually depicted as evil national traitors: for example, priest (*pop*) Krustyo, who, according to the literary version, also shared by historians, betrays Vasil Levski and turns him in to the Turkish authorities. Many of the qualifications of religion, the church and its figures born in literary-poetic forms have now passed into verbal insights, such as proverbs and resilient images. The humorous pages of periodicals or satirical newspapers, in which priests, monks and nuns are heroes in feuilletons and caricatures, often as objects of unveiling and laughingstocks – for example in *Bulgaran* (1904–1909; 1916–1924) and *Sturet* (1932–1944) – undoubtedly contribute to this.

This particular form of anticlerical freethinking contradicts the official school curricula of the restored Bulgarian state after 1879, where it is obligatory to have a religious component: law of God, catechism, church history or liturgy. Busy fighting theosophical teachings, which are very popular in Bulgaria, the church rarely draws attention to the growing secular slant in education and the relatively narrow circle of intellectuals who are concerned not so much with the ideological influences as with the exact translation of books such as Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Ницше, 1905, 1915, 1919); after the new translation of Zhana Gulubova (Ницше, 1990) most of these translations were reprinted. This lack of interest is certainly related to the low educational reach of the Bulgarian population until the 1940s: about 60% of men were literate and around 40% of women (cf. NSI 2009).

Although not as influential as the literary-poetic, the image of atheism and freedom of thought in political positions is particularly clear, especially when seen in the light of the chronic political crises after 1879, when the Bulgarian Orthodox Church usually maintained conservative and statist positions[3] but was often also in line with the public moods.

Another example in this regard is the old fighter for Bulgarian church independence, the metropolitan of Stara Zagora Methodij Kusev, who, in 1895, published the work *Education in the Spirit of Christianity or Impiety* against teachers with left-wing political convictions. In the brochure, he defends the positive effects of religious education and defines as the greatest evil for modern man the spread of atheist ideas, with which the socialist teachers try to attract young people. Ivan Kutev, the first translator of Marx-Engels's *Communist Manifesto* from Russian into Bulgarian (Маркс and Енгелс 1891), replies to the attacks with the anticlerical newspaper *Temporary List*, in whose 22nd issue in 1902–1903 the main figure for criticism was the metropolitan. Kutev's main idea is that religious education prevents public progress and exercises unacceptable control over teachers and students; it is a continuation of slavery, applied also to the soul. The public conflict forced the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to deprive Metodij Kusev of administrative rights in the Eparchy, but he still brought more than 20 lawsuits against various socialists.

Apart from such isolated cases, the church does not interfere significantly with the atheist propaganda, which is certainly politically motivated but

also has secular-enlightenment goals, especially after the crises that followed Bulgaria's defeat in the Balkan wars. Central to the case here are the two wings of Bulgarian social democracy (broad and narrow socialists) and anarcho-liberal societies, also active after the revolution in Russia in 1917 and the First World War. A major role is played by the theoretical body of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (after 1919, the Bulgarian Communist Party) and the *Novo Wreme* (*New Time*) magazine, which dates from 1897 up until today, with an intermission between 1923 and 1947. It gives a platform to translated articles from Western European Social Democrats and Bulgarian authors. For most of them, the leading authority was Friedrich Engels, whose scientifically referential study *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* and the *Dialectics of Nature* are, up to the present, far more popular than Marx's *Capital*, translated in 1905 into Bulgarian by the founder of the Social Democratic Party, Dimitar Blagoev (Енгелс 1893, 1931; Маркс 1905). It also presented the theory of Darwin, whose *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) was translated entirely into Bulgarian from the Soviet edition as late as 1941 (Дарвин 1941). Along with the political aims, scientific education and upbringing are placed at the basis of the party's activity. Although many of the articles highlight the role of individual church activists and Orthodoxy in the national revival, the qualification of religion as "the opium of the people"[4] is an indispensable part of its critique as a vestige of feudalism and the ideology of false consciousness and class inequality in capitalism.

The magazine has a relatively narrow circle of readers, but its topics are discussed in the so-called traveling circles. Such is the Marxist circle of Avram Gachev, whose main themes are the equality of women and their social and moral completeness and value, denied according to the myth of the original sin. It is no coincidence that his successor. Ana Majmunkova, editor of the women's workers' *Ravenstvo* (*Equality*), as the leader of the Bulgarian delegation at the Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1921, will suggest that 8 March be celebrated as International Women's Day.

Because the lower clergy shared the ideas of social equality and was often involved in protest actions, strikes and even armed struggle, the party's expediency imposed certain boundaries of atheistic propaganda. This is why aggressive atheism, common for the Leninist interpretation of Marxism, is absent in the ideological and organizational framework of Bulgarian social democracy. The party's restrictions, however, are missing in the writings of most Bulgarian anarchists, the fiercest critics of religion. Their organ is the newspaper *Misal i Volya* (*Thought and Will*), published by Georgi Zhechev. Along with the distinctive literary-publicist critique of any religion as a trade with faith and conscious delusion of the masses for the personal benefit of the clergy, Ivan Rokov's popular science series "Multicellular Organism – State of Cells" appears in the last issues (1934 and 1935), along with Vladimir Hanov's "Machines in Life and Literature",

which has atheist-educational goals (Роков 1935; Ханов 1935). The most outspoken similar works, however, are the book series *Bezbozhnik* (*Godless*), analogue to the Soviet newspaper and later a magazine of the League of Militant Atheists. In this series, many articles from the Russian edition are translated, as well as the books by Grigory Gurev *Build and Origin of the World* (Гурев 1931, 1936) and popular talks with an atheist orientation (cf. Горчева 2018).

This politically motivated atheism comes close to a form of science rapidly gaining influence; it can be called *university-professorial*, as its main practitioners are mostly scholars: philosophers, historians, pedagogues and lecturers in the faculties of natural and medical sciences established relatively late in Bulgaria.[5] The best known of these scholars is Assen Zlatarov, who popularized scientific materialism in the book *Einstein and the World Secrets* (Златаров 1923, 1924, 1925, 1930), in which he examines different models for the creation of the universe and life on earth in the context of evolution. His open lectures, both at the university and in the country, were a subject of great interest, especially among the teaching staff circle. In these lectures, Zlatarov presented the models of Mach, Marx's materialism, Svante Arrhenius's theories and modern vitalism. Undoubtedly, in this respect, the organization of the Bulgarian Masons, whose publishing company *Acacia* published these works, played a major role (cf. Георгиев 2016).

Bulgarian Marxists also swung towards this style of scientific education, which had political and atheistic aims, undoubtedly influenced and financed by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow. Here lies the Bulgarian contribution to Marxist theory with *Theory of Reflection* by Todor Pavlov (Павлов 1938), whose materialistic reductionism serves as the basis for criticism of religion as part of the critique of so-called bourgeois philosophy. The most active in this respect was Azaria Polikarov, who wrote a series of articles and popularizations as a secondary school and university student, such as *Introduction to the Theory of Relativity: An Elementary Exposition of Einstein's Special and General Theory of Relativity and Latest Works* (1941), with a preface by Todor Pavlov (cf. Горчева 2018). Such studies and papers were the basis of discussions in the most popular scientific journal, *The Philosophical Review* (1929–1943), which in almost every issue provided room for disputes and questions of religion. In them, the main topic was the explanation of religion by reducing it to social and psychological reasons, which largely corresponded to the philosophical beliefs of the editor of the journal, Dimitar Mihalchev, the author of numerous articles such as "The Dichotomy of Consciousness as the Basis of Spiritual Superstitions" (Михалчев 1929), "Contemporary Science and Religion" (Михалчев 1931), "Christ and the Soul of the Christian" (Михалчев 1933a) and "The Acquisitions of Modern Science as the Basis for Reforming the Christian Faith" (Михалчев 1933b). The magazine also sharply criticized the Freudian explanations of religious life, although it published a series of articles by Nayden Sheytanov about the sexual philosophy of Bulgarians and the Balkan racial

type. Sheytanov's books and articles *Body Cult* (1928), *The Great Bulgarian View* (1940) and *Great Bulgarian Youth* (1941), reissued in 2006 under the general title of the study from 1939, *Balkan-Bulgarian Titanism* (Шейтанов 2006), fall under the popular cult of the nation and its mythology, which will face the peculiar manifestations of internationalism in Bulgaria after the end of the Second World War and during the time of socialism.

State atheism and the usage of the past (1944–1989)

Regardless of the contested interpretations of the series of state coups and reforms in Bulgaria (monarchist-Fascist on 9 June 1923, military-Fascist on 19 May 1934, the socialist revolution on 9 September 1944 and the democratic changes after 10 November 1989), they all proclaimed themselves as the salvation of the state and the nation by seeking support from the Orthodox Church. This is not something unexpected: a vast part of the population subscribes to that form of Christianity rooted in the family when naming a newborn, in education, in civil life and in the army. This became quite apparent after 1944, when the socialist state system and the official state ideology – Marx-Leninism, in its postwar softened version – was being imposed on Bulgaria. It was no longer dangerous to mention that Stalin's mother was religious; he himself – a student at the seminary in Tbilisi – and Dimitrov[6] came from a Protestant family. What followed were paradoxical results: in Dimitrov's Constitution, the church was separated from the state, but it was far from independent. Undoubtedly, this occurred with the strong influence of the USSR, but it also had Bulgarian specifics in favor of Eastern Orthodoxy and certain denominations. Not religion as such, but "Hitlerism, Fascism and their servants from the Vatican" – these were permanent definitions of propaganda printing and party decisions – were declared as the creed's enemy of the socialist nations and countries. A Bulgarian example is the so-called Catholic trials during 1950 through 1952: six higher priests were executed, and 30 lower rank were sentenced to imprisonment. Among the convicted was the renowned Eugene Bossilkov, the Roman Catholic bishop of Nicopolis, beatified by the Vatican in 1998. According to the court verdict, he

> completed his religious studies in Italy and was trained by the Vatican for counter-revolutionary activities and espionage. He was in touch with diplomats from imperialist countries and gave them information of a confidential nature. The accused convoked a diocesan council in which it was decided to combat communism through religious conferences, held in Bulgaria, activities called "a mission".
>
> (Verdict No. 895 1952)

Such selective repressions are typical of religious traditions, but they are particularly powerful when it comes to establishing and legitimating state

power, which lies not so much in social solidity as in the nation or national firmness, even when the rulers are not from the same ethnic heritage and do not speak the native language.[7] This ostensible benevolence towards Eastern Orthodoxy and so-called traditional religions, such as Islam, also affected atheism in Bulgaria. The three forms of atheism already mentioned – literary-poetic, political and scientific – during the socialist era obeyed the constitutionally established state ideology: Marx-Leninism. It can therefore be said that they became parts of a new, far more efficient form that acquired the features of a substance – that of *state atheism* (cf. Atheistic propaganda of the BCP in documents). Although the church was separate from the state, it fell under its strong control, presented as a concern for the historical heritage and the merits of church figures for national self-awareness and liberation. This, of course, does not mean that the regime was soft on the different denominations. The Denominations Act 1949 stripped the church of the right to be the autonomous lord of its real estates and finances. Spiritual seminaries were closed down, and the Faculty of Theology became Spiritual Academia, part of the Holy Synod, with limited funding and membership. The once-obligatory subject Foundations of Christianity and the Bible was removed from the school programs. Communist activists and supporters of Komsomol persecuted matrimonies, baptisms and funerals. Streets, schools and hospitals lost their saints' names. This was also the case with Bulgarian family names with the prefix *Pop* (priest) – Popgeogriev, Poptodorov, Popdimitrov etc. – these being officially revised to Georgiev, Todorov and Dimitrov.

In contrast, the state strove to secure the church's independence by playing a major role in the restoration of the patriarchy, according to a decision from 10 September 1948 of the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party: "On the grounds of the necessity to strengthen the public authority of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which is essential to organizing the actions of the orthodox churches against the Vatican and its reactionary politics, the Central Committee gives permission to the Bulgarian Exarchate to be inaugurated in the Patriarchy". This was an organized step in the socialist states, in which the Russian Patriarchy played a major part. The latter usurped the right to grant autocephaly, which led to a decision of the Third Church Council (8–10 May 1953) to elect Bishop Cyril as the successor to the last Bulgarian Patriarch Euthymius from the end of the 14th century.

The gift of the state had its price: a great number of the higher representatives of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as well as other creeds, by force or by their free will cooperated with the Committee for State Security, a tradition that was distinctive for the entire socialist period and was an invisible form of direct state control (cf. Katzounov 2010). As a result, socialist Bulgaria was not seriously confronted by creeds or dissident positions. This secret collaboration, a distant echo of the orthodox "symphony" of the nation and the church, partly explains the rare propaganda campaigns against the Orthodox Church, as only the most radical figures of the

Bulgarian Communist Party and the Komsomol openly held an aggressive atheism of the Bolshevik type.

The daily work in the field of education turned out to be much more efficient, and it relatively quickly impacted the entire population. By around 1970, illiteracy was eradicated in Bulgaria, and a massive science-based education with relevant ideological explanations in the tradition of Marxist materialism was introduced. This is why the requalification of teachers, literacy work in the army, the socialist ritual and the mass media (radio and television), which all acquired secular content, played a major role. They also maintained the connection with the previous regimes in the form of the "bulgarization" of public life. This undoubtedly contradicted internationalism and Marxist ideology but reinforced socialism with the privilege of the ethnic majority and the symbols of the ruling ideology.

The evident result was the fast shift of the toponymy in Bulgaria; during early socialism and the so-called cult of personality in the Soviet manner, larger towns and mountain tops were named after famous personalities from the Communist movement: Varna became Stalin, Dobrich became Tolbukhin, Gorna Dzhumaya became Blagoevgrad, Dupnitsa became Stanke Dimitrov, and several villages were united under the name Dimitrovgrad. The figures of anti-Fascist heroes began to appear in the primary educational programs and in ABC books, partly replacing the sacred names and events in Bulgarian history and the collective consciousness. This could be observed when Communist mausoleums and ideological historic buildings became pilgrimage and educational places after the 1950s. This was a mere imitation of the Soviet original, in which there was a clear connection between the Communist ideology's "saints" and the historical tradition of the eternal friendship of the big and the little brother. The Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum, together with the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, were analogues of Lenin's Mausoleum and the Cathedral of Vasily the Blessed in Moscow, and the Russo-Bulgarian alliance was welded together with the blood of the heroes from Shipka and Saint George the Conqueror Chapel Mausoleum.

Designing the new socialist person, whose heirs would live in Communism, was atheist in name but was essentially a continuation of the old religious practices. This is reflected in the many renames of previous church holidays: Saint George's Day became Shepherd's Day; Saint Trifon's Day became Viticulturist's Day; and St. Cyril and St. Methodius Day became the Day of Bulgarian Education, Culture and Slavonic Scripture. In the same way that Christian saints once replaced pagan feasts, in socialist times, such reanimations had the pretense of reincarnating the primary historical truth. Although new official holidays were introduced, the previous church ones passed under a secular cover. In this context, radical atheism was impossible. If the socialist period had some success, it involved changing the attitude towards personal holidays. Birthdays became more important than the name day, so characteristic of the religious tradition and patronage of the

saints. This, however, hardly lay entirely within the socialist structure, but it was also due to the administrative control over personal life typical of the second part of the 20th century, when the day of birth is an important identification mark, civil marriage is more legitimate than the church ceremony, and the tax paid to the state is more obligatory than dues to the church.

The tradition of so-called Marxist scientific ideology made it required, of course, to conduct atheist propaganda in the familiar dualist style of pre-socialist Bulgaria. A major role here was played by the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge "Georgi Kirkov". Atheist education was explicitly mentioned in the organization chart. The Society resembled the former Marxist circles that traveled around the country. Now, however, they were within the so-called Political School Year, in which all the working people were obliged to participate. Within a specific timetable, the work teams attended speeches by lecturers, usually those responsible for the ideological work, or university lecturers, who delivered political talks. Once a year, usually before major Christian holidays, atheist talks were also held. A special approach was the TV program, often with a satirical ending, or broadcasting popular films and concerts by famous Western artists, trying to divert the population from visiting churches.

If there is an atheism as an expression of freethinking, it is in the program for the party and Komsomol's enlightenment, and it is institutionally domesticated in the section "Scientific Atheism" within the Institute for Philosophical Research, Bulgarian Academy of Science, analogous to the Institute of Atheism at the Academy of Science, USSR. The most remarkable aspect is that the main research objects are the rituals and the possibility of incorporating them into the socialist liturgy, which once again imitates the religious one with faith in the Communist future. The institute based the research model on the *Main Guidelines for Development and Refinement of the Festive Liturgy in the People's Republic of Bulgaria*, according the Decision of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and decree of the Council of Ministers from 1978 (cf. Маринова 2018). The aims of utmost importance in this document were the endorsement of Communist ideals, the patriotic upbringing and inspiration towards brotherhood and loyalty towards the USSR and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A special section was devoted to socialist symbolism, which should be incorporated in the ceremonial halls, where the historical tradition was combined with the party's politics with an increasing nationalist tendency. This trend manifested itself throughout the so-called revival process, aimed at Bulgaria's Muslim Turkish minority. The forced change of personal names[8] was accompanied by increasingly patriotic propaganda, focusing on the commemoration of the great anniversary of 1,300 years of the Bulgarian state, among other things. It also belittled the socio-economic problems of the present by pushing them into the background of the glorious past.

Beyond this state ethnophyletism, which sought to overcome the church's, scientific atheism developed in a very special form during the time of

socialism. The ideologically strengthened power authority no longer feared the so-called bourgeois scholars and philosophers whose works had not been accessible to the Bulgarian reader until then. In the series *Classical Heritage* of the publishing house Science and Art and in the editions of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, works of agnostics and critics of religion such as Feuerbach (Фойербах 1958, 1966), Voltaire (Волтер 1972), La Mettrie (Ламетри 1981), Diderot (Дидро 1981), d'Holbach (Холбах 1984) and Hume (Хюм 1986) were published in full translation for the first time, along with Kant's three critiques (Кант 1967, 1974, 1980), Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Хегел 1969) and selected works by Sartre (Сартр 1967, 1988), Camus (Камю 1979) and Wittgenstein (Витгенщайн 1988). All of them provoked numerous discussions in narrow university circles and private seminars. A bright example was the Philosophy Salon, where topics with an emphasis on materialist theories about the origin of man and society were discussed. Its organizer Nikolay Vassilev, in whose house the discussions took place, belonged to a particular kind of freethinking Marxists for whom Engels's dialectical materialism surpassed Marx's social teachings as it provided a wider view of anthropology and was more scientific than the ideological and religious versions of Marxism. He would be the founder of the Alternative Socialist Party in 1990, deputy prime minister and minister of education in the first democratic government since 1991. Zhelyu Zhelev, the first non-Communist president of Bulgaria from 1990 to 1997, also appeared in this circle. In his book *Fascism* (Желев 1982), the description of the totalitarian state organization in Italy and Germany created far too close an analogy with state socialism; the book was withdrawn from bookstores with a special order from the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party two weeks after it was published

A similar and so-called Marx seminar of young philosophers and sociologists, whose conferences in the Rila Mountains continue to this day, sometimes had a strong loyal inclination towards religious and medieval philosophy (cf. Бояджиев and Асенов 2015). These intellectual circles, however, had a particular social influence and were often accused of vulgar materialism by supporters of idealistic and religious doctrines coming with the winds of Soviet Perestroika with magazines and books by once-forbidden authors such as Solzhenitsyn, Berdyaev, Gumilyov etc.

Far more popular were the particular manifestations of quasi-freethinking, which on the one hand had party support and on the other were at variance with the scientific postulates of Marxism. These were the occult teachings, which were part of a long tradition in Bulgaria, mostly through the theosophy of Peter Dunov. A major role in this respect was played by Lyudmila Zhivkova, chair of the Culture Committee, member of the Central Committee and Politburo of the Communist Party, but first of all daughter of the party and state leader Todor Zhivkov. After a car accident, she had an epiphany that gave a special form of state-patronized "freethinking", violating the canons of Marx-Leninism with an inclination towards

mysticism and ties to the spiritual traditions of the Far East. A widening circle of conformist intellectual society formed around her, which, thanks to rich state subsidies, began a special campaign to promote the cult of "Unity, Creativity and Beauty" with annual celebrations of the "spiritual titans of humanity" in Bulgaria, the cradle of the most ancient civilizations. During the preparation for the 1,300th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state, this broad circle, supported by the state, imposed films, television shows, writers' meetings and international youth assemblies, alien to the dogmatic Marxist style, culminating in apparent support for mystical teachings. Ironically, Zhivkova died in 1981 when the 1,300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state was celebrated. This gave new powers to the mystic, whose roots were sought in the most remote history of the Bulgarian lands: the history of the Thracians and their cult places. The paradoxical combination of the Marxist version of the theory of reflection with these mystical practices led to the creation of a section for researching consciousness at the Institute of Philosophy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The purpose of the section was to discover and decode the authentic rituals and language remains sealed in the environment in the former Thracian sacred places.

"The Vanga phenomenon", obviously maintained by the state and state security, was added to this. She was a blind prophetess in the town of Petrich, in front of whose house thousands of Bulgarians waited for days to learn the secrets of their past and future. In the style of paradoxical dialectics, it is remarkable that Vanga's critics from the point of view of science at the time of socialism were called dogmatists in the same way that dogmatics are also called church figures who consider her to be a false prophetess. It is therefore not surprising that former members of the CC of the BCP maintained her cult and participated in the creation of Vanga's church. Her prophecies, even to this day, appear in books and newspaper articles and on internet sites, especially in Russia (cf. Большая энциклопедия Ванги, http://vanga.ru), which is why, in Russian everyday jargon, the term *vanguet* means "foreseeing the future".

On the domestic, but not the spiritual level, things were far clearer since every form of resistance had long disappeared, and socialism was supplemented by pre-socialist era practices – almost 100% literacy and ownership of the housing stock and some private land, a limited but nevertheless possible family free market, working abroad in the Soviet Union, Cuba, Algeria, Libya etc., with rights to use Western currency in some stores. This made it possible for broad social circles to publicly profess the obligatory ideology but to share ideas privately and, above all, to live under the conditions of the officially denounced petty bourgeoisie with religion and atheism for home use.[9]

Secularity and desecularization in contemporary Bulgaria (1989–2018)

The changes from 1989 brought about new dynamics in the relationship between Freethought and atheism in Bulgaria. During the three decades

after 1989, we can roughly distinguish three phases: the first was the initial opposition to the state-supported ambivalent atheism of the previous regime and the “religious boom” of the 1990s; the second was a period of coexistence of new religious practices, old (socialist) atheism and other secular inspirations; the third phase comprised the recent intensification of religious dogmatism which ran parallel to the growing popularity of ethnic nationalism and the rise of the alt-right.

While during the socialist period, the orthodoxy of Marx-Leninism was scientific atheism, dissidents and opponents of the regime would embrace religion as a form of Freethought. The first years after the changes witnessed a religious uprising, visible through various public practices that were intended as demonstrations of opposition to the former regime. The immediate rejection of Marx-Leninist orthodoxy took a variety of forms. Christophor Sabev, a religious figure and a dissident and one of the leaders of the Union of Democratic Forces (the coalition of oppositional parties), for example, organized mass religious vigils with prayers in public spaces during the first years after the changes. Another form of public demonstration of the new tradition was the adoption of the names of patron saints by institutions of higher education and public health. The Faculty of Theology of Sofia University “Saint Kliment Ohridski” was reopened in 1991, along with similar study programs and faculties in other institutions of higher education. Among other forms of public revival of religiosity, public television started direct transmissions of the religious rituals of the Orthodox Church. In this context, it is not an accident that, after the changes in November 1989, members of the Politburo of the BCP appeared at Easter liturgy in the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia.

Nevertheless, the Constitution adopted in 1991 declared the Republic of Bulgaria a secular state, granting all citizens freedom of expression, of assembly and of religious faith. The secular character of state power and public institutions was guaranteed by article 13 (2): “Religious institutions are separate from the State” (National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria 1991). East Orthodox Christianity is defined as the traditional religion in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The change in the political regime in 1989, it was assumed, would put an end to the “forced” secularization of Bulgarian society, and “a religious boom” was to be expected in the 1990s, according to some scholars (Гребенарова 2002; Назърска and Шапкарова 2015, 78). Statistical data from the first decade after the changes showed a rise in the practice of main Christian Orthodox rituals such as christening, religious marriage and burial services. According to the dominant hypothesis, the years 1992 and 1993 marked an intermediate phase in the restoration of religiosity after 45 years of restrictions imposed upon its practice. Hence, the rise in the number of christenings, for example, can be explained by the fact that not only newborn children, but also grown-up individuals accepted the Christian faith after the change in the regime. The return to faith was

celebrated by enthusiastic analysts, who viewed the new rise of religious practice in opposition to the dark years of imposed atheism. "The christenings of 30- or 50-year-olds were not just a fashionable enthusiasm but a conscious choice of a generation socialized with atheism. It was their duty to accept the church sacrament, the analyst claims, which their parents had not done [when they were born during socialism] for obvious reasons" (Гребенарова 2002).

If the same hypothesis is valid, a period of normalization can be expected after the rise of religious practice compensating for the previous period of "forced" secularization. Thus, "sociological studies of the post-communist states clearly indicate that the great religious 'boom' of the late 1980s and early 1990s marked a decline in the late twentieth century, and these societies returned to their traditional levels of religiosity" (Назърска and Шапкарова 2015, 78).

Data from the European Values Study from 2008 showed a different trend for this second phase of normalization after the religious boom (Карамелска 2009). More than half of Bulgarians (60%) described themselves as "religious" (all denominations and cults combined). Atheism was a convincing worldview for just 5% of the 1,500 respondents participating in the survey. Other data from the same survey, however, showed contradictory trends: only 35% of Bulgarians believed that there is "one God", a belief characteristic of monotheistic Christianity, Islam and Judaism, while another 46% declared that they believed in the existence of "some sort of spirit or life force", and still another 11% were not sure what they believed in.[10] Therefore, being religious, for a number of Bulgarians, was not necessarily connected to some form of Orthodoxy, to the institution of the church or to some form of canonical practice. Although the group of proclaimed atheists was relatively small (only 5%), the majority of Bulgarians seemed to be tolerant of nontraditional religious beliefs and practices.

Another key indicator of secularization is attendance at services of worship. Only 4.4% went to service at least once a week and 9.2% once a month; 45.5% participated in worship only on certain religious holidays, and 24.9% responded to the question with "never, practically never" (Карамелска 2009, 31). "Like most Europeans, the analyst concludes, Bulgarians also demonstrate a tendency to individual selection of the religious content and practices – a tendency characteristic of the syncretic religiosity of the entire secularized modernity" (Карамелска 2009, 31).[11] The majority of Bulgarians demonstrated their religiosity on the occasion of major events in their life trajectories, such as birth, marriage and death.

The results were confirmed in a smaller survey covering a longer period from 1989 to 2014. Data were collected from the registers of 165 Orthodox churches in the capital and across the country, documenting the number of christenings, marriage and burial ceremonies performed in the church per year (Назърска and Шапкарова 2015, 80). Although the publication could not pretend to provide encompassing data, it identified a trend: "the

occurrence of a secularization process is clearly demonstrated by a visible and serious decline in the number of baptisms and a less noticeable reduction in the number of marriages" (Назърска and Шапкарова 2015, 89).

Although the statistical data presented here cannot indicate the extent of the group of nonbelievers or show the fluctuating boundaries between traditional and nontraditional beliefs, the secular view of reality remained dominant, and the basic principle of secularism in public institutions is intact in contemporary Bulgaria up to the present day. The tradition of secular thought is supported by the presence and work of several civil society associations, through new inspirations coming from Western culture and traditions of resistance grounded in Bulgarian history.

The forms of associational life qualifying as secular in the considerations hereafter are not necessarily connected to the forms of "forced" secularization from the previous period or to the dominant ideology of Marx-Leninism. Some take their sources in history before 1945. The anarchist movement is such an example. Its origins can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, when anarcho-syndicalism was an integral part of the workers' movement. The Federation of Anarchists in Bulgaria (FAB) was founded in the summer of 1919, when the movement was torn between the agitation of Europe's workers and military uprisings and the contradicting evaluation of the Bolshevik Revolution. Eventually, FAB moved away from syndicalism and adopted the federalist principle for organizing groups in different cities. The federation was active through a number of publications and activities in the following decades, until the anarchist leaders and organization were smashed by the cruelties of the interwar governments and the regime of King Boris III, followed by the repressions of anarchists from the Bolshevist regime after 1946 (Даскалов 1995).

Some minor attempts at reviving the anarchist movement were made by informal groups in the mid-1990s. It was only at the beginning of the 21st century, however, that the "new anarchists" opened the first autonomous social centers in Bulgaria. The new anarchism is defined by activist anthropologists such as David Graeber as a form of prefigurative politics: its aim is to form communities of action based on horizontal structures, erasing all forms of power relations in the vein of the slogan "No Gods, no country, no masters!" Two autonomous spaces were opened in Sofia in 2010 (Adelante and Haspel, both closed in 2015), one in Varna (the Solidarity Center, 2013–2015); another one opened in Veliko Turnovo in 2014 for only several months. A larger and more popular space – Fabrika Avtonomia – has been active in Sofia since 8 April 2017.

Maintaining a distance from the official politics of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (the heir to the Bulgarian Communist Party), some informal groups of pro-Western or unorthodox Marxists have formed a fragmented New Left, active mainly through online publications via the platforms Novi Levi Perspectivi and Life after Capitalism and the e-zine *dVersia*. Unlike the more conservative BSP, these small groups target the younger generation

of left-leaning Bulgarians, the academic left and reformists inside the more traditional party structures. The online publications of the cited groups promote the fight for social justice through tax reform, critical attacks on the appropriation of the commons and international solidarity with refugees, Roma and LGBT communities.

The influence of recent atheists, as exemplified by the writings of such authors as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris, cannot be traced through reliable statistical data. The first translation of Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* appeared in 1998 from the academic publishing house of Sofia University. (The second edition in 2015 was by a commercial publisher.) His *The God Delusion* appeared in Bulgarian in 2008, two years after its original publication. The author was invited to speak at the Sofia Festival of Science in 2015 and made some appearances on popular media channels on this occasion. Daniel Dennett's influential book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* was only translated in 2014 by the same publisher. Although Sam Harris is quite popular on YouTube, only one of his books has been translated into Bulgarian: *The Moral Landscape* in 2012.[12]

A third phase in the dynamic relationship between Freethought and stronger religious beliefs is marked by the recent rise of nationalist ideologies, which see the Bulgarian nation as indissociably connected to Orthodox Christianity, in the vein of the ethnophyletism of the 19th century. The cases and data discussed hereafter confirm the hypothesis of ethnophyletism, as it is defined by Teodora Karamelska in her analysis of the data from the European Values Study in 2008:

> Considering the common social insecurity, in the context of globalization and the dynamic political processes in Europe, some Bulgarians will likely place ethnophyletism ("one nation, one state, one church") as the *differentia specifica* of their collective identity. In an attempt to satisfy such attitudes, the Orthodox Church can radicalize its messages and thus can serve in favor of isolationist ideologies.
>
> (Карамелска 2009, 35)

What this citation points out unmistakably is the key issue of collective identity. Interpreted in the vein of growing nationalism and finding support in the Christian Orthodox tradition, the quest for national identity will reverse the process of secularization and incite political movements with conservative and religious agendas, questioning the values of civil rights, social justice and solidarity. There is no doubt that the emerging antisecular movements from the last decade gained force as a consequence of the weakening of secular movements and organizations. The specifics of some recent nationalist and/or antisecular groups will be elaborated in the remaining part of this chapter, as they have been met with growing concern within associations of civil society.

As shown by prominent political scientists working in the region (Kopecký and Mudde 2003), the normative interpretation of the concept of "civil society" tends to leave out of the focus of attention some forms of associational life that do not embrace liberal democratic values. A variety of populist, nationalist or other movements with authoritarian or antidemocratic tendencies are regrouped under the heading of "uncivil society". (The concept itself is no less ideologically laden than "civil society".)

The popularity of nationalistic groups has been rising in Bulgaria since 2001 or 2004. At least two wings of the nationalist movement can be distinguished. One of these wings includes a number of small groups and their associations. Typically, these groups form fraternities or squads in small towns and in the districts of major cities. In their view, change can happen from below when more and more people "work for Bulgaria", and their movement becomes a mass movement.

The other wing sees the desired change in a different way: it will come from above, not as a mass movement, but when a small group of well-trained politicians use the established political institutions to "work for Bulgaria". This wing includes the political parties ATAKA (Attack, founded by Volen Siderov in 2005); the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), founded in the 19th century and still active today as a radical nationalist party) and the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB), founded in 2011. These political parties have a vertical structure, with a charismatic leader at the head, a core of activists and a periphery of supporters. Nationalist ideology is very important for the structure of these parties, for it provides enough incentive to motivate young people to participate in volunteering, organization of events and various political activities.

At both levels of the movement – the level of political parties and the more informal groups of supporters – Christian Orthodoxy is an essential part of the nationalist ideology. It embraces this religious denomination as one of the pillars of the Bulgarian nation, and politicians, specifically, demonstrate ostentatious devotion in practicing religious rituals. Nationalist proponents also see their mission as "the protection" of the Bulgarian nation from other religious and ethnic groups, most importantly Islam.

In the movements of the "uncivil" society, a tendency for strong politicization over religious issues is highly present. The leader of the political party ATAKA Siderov consequently found the sound of the Friday prayer extremely annoying and staged a rally of nationalist supporters in front of the Banya Bashi Mosque in the center of Sofia during the prayer on 20 May 2011. A conflict escalated, and the proponents of the nationalist factions attacked the prayers. The police intervened in order to prevent bloodshed. In 2016, charges were pressed against Siderov's violent behavior, but for another offense (an attack against a student at the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts). Siderov is sometimes referred to in analytical publications as one of "the new orthodox politicians", along with Radovan Karadjic and Vuk Draskovic, Korneliu Vadim Tudor and Alexandre Dugin.

On 14 February 2014, a spontaneous protest in Plovdiv resulted in a vandal attack on the Dzhumaya Mosque. Responsibility for the protest demonstration was taken by the Association of Football Supporters, led by Elena Vatashka. Such events show the degree of popularity of nationalist feelings coupled with a form of religious devotion (rather intolerance).

During the presidential elections of 2016, the political parties associated with the "uncivil" society formed a coalition – the Patriotic Front. The next year, this formation received 9% of the vote in the parliamentary elections (2017) and are now part of the ruling coalition.

At present, the groups that are most severely affected by the rise of Christian Orthodox fundamentalism are Turkish and Roma minorities, LGBT people and, more recently and paradoxically, women. The attacks on the Turkish community affect their places of worship, as described here, and their right to vote. Blockades of nationalist supporters are organized to prevent Turkish voters' access to the sections. Apart from everyday racism and hate speech, the Roma minority has been affected by forced evictions from their homes by the local authorities on a number of occasions when nationalist formations stirred up "interethnic tension".[13]

After January 2018, women's rights came under attack when a massive smear campaign against the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known also as the Istanbul Convention) was launched by the joint efforts of nationalist politicians (the two deputy prime ministers, Karakachanov and Simeonov, from the Patriotic Front) and conservative evangelical organizations (the coalition Family and Values, a branch of the US-based network World Congress of Families). As a consequence of the conservative backlash, the Bulgarian Parliament failed to ratify the convention, and the constitutional court declared the international document unconstitutional.

The concerns of the analyst Teodora Karamelska cited here, that the Orthodox Church might radicalize its messages by bringing its positions closer to nationalist political movements, have been confirmed in recent years. For several consecutive years, the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has issued statements condemning Sofia Pride. This conservative stance can be expected with regard to LGBT people's rights, but in January 2018, the Holy Synod intervened in the debate over the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, allying with the nationalists. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church denounced the convention against gender-based and domestic violence as "satanic" and its supporters as "liberal scum". Upon an order of the Holy Synod, a condemnation of the convention was added to the Sunday service, pronounced in every Orthodox church in the country.

The alliance of nationalists with conservative religious positions was embraced by the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Kornelia Ninova, who withdrew support for the Istanbul Convention. If the party is still considered heir to the Bulgarian Communist Party and, as such, the agent (of what remains) of scientific atheism, the recent reorientation of its leader

supports the "traditional values" of ethnocentric nationalism. The political party that is therefore supposed to be the agent of atheism has joined the coalition of conservative religious backlash. It is more than curious to observe how Bulgarian socialists in recent months have become defenders of the "national tradition" and have opposed the values of secularization, to the detriment of women's rights.

In opposition to this conservative religious mobilization, supported by a coalition of nationalists, evangelical conservatives, the Holy Synod and socialist populists, stands a strongly secular LGBT movement that has animated the activist scene from the first years of democratic changes. Registered back in 1992, the first LGBT organization in Bulgaria – Gemini – is currently nonoperational. While in the initial phase of its existence from the early 1990s it was more active as "a way of life", or a subcultural formation inhabiting a number of nightclubs, since 2008, with the first Sofia Pride march, the movement came "out of the closet" into the public space. Gemini gave way to a number of smaller NGOs and self-organized groups that form a vibrant movement with a number of cultural events and festivals held mainly in Sofia. The movement stands against persistent (and sometimes violent) attacks on behalf of nationalist formations and the condemning declarations of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, issued every year on the occasion of its largest event, Sofia Pride, which has attracted some 3,000 or more supporters every June since 2008.

Women's organizations have been somewhat less instrumental in defending the secular values of human rights, free choice and solidarity against the religious-nationalist backlash. Once a strong and well-connected network of women's unions uniting both bourgeois and working-class women in a common fight, during the socialist regime the feminist movement evolved into a strictly centralized top-down organization under the heading of the Fatherland Front (OF) – a massive social and political organization controlled by the Bulgarian Communist Party (Daskalova and Nazarska 2005). After the changes of 1989, although a large number of small feminist organizations emerged, they never had the impulse or the forces to mobilize large segments of women. Over the last two decades, the feminist movement has become limited to a bureaucratized network of women's NGOs, dealing mainly with providing social services, lobbyism and litigation (Ivancheva 2015). They have focused their professional work on a limited number of topics, such as domestic violence, human traffic and sexual abuse. While their work remains important, these NGOs have missed the opportunity to spread the values of a strongly secular vision of the role of women in society.

In the current political context in Bulgaria, it is very difficult "to distinguish political movements that are genuinely inspired by religion and those that use religion as convenient legitimation for political agendas based on quite nonreligious interests", as Peter Berger (1999) proposes, advancing the thesis of the desecularization of contemporary societies at the end of the 20th century. In the 1990s, the higher levels of religiosity in Eastern Europe,

as compared to Western European countries, demonstrated what he calls "resurgent religion". Also on the global scale, the levels of religious practice have not diminished over the last decades, a fact that compromises the thesis of the secularization of the world, which has been the most influential academic narrative thus far, coupling the history of modernization and economic development with a detachment from religious feelings. According to the secularization thesis, belief in God will be replaced by the values of the Enlightenment in the process of modernization or by an even more liberal secular culture grounded in the narrative of civil rights, social justice and Freethought. This set of secular values, Berger argues, was embraced by the elites and propagated through education but failed to explain the state of insecurity in the contemporary world. Hence, the resurgence of religion around the globe with the significant exception of Western Europe and what Berger calls the "subculture" of global liberal elites. Do the Bulgarians fall under the hypothesis of resurgent religion with the current rise of nationalist religious-political alliances?

In the absence of reliable statistical data for the more recent period after 2008,[14] the hypothesis of secularization or desecularization cannot be confirmed or rejected. However, in the face of rising conservatism in contemporary Bulgarian society, Berger's thesis about desecularization can serve as an alarm to those organizations of civil society that view themselves as proponents of progressive and secular values. Atheism, Freethought and secular values can no longer be taken for granted. It is more or less clear that the political movements associated with the nationalist parties are taking advantage of religious feelings as a convenient legitimation for their political program, and the position of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church with regards to women's rights is more than problematic. Although it cannot be confirmed by statistical data, the process of desecularization can easily take away some traditional agents of secularism – the Bulgarian Socialist Party and its leadership.

Notes

1 At the Pan-Orthodox Council in June 2016, faithful nationalism was defined as an ecclesiological heresy linked to the tensions between the various churches and attempts at autocephaly. Such mutual accusations of ethnophyletism, disguising political claims, are currently addressed by the Serbian patriarchy to bishops in Macedonia, as well as by the patriarchs in Moscow and Istanbul concerning the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

2 English translation by Temenuga Marinova.

3 Such is the case, for example, of the Eparchy of Veliko Tarnovo's metropolitan, Clement Branicky, who was actively involved in political life as one of the leaders of the Conservative Party and headed the Second Government of the Principality of Bulgaria (November 1879–March 1880).

4 The well-known definition by Marx "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (Marx 1976, 378–379) can also be read in a positive

therapeutic sense. It is undoubtedly taken up by Heine: "Praise a religion that, in the bitter cup of suffering, inflicted on the human race a few sweet, seductive drops of spiritual opium, a few drops of love, hope and faith!" (Heine 1976, 283).

5 Sofia University was founded in 1888 as a pedagogical college; the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics was established in 1894 while the Faculty of Theology was established together with the medical, veterinary-medical and agronomic faculties between 1918 and 1923.

6 Georgi Dimitrov, leader of Bulgarian socialist trade unions and the Communist Party, very popular internationally after the Leipzig Trial from 1933, appointed by Stalin as leader of the Communist International (1934–1943), Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1946–1949); without consulting the USSR, he began negotiating with Josip Broz Tito on the creation of a Balkan Federation, one of the reasons for the speculations that he had been poisoned in a sanatorium near Moscow in July 1949. Dimitrov's body was embalmed and placed in Sofia's mausoleum.

7 Especially interesting is the study by Gábor Klaniczay (1990).

8 The personal name is subject to strong governmental control: in the birth homes since the 1970s, there are lists of traditional Bulgarian names that parents are required to choose from for their children.

9 This is described as "the socialist transformation of the village and the village transformation of socialism" by Creed (1998).

10 See, for example, the map of data for people who believe in "some sort of spirit or life force" (Atlas of European Values 2011).

11 This conclusion is in line with the thesis about individualized religion advanced by Charles Taylor (2002).

12 See also YouTube (2015), a lecture by Sam Harris with Bulgarian subtitles.

13 The cases of Garmen and Varna are documented by human rights activists (Българският хелзинкски комитет 2018). A more recent case is Voyvodinovo.

14 The national census from 2011 covered the topic of religion with only two questions: "Are you a religious person?" and "What is your denomination?" The data provided by this question cannot add significantly to the main interest in secularity and desecularization discussed here. The data from the European Values Study held in 2017 were not yet published at the time of the writing of this chapter (January 2019).

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3 Anticlericalism, nonreligiosity and atheism in Croatia

Nikolina Hazdovac Bajić, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov and Branko Ančić

Introduction

Since the initial process of embracing Christianity from the seventh to the eleventh century, Catholic religiosity became a significant factor in the process of creating and shaping the collective identity of Croats. During the history on different national borders, Catholicism served as a characteristic feature of Croatian identity and a demarcation line with respect to the "other".

Croatia was marked by a long history of gaining and losing state independence. For centuries, Croatian territory had been part of different empires (Hungarian, Hungarian-Austrian and Ottoman) and different states (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Independent State of Croatia, socialist Yugoslavia). After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the introduction of political pluralism at the end of the 1980s, major social changes occurred, which contributed to the process of the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia and the proclamation of today's Republic of Croatia.

Through all these periods the strong connection between different national and religious identities in the region was present, Catholicism being the most prominent identification of Croats. In different periods throughout history, however, anticlericalism, atheism and antireligiousness were present and more or less visible.

In the 19th century, in parallel with the emergence of more prominent and organized nonreligious, atheist and Freethought movements in Western Europe and the United States (Campbell 1971), there were also public voices in Croatia that posed a challenge primarily for the church's position and its role, but also for certain parts of Catholic doctrine. Such voices appeared in the form of anticlerical stances in political life and in the literary movement of modernism, as well as in the field of the natural sciences with the first ideologization of Darwinism.

It should be noted that there is no information in the relevant literature about any forms of a Freethought movement in Croatia at the time. However, the most powerful form of atheism and secularism as a political doctrine or ideology (Asad 2003, 1; Wilson 2005, 8214–8215) in Croatia developed after the end of World War II within the framework of

Communist Yugoslavia. After the collapse of Communism and the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia, Croatian society went through numerous changes, including the revitalization of religion. Although religiosity became a desirable (and dominant) conformity pattern, nonreligiosity and atheism are still present on the individual level. In public life, they are most evident in the activities of organized communities of nonreligious people and atheists, which have appeared during the last decade. These groups are under the significant influence of the movement of New Atheism.

This chapter will present an overview of the anticlerical, nonreligious and atheist manifestations in Croatian society from the 19th century onwards. In order to better understand the topic, the social context of certain historical periods will also be presented. Additionally, some empirical data concerning nonreligiosity and atheism available from the socialist period, as well as qualitative data obtained by conducting interviews (n = 22) with members of nonreligious and atheist organizations in contemporary Croatian society, have been taken into account.

Anticlericalism in Croatia during the late 19th and early 20th century

Individualism as the basic life principle of modern man at the turn of the century manifested itself in politics through parliamentary decision-making, in economics through the development of a free market, in science through the progress of natural sciences that question authority and in art through artistic aspirations for originality and aestheticism (Batušić et al. 2001, 11). Individualism rejects limitations that some forms of collective bodies, public authorities and traditional institutions can have. Institutionalized religion is thus one of the phenomena that individualism through liberalism and liberal tendencies in society strongly opposes.

As part of the processes of romantic nationalism in Europe, the period of the 19th century was also a formative period in terms of the awakening of the Croatian national consciousness and aspirations for the national and political emancipation of Croats in regard to the Habsburg monarchy. At the time, distinct anticlerical attitudes could be observed in the ideas of some of the most prominent politicians, crucial in the formation of the idea of the Croatian nation. Ante Starčević (1823–1896), often regarded as the Father of the Homeland, was the leader and main ideologist of the political Croatian hood and nationalist movement and a great opponent of all perceived anti-Croatian policy in the region. Under the influence of the ideas and writers of the French Revolution, he also expressed antagonism toward the clergy, who were, in his view, deeply anti-Croatian because he saw neglected Croatian rural areas, illiteracy and a lack of education as consequences of clericalism. In his view, the Roman Catholic Church served as cultural retention and not advancement for the people, which ultimately went in favor of Croatian oppressors and created national dissension among Croats, dividing

them as Roman Catholics, Muslim and Orthodox. Starčević believed that religion should be a personal matter for each individual and opposed favoring any religion by the state. Since Starčević's basic political goal was to create an independent Croatian state outside the Austro-Hungarian framework, the Catholic Church was strongly criticized for its connection with the monarchy. His ideas were based on the revolutionary character of nationalism and on the principle of the peoples' natural right to self-determination brought about by the French Revolution. He daily read *Independence Belge*, an extremely liberal journal, which was occasionally publicly reproached by priests who addressed Starčević as a rebel and Antichrist who was disobeying all the commands of God, the people and the church (Horvat 1990, 376). His most quoted authors were Rousseau (who was his greatest role model), Montesquieu, Voltaire, Lamennais and Cormenin (Barišić 2017, 445). One of the historians of Croatian philosophy, Kruno Krstić, accentuates the importance of great popular writers (among whom Starčević was the greatest) to the later development of Croatian philosophy (Posavac 1996, 282).

One of Starčević's closest friends and the cofounder of Stranka Prava (Party of Rights) was Eugen Kumičić (1850–1904), a Croatian writer. Although deeply religious, he expressed strong anticlerical ideas, which were most apparent in his historical novel *Kraljica Lepa* (*Queen Lepa*) from 1902. The novel met with fierce disapproval on the part of the clergy and supporters of "Catholic Croatian hood", who viewed it as an expression of materialism and atheism in literature, as another voice for Darwinism (Prosperov Novak 2004, 96). Literary review today perceives Kumičić as the first Croatian writer whose novels reproduced the world in all its ugliness, based on the crude modern capitalist logic.

Even more prominent anticlericalists were famous Croatian politicians, the founders of the *Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka* (Croatian People's Peasant Party), Stjepan Radić (1871–1928) and Antun Radić (1868–1919). They partly built their popularity on criticizing the church and clergy, while maintaining strong individual (Catholic) religiosity. During one of his celebrated speeches, Stjepan Radić expressed the leading idea of his People's Peasant Party as follows:

> It doesn't matter how you cross yourself, with three fingers, or with the whole hand, or maybe you don't cross at all, because you are not a Christian. It matters only how you live your life and what kind of man you are.
>
> (1924)

In the same speech, he added:

> Priests or bishops are teachers of the faith, and as such we are listening to them in the church and outside the church. But when religion is

> mixed with politics, moreover with such a heathen politics of revenge, blood, pride and gluttony, then they are not teachers, but destroyers of faith and the Church. . . . The old satrap priestly reputation fell apart like a dense fog disappears in the sun. The people ceased to believe in priests, but they did not lose their Christian faith. In this way the old priest's witticism that they are the keepers of the faith among the people has turned to dust. They do not keep the faith, but the people keep it from them.
>
> (1924)

Apart from being the most prominent political figure of his day, Stjepan Radić was one of the main representatives of a cultural-political movement that partly overlapped with the period of modernism in Croatian literature. The movement attracted a new generation of young writers and politicians who, after anti-Hungarian demonstrations against the arrival of Franz Joseph I in Zagreb in 1895, were banned from studying in Croatia and went to Prague and Vienna.

Anticlerical ideas, which were part of the program of the most prominent politicians, are thus also reflected in literature. The usual social function of Croatian literature, which comes down to "a patriotic-social, often utilitarian or didactic" role (Šicel 1982, 121) saturated with the Christian worldview (Lončarević 2015, 298), was suddenly questioned. The Vienna group of artists emphasized that literature should primarily meet aesthetic criteria, while its ethical dimension was irrelevant. They viewed Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche as their role models. The older generation resented their admiration for Nietzsche because they understood it as proof of anti-Catholicism and anti-Christianism. Nietzsche's works were read and commented on, however, by many writers who claimed that modernity in the form that appeared in Croatia "evidently drew its line from Nietzsche, the philosopher and the main apostle of modern individualism" (Jonjić 2015, 325). In his criticism of everything and in his radical demands for new concepts, Nietzsche also offered a philosophical explanation and justification for the reach of modern sciences represented in the works of Darwin and Haeckel.

The Prague group (of which Stjepan Radić was a member) considered, in contrast, that literature should be more in the service of people (tendentious literature). This group was strongly influenced by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), the Czech politician, philosopher and sociologist and later also the first Czechoslovak president. Masaryk's political ideas of social realism were guided by the principles of pragmatism, idealism and humanism, and his personal credo was based on a deep religiosity on the one hand and on the positivistic notions of that era reflected in Auguste Comté's work on the other (Musil 1995, 33). Although these ideas appear to be incompatible, they testify to Masaryk's vision of the Europe of his time, based on religious humanism and modern rationality. In this manner, Masaryk's

dualism builds on the sociological thinkers of the time, such as Durkheim, Weber and Tönnies, who "perceived the epochal meaning of the transition of European societies from traditional, corporatist, noncontractual and relatively closed and nonmobile ones, to modern societies based on markets, industry, contractual solidarity, developed division of labour, mobility and individualism" (Musil 1995, 37). Furthermore, Masaryk considered that the modern crisis that emerges from this transition of modern societies cannot be solved by Marxism. As a highly spiritual person, he was bothered by the materialistic approach of Marxism and sharply criticized Marx and Engels, while at the same time being fascinated by Dostoevsky (Lipovac 2017). The transition to the modern era was marked for him by the change from theocracy to democracy and, on the spiritual individual level, from revealed religion to an inner and personal one (Musil 1995, 37), but not to the disappearance of religion.

Although the era of modernism in Croatian literature was marked by different and sometimes even contradictory artistic notions (Batušić et al. 2001, 18; Žmegač 1992, 25), the common features of Croatian writers were manifested in opposition to a traditional understanding of literature and the demands for change (liberation from the existing literary directions). At the same time, the conceptual key of modernism in Croatian literature was anticlericalism (Lončarević 2015, 306) in Masaryk's (or Radić's) sense: the aspiration for the liberation from religious institutions and their influence and turning toward an inner individual spirituality.

Writers of the young generation came into conflict with representatives of the older generation who opposed the pluralistic approach and supported the idealism and strong presence of religion in literary work (Lončarević 2015, 305). The most prominent writer of Croatian literature of modernism, Antun Gustav Matoš, in accordance with the spirit of the time, thought that the key process of creating one's own nature involved emancipation. Hence, in national terms (as well as in art), clericalism and the religious influence represented a highly negative factor for him.

The conflict between the theological tradition and the modernist ideas of positivism and materialism did not meet with much of a response in Croatian philosophy. There were philosophers who were religiously centered and others who were not but still remained neutral in this conflict. This neutral stance can be seen in the work of the philosopher Albert Bazala (1877–1949), who was influenced by Masaryk and Nietzsche in formulating his theoretical approach based on freedom and responsibility, antischolasticism and antidogmatism. However, in terms of the actual clash between positivism and the mechanistic conception of the world on the one hand and neo-Kantianism and revived dogmatic idealism on the other, Bazala was unable to find answers to specific Croatian issues and consequently disregarded them (Filipović 1978, 20). The philosopher Pavao Vuk Pavlović (1894–1976), although evidently under the influence of Camus and existentialism (Polić 2001, 145–148), wrote that contemporary atheism was a

specific phenomenon of the secularization of religion, while complete nonreligiosity was basically impossible (Polić 2001, 156–158). Vladimir Filipović, Bazala's student, tried to follow the neutrality of his predecessors and influenced the first generation of academically educated Marxists[1] in the early 1950s, introducing them to classical German idealism as a philosophical source of Marx's early thought (Zenko 1995, 467). The conflict between the old religiously influenced worldview and the new one, based on new scientific and philosophic ideas, was thus fought mostly on the field of literature and science.

The generation of artists and politicians at the turn of the century sought to abandon old cultural, religious and political traditions. In their programmatic documents, they mostly made a shift in relation to national-political and state-law issues, this being partly influenced by socialist ideas (especially regarding the adherence to liberal-reformative principles and reservations about the political engagement of religious circles). Although anticlericalism, which was present during this period, was not analogous for the most part to anti-Christian, anti-Catholic or antireligious ideas, clerical criticists used to find sizeable and dangerous atheist tendencies in it. Such tendencies indeed appeared later as part of a new ideology. This new ideology was primarily based on an emphasis on "brotherhood and unity" and solidarity among Slavs (especially Serbs and Croats). It found its political expression later in the creation of the Yugoslav community, especially in the form of the Communist state, which shaped its relationship toward the church and religion as scientific atheism of the ruling Communist party. Anticlerical ideas among prominent Croatian intellectuals in the 19th century, however, should be seen as a consequence of spreading the ideas of the post-Christian era in the Western civilization of the 18th and 19th centuries, but also as the emancipatory process of attitudes towards religion and the Church that served as a critique of the hegemonic structure.

The influence of Darwinism

Apart from a number of new social and political ideas, philosophies and spiritual directions, the period of modernism also brought in new scientific theories. One of the most important and influential was Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Evolutionism and even Darwinism were firmly linked from the very beginning to the modern idea of progress (Markus 2008, 240), and the Darwinian paradigm has become "important not only for explaining biological evolution, but more broadly for understanding our entire world and the human phenomenon" (Diamond 2002, 7). The term *Darwinism* refers to the biological theory of evolution and to some other ideas and concepts that were developed in relation (direct or indirect) to the theory of evolution (e.g., economic Darwinism, social Darwinism). Darwin's theory, presented in the book *The Origin of Species* (1859), with its naturalism that does not require any supernatural causes or explanations,

has met with divided reactions since the time it appeared (Mayr 2002, 13, 1998, 14).

In Croatia, the problem of the relationship between faith and the natural sciences suddenly emerged at this time. The Catholic Church and the circles around it (gathered in the Croatian Catholic Movement), as firm supporters of creationism, often criticized Darwin and Haeckel and rejected evolutionism. This conflict was further reinforced by the views of evolutionists concerning the position of the Church in society and especially its influence on science and education. The Croatian Catholic Movement thus strongly resisted the influence of Darwinism and the ideas they associated with it: naturalism, liberalism, empiricism, anthropological materialism, monism, eugenics and social Darwinism.

The first translations of *The Origin of Species* were published in Belgrade in Serbian in 1878 and 1900 (Darwin 1878, 1900). These translations were also read in Croatia, where Darwin's theory was very well accepted in scientific and academic circles. However, the first Croatian translation wasn't published until 2000 (Darwin 2000).

In a study on the development and reception of Darwinism in Croatia, Balabanić[2] (2009) distinguishes three different periods. The first one from 1859 to 1869 was a period of the latent presence of Darwinism because it was not publicly discussed, and the reception varied from "zealous" acceptance to indications of ideological rejections. In the second period, from 1869 to 1900 (when the first translations of Darwin's book appeared), Darwinism was present as a scientific hypothesis among Croatian scholars and publicly debated. It was rejected only by a few biblical literalists. According to Balabanić, the third period from 1900 to 1980 was marked by strong instrumentalization of Darwinism for different ideological purposes (Communism, capitalism, Nazism, Fascism, eugenics). In Croatia, therefore, Darwinism was most often seen as part of the Communist ideology of scientific atheism and usually, depending on the ideological preference of the individual, was uncritically accepted or completely rejected. Some scholars, however, irrespective of their ideological orientation, rejected the idea of linking Darwinism with any ideology (Balabanić 2009, 393).

In the post-Communist period in Croatia, from the very beginning in 1990 until today, there has been continuous public debate over Darwinism versus creationism. This debate involves different protagonists (scientists, priests, theologians, philosophers, journalists, politicians, even one minister of education, members of civil society organizations, citizens etc.), different media (from TV, radio, newspapers, internet portals to the web pages of different organizations and Facebook groups) and different activities. These include, for instance, promotion of books dedicated to the theme, as well as public activities of different groups, such as demonstrations and public gatherings organized by the newly formed conservative traditionalist civil society organizations or newly established nonreligious and atheist

organizations as part of their struggle for different issues. This public debate has been enabled by and reflects primarily the process of democratization in Croatian society. Over the course of this process, supported by crucial legal solutions and political decisions and influence, the position and the role of (particularly) the Catholic Church and religion in general has substantially changed. The introduction of confessional religious instruction as the model of religious education in the public school system (in 1991) was crucial in an attempt to secure the cultural transmission of religious values to young generations. Nevertheless, according to research among primary school pupils, the parallel teaching of scientific and religious concepts in the Croatian curricula for more than 25 years now is not without its shortcomings and controversies. Science education and confessional religious instruction are taught independently, without substantial and dialogical or conflicting elements. They present evolutionary theory and creationism, central concepts of biology and catechetic teaching, independently and in different manners. Religious instruction seems better adjusted to younger pupils, however, and has better results among them, while older students "more readily express a need and readiness to re-examine their own beliefs and the Church's teachings". Moreover, "they expressed strong, elaborated, and diversified criticism of the Catholic Church, which was almost nonexistent among younger participants" (Jokić 2013, 334).

The acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution is highly important for the members of the newly formed nonreligious and atheist organizations. The data from recent research among members of organizations of nonreligious persons and atheists in Croatia (Hazdovac Bajić 2017) demonstrated that the theory of evolution represents an unquestionable scientific fact for them. For some of them this leads to a nonanthropocentric worldview, as can be seen from Mario's statement:

> I think that all living creatures are equally valuable. . . . We and our ancestors, we were all once animals. Let's go 4–5 million years back. And even less than that. Our ancestor was duller than today's chimpanzee. And what? Was he of less worth? So, my great, great, great and lots of times great grandfather was, in fact, a common ancestor of a chimpanzee and me. Perhaps cats will be some advanced specie in a couple of million years.
>
> (Mario)

Some of the interviewees pointed out that the theory of evolution was the key factor that directed them toward nonreligiosity or atheism. Mladen, who was a deeply religious person, pointed to this in his interview:

> Well, everything came together. I was too much . . . how can I explain this? I had too much knowledge to let just one person or one book change it. It was a long process. Really, I cannot say that somebody or

> something had a decisive effect on me. Perhaps my study of the theory of the evolution had the biggest influence on me.
>
> (Mladen)

Darwin´s theory of evolution certainly represents an important basis for an unreligious and atheist way of interpreting the world among members of nonreligious and atheist organizations in Croatia, providing them, to use Berger's and Luckmann's (1991) terms, with an alternative symbolic universe.

Secularism, nonreligiosity and atheism under Communism in Croatia

Marxism and Communist ideas were present in Croatia long before World War II and became the official ideology of the new state in 1943.[3] Already in 1894, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia, based on the ideas of Karl Marx, had been established. After the First World War, it split up and its left, revolutionary wing participated in the founding of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1919, within which the Communist Party of Croatia was organized. The ideological foundation of the party was Marxism, and its political program was based on the struggle for workers' rights and the destruction of the capitalist order. After the adoption of the Constitution in 1921, the party was prohibited altogether, and its members were imprisoned. Despite this, Marxism gained great popularity in the 1920s. Its main proponents were Communist-oriented writers and publicists: Oskar Prica, Božidar Adžija, Otokar Keršovani, Miroslav Krleža and August Cesarec. In the 1930s, Marxism was accepted as a relevant social theory; Marx's and Lenin's books were widely translated and read. *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels was translated in 1933 by the journalist and politician Moša Pijade (1890–1957).[4] Pijade was imprisoned at the time because of his illegal involvement with the Communist Party. He continued his activism even in prison, where he established connections with other like-minded people, such as Rodoljub Čolaković, with whom he translated Marx's *Capital, The Poverty of Philosophy* and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Oskar Prica translated Lenin's work, and Božidar Adžija wrote elaborate studies on Marx.

The greatest literary and cultural figure of the time was Miroslav Krleža, who achieved an enormous literary opus that included the most important texts of 20th-century Croatian literature. Initially fascinated by Lenin and the Soviet revolution, he became involved in the Communist movement and agreed with its anti-imperialist concept. With the approach of World War II, however, Krleža's faith in Communism weakened and declined; this was partly related to an aversion to the canons of socialist realism that became mandatory in the period of mature Stalinism. He consequently became one of the key figures in the so-called conflict on the left, in which leftist writers were divided between two literary aesthetics (social literature and surrealism).

Krleža advocated artistic freedom and, in this conflict, was closer to the surrealists. After World War II, he began to become more involved in social life after the Yugoslavian break with the Soviets Union's *Informbiro* and acted as a promoter of artistic liberty and liberation from social realism. Philosophers who participated in the conflict on the left, Zvonimir Richtmann and Rikard Podhorsky, "opposed their own neopositivist Marxism, backed by the new results of the natural sciences (especially quantum physics), to the Stalinized Marxist orthodoxy" (Kukoč 2009, 515).

Under the Communist rule in socialist Yugoslavia, religion and churches carried negative connotations and were mostly confined to the private sphere. Following Feuerbach's assumptions about the social roots of religion and Marx's concept of historical materialism, according to which all social upgrading reflects the inequality and injustice of the social base (productive economic relations), Communist ideology took an antagonistic attitude towards religion, perceiving it as a symbol of the old order, false consciousness and the legitimacy of oppression. Nonreligiosity and atheism became the institutionalized conformity patterns in socialist Yugoslavia. They were culturally transmitted through the public sphere, particularly through the educational system and the media.

As a prevailing ideology, atheism can be observed on several levels. On the personal level, it was perceived as an enlightenment-rationalist program that should be developed on the moral-psychological and cognitive dimension of the individuals. In this sense, it was a "constituent element of the socialist programme for the whole personality" (Ćimić 1971, 67–68), which influences the formation of human relationships built on the knowledge of scientifically verifiable facts and ultimately gives "the impression of fulfilment, strength and joy" (Ćimić 1971, 70). On the societal level, atheism is seen as a social practice aimed against "the perverted material relations of civil society that is based upon a commodity-money exchange and private property" (Ćimić 1971, 70). It is manifested as the socio-economic aspect that seeks to unite affiliated human labor with its own power. Thus, atheist criticism of religion became, in the broadest ideological sense, criticism of a certain (capitalist) social order. In other words, "the enlightenment fight against religion" is actually a struggle against the "inhuman state" of society (Supek 1987, 161) or, as Ćimić (1971, 107) phrased it:

> atheist action, which is the function of the entire activity of the League of Communists, cannot be separate propaganda. If we are resolved to remain in the trajectory and in the concept of Marx's thoughts, then we have to treat religion primarily as a relation, and secondarily as consciousness.

In accordance with this, an ideological "struggle" against religion and churches was fought in different areas of social life. As Zrinščak (2004) pointed out, however, this struggle went through two phases over time: conflict and cooperation. The first period lasted from the end of World War II

to the middle of the 1960s and could be characterized as a conflictual relation between the state and the church since the difference in worldviews was more pronounced, and the "ideological struggle" against religion and church in various fields was carried out. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the Vatican and the changes brought by the Second Vatican Council, the relationship between church and state entered into a relatively quiet period marked by more passive resistance to certain forms of cooperation. Such a relationship lasted until the social, political and economic changes in the early 1990s.

The essence of Communist Party positions and policies was mirrored in the social sciences; the social status of Marxism as an ideology and social theory was not questionable. In philosophy, however, there was a conflict in the 1960s between the dogmatic and "creative", humanistic or "opened" Marxism, whereby different interpretations of Marx's thought were profiled. Among them, the most significant was the so-called philosophy of practice (Petrović, Kangrga, Vranicki and others), a group gathered around the *Praxis* magazine (1964–1974) and annual international gatherings *Korčulanska ljetna škola* (Korčula Summer School) (1963–1974), which gained an international reputation. Korčula Summer School attracted many world-famous philosophers of the time such as Bloch, Marcuse, Lefebvre, Habermas, Fink, Goldmann, Kołakowski, Kosik, Morawski, Heller etc. These gatherings were a platform where Marxism was discussed by Western philosophers (who recognized Yugoslavia and self-governing socialism as more open than other countries of the Soviet bloc) as well as by Eastern philosophers (who were not prevented in participating by their authoritarian governments). International openness provided new approaches to Marxism and enabled connections with other contemporary philosophical orientations, such as phenomenology and existentialism (Sutlić, Petrović, Pejović). Hence, the *Praxis* group was resented by more orthodox Marxists gathered at other universities (in Serbia or Slovenia), in that it was "making a revision of Marxism under the influence of the fashionable trends of Western bourgeois philosophy" such as Jean-Paul Sartre's French existentialism and Heidegger's German idealism (Kukoč 2009, 516).

It is significant, however, that Croatian Marxist philosophers in general avoided tackling religious issues. In the rare moments when they referred to religion, they tried to refrain from "established controversial dogmas taken from the categorical apparatus of vulgar Marxist orientation", but still "hardly managed to avoid the antireligious charge from their doctrinaire Marxist inspiration" (Kukoč 1993, 73). From that period, only philosopher Banko Bošnjak explicitly addressed the issue of religion. His first paper published in *Praxis* (Bošnjak 1964) was written as a programmatic text inspired more by Lenin's aggressive atheist stance than by Marx's theoretical critique of religion (Kukoč 1993, 75). This approach is also visible in the paper, published in 1967, in which Bošnjak refutes the foundations of religion and religious beliefs following the development of atheist thought from ancient

philosophers (Heraclitus, Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius) and the French Enlightenment (Holbach) to Marx and Lenin, in whose ideas, according to him, atheism fulfills its full potential (because it includes practical action and social change and not only theoretical and ideological criticism). He concludes, referring to Lenin, that it is the duty of a socialist state to be "actively involved against religious understandings" (Bošnjak 1967, 975), because even if religion is the private matter of every individual, on a broader social scale, it calls for an ideological battle for liberation of genuine human nature. In his later work, this author moved to a somewhat more tolerant approach advocating dialogue and coexistence. Apart from Bošnjak, Vanja Sutlić indirectly touched on the phenomenon of religion in his book *Praksa rada kao znanstvena povijest* (*Practice of Work as a Scientific History*) from 1974. Dealing with basic philosophical questions and relying on Marx as his fundamental base, but also on Heidegger's philosophical ideas, he concludes that work is the absolute, the essence of everything and being itself (Kukoč 1993, 81). Therefore, among the Croatian philosophers of Marxism, Sutlić and his interpretation came closest to the new philosophical definition of God and religion.

Similar to philosophy, sociology saw religion through Marx's, Engels's and Lenin's theses, with the enlightenment-rationalist and positivistic scientific approach of the 18th century, which is visible from the first theoretical texts by Ćimić, Mandić and Fiamengo (Zrinščak 1993, 60). In the atmosphere of "opened" Marxism, however, atheism in the sociology of religion of the time meant not only an aggressive negation but also a new interpretation of human atheism. This new interpretation presupposes an anthropocentric position in which man has unprecedented opportunities for development through emancipation from God and a constant active fight against Him (Zrinščak 1993, 62–63). This stance was described by the sociologist Ivan Kuvačić:

> Developed based on self-governing social practice, which starts from man and his destiny and provides a historical alternative to Stalinism, our sociology is in its central, main orientation, together with the philosophy and criticism of the political economy, necessarily Marxist and humanistic, which specifically means that it nurtures criticism focused on removing the remaining and creating newer human forms of life.
> (1978, 18–19)

Religion is, despite the Marxist "openness", willingness to dialogue and understanding, seen a priori as a result of "the ignorance of the natural and social forces and conditions of man's life" that will unquestionably disappear through the realization of a human society based on the development of science and enlightenment actions (Ćimić in Zrinščak 1993, 60).[5]

On a broader social scale, although the socialistic Constitution guaranteed religious rights and freedom, it defined religion as a private matter,

thus making it socially irrelevant and publicly invisible. Therefore, both religious communities and religious people lived in a double reality: one that guaranteed the religious freedom and autonomy of religious communities and another that favored the nonreligious worldview (Zrinščak et al. 2014). During most of this period, religious people were considered, and more or less treated as, second-class citizens. However, despite the basic hostility of the Communist state towards religion and the church, they were widely spread in traditional forms across all segments of society making Croatia (together with Slovenia), in the context of confessional differences, the most religious (predominantly Catholic) part of former Yugoslavia. At the same time, state-propagated atheism had its effect in the continual growth of a population claiming to have no confessional affiliation during the Communist period. Numerous researches in the Zagreb region[6] and on the national level show data over time in this respect: for instance, 4% of the population claimed no confessional affiliation in the Zagreb region in 1968, 6% in 1972, 15% in 1982 and 20% in 1989. At a national level, 12.5% of respondents declared that they did not adhere to any confession in 1953 and 18% in 1989. The fall of Communism in the early 1990s changed this trend. The census from 1991 showed that the number of Croats claiming no confessional affiliation fell to 4%. The following censuses showed a stagnation or slight increase in the share of the nonconfessionally affiliated population: in 2001, it was 6% and in 2011, 7% of Croats. Additional research confirmed this data (Črpić and Zrinščak 2010; Marinović Jerolimov 1999, 2005; Nikodem 2004, 2011; Nikodem and Zrinščak 2012).

According to self-reported religiosity,[7] the data in Table 3.1 show the levels of religiosity and nonreligiosity in two different social and political contexts.

Table 3.1 (Non)religious self-identification in Zagreb and in Croatia in the socialist and post-socialist period.

Religious identification	*ZAGREB*			*CROATIA*			
	1972	*1982*	*1999*	*1984*	*1989*	*1996*	*2004*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Convinced believer	23	19	51	10	14	36	40
Religious	22	24	34	25	27	37	38
Uncertain	9	10	6	12	11	8	7
Indifferent	10	7	2	11	11	6	6
Not religious	**24**	**33**	**7**	**35**	**35**	**12**	**8**
Opposed to religion	**8**	**7**	**0**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**1**

Source: Surveys conducted by the Institute for Social Research-Zagreb in respective years on representative samples in the Zagreb region and national representative samples of the adult population over 18 years of age.

The data clearly show that: 1) 30–40% of Croatian citizens, both in the Zagreb region and on the national level, were nonreligious in the socialist time; 2) keeping in mind the lower levels of confessional affiliation, it is obvious that among nonreligious persons there were also those who declared belonging to some (mostly Catholic) confession at that time. Furthermore, according to different research from that period, nonreligious persons as well as atheists[8] had parents that belonged to some (mostly Catholic) confession (50–85% of them); they had a religious upbringing in their families (30–60% of them); they even believed (6%) or declared they were not sure (25%) that God exists; around 8% went to church occasionally, and more than 25% regularly celebrated major religious holidays (Marinović Jerolimov 1993). Therefore, the overall cultural embracing of Catholicism had its effect even among nonreligious persons at that time, be they from atheist families or from mixed atheist/religious families. Even at the beginning of the 1960s, one of the first research projects from the socialist period indicates different types of atheists: emotive atheists, rational atheists and pseudo-atheists – people who were, in fact, believers but, for different socio-psychological reasons (either conformism or defiance) declared themselves atheists (Ćimić 1971). Also of interest are some attitudes of religious and nonreligious people in the socialist period towards Marxism and socialism. Asked about their worldview, respondents in the Zagreb region in 1972 answered as follows (in %):

Table 3.2 Every person has a certain worldview developed during upbringing. Could you tell us about your worldview?

Non/religious identification	*Religious*	*Partly religious*	*Marxist*	*Partly Marxist*	*Neither*	*Better without a worldview*	*Haven't thought about it*	*Total*
Believer	44	23	1	4	6	3	19	44.6
Undecided	2	14	6	12	22	6	38	19.5
Nonreligious	0	4	24	27	21	4	21	18.0
Atheist	0	1	53	21	16	2	7	18.0
Total	**20**	**14**	**15**	**13**	**14**	**3**	**21**	**100.0**

While *religious* people mostly reported their worldview as religious or partly religious (67%), *atheists* mostly reported theirs as Marxist or partly Marxist (74%). Respondents who declared as *nonreligious*, although grouped dominantly as having a Marxist or partly Marxist worldview (51%), answered in a significant percentage that they had not thought about it (21%) or had neither of these worldviews (21%). Obviously, the question of a worldview is far more complex than religiosity itself. Answers that they did not think about it or that their worldview did not fall under either of these two confirmed this conclusion. It should be taken into account,

of course, that some respondents tried to avoid answering the question in these terms, recognizing the conformity pattern in ideology and society in general.

The question about the possibility of being religious and a follower of socialism at the same time showed that, while 74% of *firm believer*s confirmed it, as well as 89% of those who said they were religious, only 44% of those who declared themselves *opposed to religion* answered positively.

Even more distinctive was the similar question "Is it possible to be religious and a follower of the Marxist orientation?" While 41% of *firm believers* answered positively (but 39% answered that they did not know), only 9% of those *opposed to religion* found it possible. These answers both indicated and raised questions about the complexity of religiosity as well as nonreligiosity and atheism. It primarily provoked a discussion about awareness of religiosity and Marxism among religious and nonreligious people at that time and raised the question of the types of religiosity and nonreligiosity (rational, emotional etc.).

As can be seen from the presented data, religiosity and nonreligiosity and atheism were not homogenous, separated phenomena. A specific type of softer and more open Marxism and intertwined elements of religiosity and nonreligiosity among the population led to the possibility of mixing otherwise opposite worldviews (religious and socialist or Marxist). This possibility was predominantly dismissed, however, toward the more firm end of the spectrum that encompassed those who were opposed to religion.

Nonreligiosity and atheism in post-Communist Croatia

The transitional context in Croatia, as well as in other post-Communist countries, has been marked by the transformation of the institutional, industrial, economic and cultural structures of society, followed by parallel processes of liberalization and democratization as preconditions of political and social changes. Within the process of socio-cultural changes, religion has occupied an important place. The positions of religion on the one hand and nonreligiosity and atheism on the other hand have changed their social desirability with the changes in the socio-political system. Nonreligiosity and atheism thus moved from being socially preferred and conformist positions to undesirable and nonconformist. Empirical data indicate a change in the share of nonreligious persons and atheists (see Table 3.1). Similar to the Communist period, however, data indicate a mixing of religious and nonreligious elements often making it "blurry". For instance, some of the religious citizens, along with a high level of confessional and religious identification, religious socialization in the family, belief in God and regular church attendance, parallelly accept alternative beliefs or reject the acceptance of Catholic moral norms concerning sexuality and marriage (Marinović Jerolimov 2006; Marinović Jerolimov and Ančić 2014; Nikodem and Zrinščak 2012; Zrinščak 2011),[9] which points to a range of diffused secularity at the level of

values. Similar to what was evidenced in the Communist period, some of the nonreligious persons and atheists adhere to an affiliation to a certain confession (mostly Catholic), come from families within which they received religious instruction, state high levels of confessional belonging in their parents and celebrate religious holidays in their families (Hazdovac Bajić 2017).

On the more general level, it is apparent that, during socialism, Croatian society was marked by socialist modernization (which included planned industrialization, urbanization, an increase in education, women's employment and atheism) and secularization, i.e., secularism,[10] while in the post-socialist times, Croatia is marked by processes of desecularization (Berger 1999) and deprivatization (Casanova 1994). Here we refer to the shift in symbolic (cultural) meaning that is also occurring in historically specific relations between religious/secular and political power (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012).

For our current theme, several facts are important, reflecting the social position of the dominant Catholic Church in the new democratic social and political system. There is no doubt that its position is somehow privileged in relation to that of other religious communities. Another important issue is the overall public discourse of the representatives of the Catholic Church. The narratives of the church elite are mostly placed around a connection between national and religious ("God and Croats"). Anti-Communism is another common topic in their narratives, reflecting their reaction to and rejection of the legacy of Communism. In the background, there is always a criticism over imposed and overarching Communist atheism. After the former president of the Republic of Croatia Ivo Josipović publicly declared himself an agnostic, a well-known Catholic theologian gave a long interview criticizing the notion that an agnostic could be the president of an almost completely Catholic population (Uznik 2009). It could therefore be said that in these new social and political circumstances, by forcing religiosity through the system and by hierarchizing religious communities through regulating religion, the state put the nonreligious (and non-Catholic) citizens in an unequal position. They became second-class citizens (although this cannot be perceived in terms of oppression). This was confirmed by research conducted among parents of nonreligious pupils who did not attend religious instruction class in public schools, who claimed that their children were discriminated against either by other children or by the overall social climate in society and at schools that favor religiosity (Ančić and Puhovski 2011). Moreover, analysis of textbooks conducted by Marinović (2018) indicates that (Catholic) religious instruction textbooks are not at all tolerant and dialogical in the case of atheism and irreligious people. Atheism is absolutely unacceptable from the Catholic point of view. Textbooks do not develop the spirit of tolerance towards atheism and atheists postulated by the II Vatican Council but offer a confusing image of the world to students, in which nonbelievers (living with their parents among believers) become "people with a mistake" and "an object of urgent correcting". Textbook

instruction for students is quite clear: unacceptance of difference but a correction of atheists and prevention of atheism by evangelization. The textbooks change the II Vatican Council dialogue principle "to know to better understand" to "to know to prevent and convert" (Marinović 2018). Furthermore, the organizing of nonreligious citizens and atheists in various formal and informal groups (whose aim is to protect and promote nonreligious and atheist rights and interests) also testifies to their perception of their own position as unequal and discriminated against. The concrete activities of these groups and the social reactions to these activities further support a perception of inequality (e.g., an attempt to organize the Atheist Bus Campaign in Zagreb) (Marinović Jerolimov and Hazdovac Bajić 2017).

There are nine organizations of nonreligious persons and atheists in Croatia. Five of them are forma*l – Protagora, David, LiberOs, At3a, Centar za građansku hrabrost* (Center for Civil Courage) – and four informal: *Nisam vjernik* (I'm Not a Believer), *Koalicija za sekularizam* (Coalition for Secularism), *Pokret za sekularnu Hrvatsku* (Movement for Secular Croatia) and *Ateisti i agnostici Hrvatske* (Atheists and Agnostics of Croatia).[11] Although these organizations differ in terms of their internal organization, goals, activities, strategies, group dynamic etc., their main interest is to protect the rights of atheists and nonreligious persons as a minority group in Croatia. Organizations of nonreligious persons and atheists (especially formal ones) gather only a small number of members, but they are publicly active, media covered and, for some activities, have the potential to attract larger numbers of sympathizers and stronger public interest.

Milan Polić (1946–2015), founder of *Protagora*,[12] the largest and most renowned formal organization of nonreligious persons in Croatia, was a prominent Croatian philosopher. Although his main field of interest was the philosophy of education, his basic ideas were also applicable in terms of attitudes toward religion: "free development of the personality is not a random subsistence or default ageing by biological or social necessity, but mental self-determination" (Polić 2015, 173). Polić followed the development of a free personality, which often involved resistance to collectivity or the rejection of conformism, in the philosophical thought from Socrates (who first theoretically stood for it and then confirmed it through the historical act of civil liberty) through Rousseau to classical German idealism. Two other prominent philosophers included in this type of activism are Željko Porobija and Pavel Gregorić, who coauthored a book *Horizonti ateizma* (*Horizons of Atheism*) (2017). This book, written in epistolary form, includes the exchange of opinions between two authors who come from completely different positions,[13] but who express distinct similarities and firm agreement regarding their relationship to religion. Their fundamental attitude is naturalism (methodological and ontological), and they express trust in natural sciences and the acceptance of the theory of evolution.

The research into the organized groups of nonreligious persons and atheists in Croatia (Hazdovac Bajić 2017) showed the particular influence

of the movement of New Atheism and its main representatives (the four horsemen – Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, Hitchens) on the individual as well as the group level. The very emergence of organizations of nonreligious persons and atheists in Croatia coincides with the momentum of New Atheism in the UK and the US,[14] and it can be assumed, given the popularity the authors of New Atheism enjoy among the members, that it was the impetus for the organization, although it is not specifically mentioned anywhere. The influence of New Atheism is evident in some other elements of organized activity in Croatia: the organization of Reason Rally in Zagreb and Split and regular Sceptics in the Pub gatherings; celebrating the Festivus; attempts to organize the Atheist Bus Campaign in 2009, modeled on the British example and printing the book *Humanism for Kids*, written using the example of a book of the same name which was published in the US. Along with the aforementioned forms of taking over foreign activities, the great influence of the New Atheism is noticeable at the individual level since the members of the organizations are well acquainted with its authors and books:

> Definitely Richard Dawkins and his book *The God Delusion*. I follow these leading atheist intellectuals, Dawkins, Sam Harris . . . I don't know . . . the late Hitchens. I've been watching their debates online, listening and reading their books. So, definitely, they play a big part in my world view.
>
> (Davor)

In accordance with the prevailing position of New Atheism, religion is seen as a phenomenon which is, at this point, although of great importance in the history of humankind, redundant and represents a relic of the past. This stance is evident in the following quotes:

> To me, religion is a very interesting phenomenon. Here I think of religion as part of the way in the development of humankind, in the evolution of human species. But, I think that at this point in time, it should be outgrown.
>
> (Ivana)

> Religion intrigues me. I consider it to be a very important element in human development since . . . man is still primitive and because of that religion still exists.
>
> (Marko)

Some interviewees also point out that New Atheists had an important role for them personally because they influenced the formation of their nonreligiousness or atheism. New Atheism offered them a different way of understanding the world and helped them express their attitudes.

> I'm following the work of New Atheists, especially the most famous ones. And it's interesting to me, I think they have interesting ideas and often I have the feeling that they verbalize my attitudes.
>
> (Željka)

> A book that was very important to me was Darwin's *Selfish Gene* at one time due to the possibility of giving me some alternative.
>
> (Jakov)

Although most of the interviewees enthusiastically and uncritically accept the ideas of New Atheism, there are some who point to some criticism. The criticism concerns the weakest points of the New Atheism: the scientistic approach and conception of religion as an incorrect hypothesis (LeDrew 2015) or the focus on the cognitive aspect, which is a reductionist approach to religion. Some interviewees' criticism also focused on the overly aggressive and militant approach.

> I've read Dawkins a lot. He is a great evolutionary biologist, and I respect him primarily as such. I think he is better at explaining the alternative than dealing with religion. I'm not convinced of his approach, either. OK, he is exposed to different kinds of pressure and fanaticism, so he answers using the same language. But I think that he gets some things wrong. He is a scientist and thinks causally and believes that he can explain some things to religious people, to whom definitions are of no relevance. They do not seek explanations.
>
> (Jakov)

It should also be noted that, although New Atheism has given a certain impetus for nonreligious and atheist organizations and specific activities, the leading thinkers of this type of activism in Croatia (such as Polić and Porobija) tend to refer to classic Greek philosophers and French Enlightenment thinkers rather than to prominent New Atheists. In other words, New Atheism is important in terms of providing forums for public appearances and modes of public outreach and offering ideas for criticizing religion, which create the common foundation for nonreligious persons and atheists to connect with one another. It is not well accepted, however, as a theoretical or ideological basis among the intellectual core of this type of activism in Croatia.

Conclusion

If one wants to analytically describe atheism and secularization in Croatian society in order to gain a more synthesizing insight, the concept of the semi-periphery could be engaged. It seems that the history of atheism and

secularization does not contain originality within the context of Croatian society and its history of the last 150 years. From the perspective of its semi-peripheral position, the ideas of rejecting traditional social or religious belief systems were part of similar tendencies in Europe, either as a form of rejecting hegemony or as part of a state-imposed ideology due to the spread of socialism or influence of new social movements (New Atheism) in the last few years. It seems that the relationship between nonreligiosity and religiosity in Croatian society follows patterns similar to those that can be observed in other countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Borowik et al. 2013). One might ask the question "To what extent do global trends in the relationship between religion and nonreligion unfold on a local level or, in this case, in Croatian society?" Some societies with the experience of socialist history, such as the Croatian, had quite an intense relationship over the last 70 years between religious systems and the ideas derived from atheism and secularization due to intense disruptions that occurred after WWII and the fall of the Berlin Wall. From the perspective of secularization theory, it could have been expected that, in the post-socialist period, religion, which was under strong antireligious pressure during socialism, would experience the resumption of secularization and an overall decrease in significance. Notwithstanding, religion experienced a great return since revitalization of religion and a religious revival occurred, not only in Croatia but also in some other post-socialist societies (Borowik and Tomka 2001; Tomka 2011). The religious revival unfolded on an individual level and on the level of society in general. The overall increase in various dimensions of religiosity, such as denominational belonging, religious practices, trust in the church, belief in God etc. (Müller 2004, 2008) occurred on an individual level while, in the public sphere, religion became a relevant social actor, specifically in the political and civil society arena. Empirical analysis thus far has not pointed to a significant trend in the increase of nonreligious elements on the individual level, but there is a clear increase in the public sphere of atheist and secular protagonists (individuals and organizations) (Hazdovac Bajić 2017; Marinović Jerolimov and Hazdovac Bajić 2017), who are active in promoting their ideas and concepts.

As stated before, Croatian society has a strong monoconfessional character, and in the process of religious revival after the collapse of socialism, religion per se in Croatia could be described as institutionalized, publicly influential and traditional/conservative. Although there are almost 45 years of experience of atheist and secular ideas and concepts in Croatian society, only in the last several years have these ideas and concepts relied on built-up organizational action. In the last several years, we have also witnessed the spread of the elements of culture wars in Croatian society, specifically involving topics concerning gender, bioethics and education. Organized atheist and secular protagonists are investing their efforts in participating in public debates on the aforementioned culture wars topics, but thus far, they are not publicly recognized as primary protagonists in the struggle. It

is therefore of sociological importance to continue to explore how these protagonists could develop their strategies in the future.

Notes

1 The so-called *Praxis* group (see later in text).

2 Josip Balabanić is a Croatian biomedical scientist. He translated Darwin's books into Croatian and published scientific papers on the reception of Darwin's ideas in Croatia.

3 The Croatian public was informed about the Communist movement and Marx through newspapers as early as the 1850s. Marx was regarded as "a minor figure suppressed under the more famous names of French anarchists and early socialists" (Globačnik 2017, 186). He became interesting for the Croatian press again around the events concerning the Paris Commune in the late 1860s and early 1870s but was portrayed in a negative way. Under the influence of the German and Austrian Social Democrats of the time, however, Marx's ideas became more popular among Croatian intellectuals. (Globačnik 2017).

4 The first translation of Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto* in the region was published in periodical fashion in the magazine *Pančevac* in Belgrade in Serbia in 1871. The translation, as well as the preface, was anonymous (Bogdanić 2011).

5 The different position of Yugoslavia within the Communist bloc, as well as its position and active role in establishing the world Nonaligned Movement, affected its political reception at the international level as a more open Communist country. This is the reason that, in order to discuss nonreligiosity and atheism, a neglected theme within the sociology of religion, the *Conference Internationale de Sociologie Religiouse* (CISR), todays *Société Internationale de Sociologie des Religions* (International Society for the Sociology of Religion) decided to organize their 11th conference for the first time in a Communist country behind the "Iron Curtain". To show the openness of the CISR, it was decided that the 11th conference should take place in a Croatian town on the Adriatic coast, Opatija, in September 1971; the central theme of this conference was Religion and Religiosity, Atheism and Non-belief in Industrial and Urban Society. A major task for CISR was "to ensure that the conference would be a scientific meeting and not a discussion of Christians versus Marxists. And in Yugoslavia, it had to ensure that the conference did not incite oppositions from the Catholic Church, the Apostolic Nuncio and the Archbishop of Zagreb, and the Yugoslavian State Institute on Religions and Atheism" (Dobbelaere 2011). The conference in Opatija was a success; there were 211 participants from 23 different countries; one third came from Yugoslavia; one third from Belgium, France and Italy and, among the other participants, six came from Eastern Europe (none from Russia) and three from Africa.

6 Zagreb is the capitol of Croatia where 25% of the Croatian population lives.

7 As an indicator of religious identification, a six-item scale has been used, which presents a continuum from a convinced believer to an opponent of religion. It brought about a differentiation within religious respondents, those who found themselves between religiosity and nonreligiosity and nonreligious respondents. The question "If you were asked about your relationship to religion, where would you place yourself?" allowed the respondents to choose from the following answers: 1. I am a convinced believer, and I accept everything my religion teaches; 2. I am religious although I do not accept everything my religion teaches; 3. I think about this issue a lot, but I am not certain whether I believe or not; 4. I am indifferent towards religion; 5. I am not religious, but I don't have anything against religion; 6. I am not religious, and I oppose religion.

8 Following Campbell (1971), nonreligiosity is understood as a broader concept that includes atheism and other forms and attitudes towards religion, hostility, indifference and rejection.

9 It should be taken into account that in both Communist and post-Communist times, some nonreligious and respectively religious citizens declared their (non) religiousness according to the leading conformist pattern and not as their true beliefs or attitudes.

10 Secularism as an ideology according to Wilson (2005).

11 Atheists and Agnostics of Croatia is a Facebook group, but it is included here because of its marked activity with the public and the organization of regular informal monthly gatherings called Coffee with Unbelievers, which are held simultaneously in various towns in Croatia.

12 Protagoras was a Greek philosopher. In his book *About the Gods*, Protagoras argues, "We cannot know about gods whether they are or they are not, nor what is their form, because many things prevent the reliable knowledge, ambiguity and shortness of human life". Because of his attitudes, he is today considered a skeptic and one of the first agnostics.

13 Željko Porobija has a PhD in theology; he was a pastor in the Protestant Adventist Church and dean of the Adventist Theological College in Croatia. After a long process of internal reexamination (about which he often publicly speaks), he left his faith and church and accepted an atheist position. Pavel Gregorić has a PhD in philosophy; he is professor of philosophy at the University of Zagreb. He is an atheist and was never religious.

14 The association *Protagora* was the first organization of nonreligious people and atheists established in 2006 in Zagreb. Most of the New Atheists' books are translated into Croatian.

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4 Freethinkers and atheists in the Czech Lands in the 20th century

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The Czech Republic ranks among the most indifferent countries in terms of religion, and the complicated attitude of the Czech population towards religion and religious institutions can be considered one of the characteristic features of modern Czech society (Václavík 2010). This phenomenon is confirmed by sociological research, including data gained from a census. In the latest 2011 census, for example, 35% of the population claimed to be of "no religious faith", and only 21% explicitly declared some form of religious belief.[1] Nevertheless, the question remains: What do these sociological data mean, and should the part of the population identifying as "without religious faith" be simply considered modern nonbelievers or even atheists? If the later mentioned data on the high level of religious nonbelief in the Czech Republic signifies anything, it is, above all, the gradually changing attitude of Czechs towards traditional religious institutions. The phenomenon frequently labeled "Czech atheism" is actually a manifestation of a negative attitude towards churches and centralized and institutional forms of spirituality (Václavík and Václavíková Helšusová 2006). To understand the current situation in Czech society and its attitudes, it is important to look back at the beginnings and development of nonreligious thinking, which began to develop in the 19th century and especially in the beginning of the 20th century, specifically in the form of freethinking.

Two streams within the Freethought movement and its institutionalization

The negative attitude towards traditional religious institutions in the Czech Lands is rooted in the 19th century and became an integral part of the rising national awareness. The establishment of an independent Czech state (Czechoslovakia) in 1918 strengthened this attitude. The Catholic Church, with its dominant position in the sphere of religious life, was considered an embodiment of the old authoritative regime by the representatives of the new democracy and was seen as hostile towards the national and democratic interests as well as towards new forms of nontraditional religiosity.

It is difficult to characterize atheist and nonbelief positions within the newly forming modern Czech society because these positions were rarely declared, and even if they were, it was never systematic. During the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which the Czech Lands were a part, it was due to fear of persecution, be it institutional or social. Atheism was more often discussed by Catholic theologians and philosophers who thus created a specific discourse that had apologetic purposes and attacked those who held other views on religious issues. Many theologians of those times did not differentiate, however, between atheism, agnosticism, anticlericalism, or nonbelief and therefore even people who only disobeyed church discipline and hierarchy, or who criticized church practices were labeled as atheists. Within this theological discourse of antiatheist struggle, nonbelief was seen as a result of the moral decay, intellectual skepticism, or spiritual weakness of an individual. Tomáš G. Masaryk, the first Czechoslovak president and a key figure in its intellectual life, claimed that despite the period's religious skepticism and crisis, genuine atheism was rather rare and exceptional (Masaryk 1904/1947, 32).

In the Czech Lands, atheist and anticlerical attitudes were originally closely connected to the concepts of Freethought. Anticlericalism and the focus on rationalism had been ripening since the first half of the 19th century. The Czech Lands were then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and many Czechs believed that national identity or "Czechness" could only assert itself in opposition to Vienna (as the capital of the monarchy) and Rome (as the center of the Catholic Church), i.e., in opposition to official state policy, religion and their authoritarianism. Some Czech nationalists, mainly groups influenced by German liberalism, conceived the idea of a nation as a fundamental requirement for self-identification while the official church politics were seen as the enemy of Czech national interests. Czech identity and national awareness were formed during this period by a critique of the Church and of the political situation. Czech intellectuals, whose ideas closely resembled Voltaire's, were among those who led, although often only privately, a struggle for the improvement of the situation.

The history of Czech Freethought in the first decades of the 20th century well illustrates the inner character of Czech nonbelief and atheism, soon splitting into two main basic streams: positivistic-progressive and Marxist-proletarian (Kudláč 2005). The first stream was influenced by the positivism of Herbert Spencer (rather than of Auguste Comte). It stressed rational cognition, scientific data and empiricism. The second was based on the philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and on dialectical and historical materialism, as well as on the ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach on the one side, and Georgi Plechanov on the other. Apart from the attitude towards anticlericalism, these two streams were the main cause of the lasting schism in the formation of the Freethought movement.

For the Czech progressive movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, the traditional strong bond with the German intellectual avant-garde was

fundamental; however, at the same time connections to representatives of French, English and American Freethought existed as well. Particularly in the beginning of the 20th century, many important texts were translated into Czech, such as works by Voltaire, Denis Diderot, Sigmund Freud, Ernest Renan, Émile Durkheim, Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell etc. This fact clearly illustrates that, until the 1930s, the prevailing influence was that of Western Freethought and atheism rather than Marxist atheism. Marxist atheism gained ground after WWII and, following the rise of the state Communist regime, began to dominate. Translations of Western authors also disappeared, with only very few exceptions.

In the interwar period, the Czech Lands were mostly Catholic, and thus anticlericalism and criticism of papacy and the Roman Catholic Church were seen as typical features of progressive movements (Kozák 1925, 3–47). A specific role was also played by various interpretations of the Hussite movement and other forms of the Czech Reformation considered the roots or historical manifestations of "Czech progressiveness". The anti-Catholic propaganda and struggle brought Freethought together with, in spite of all their evident differences, Monists, Social Democrats and anarchists (Kudláč 2005, 36–37). While progress[2] was associated not only with the critique of clericalism as a form of Catholicism, but sometimes also with nonreligiousness, some intellectuals considered the reducing of progressiveness to the struggle against clericalism to be an inadmissible limitation of the progressive program and rejected the so-called progressive front. The defense of progress was therefore not automatically understood as a rejection of religion but as an attempt at its improvement as well.

The Marxist-proletarian stream was based on the view that positivist-oriented Freethought gave up on the original materialism in favor of positivist empiricism and agnosticism and is therefore unable to stand up to a religious worldview. In fact, it opened the doors to it instead. If there is any atheism left in the positivist stream, it is limited to criticism of clericalism. Therefore, so-called bourgeois atheism cannot establish a genuine path to the overcoming of religion. It was believed that the only plausible alternative was the proletarian, Marxist, truly scientific atheism that was closely connected to the proletariat's class struggle. Such a form of atheism goes hand in hand with a change in the entire society, not only with criticism of its conditions, but also its negation (Blažek et al. 1962, 39–41).

The international context of Czech Freethought

In order to situate the Czech freethinking movement in an international context, there is a need to outline it chronologically. The first Freethought society in Europe was founded as early as 1854 in Brussels, and more came into existence in the 1860s and 1870s, especially in Germany and France. These frequently took the form of British style associations or clubs and only later evolved into mass movements. In 1880, an international association,

Fédération internationale de la libre pensée,[3] was established, turning into an umbrella organization for various national Freethought and atheist groups of diverse streams and opinions. Generally, it can be stated that the *Fédération* associated thinkers of various positions, such as liberals, positivists, materialists, socialists, anarchists and atheists as well as believers. Its aim was promoting freedom of thought and freedom of life (Milde 1947, 23).

The development in the Czech Lands was similar. The so-called Young Czech Party (officially, the National Liberal Party) radicals[4] Alfons Šťastný and Josef Barák, who in the 1860s harshly criticized the Catholic Church based on Feuerbach's criticism of religion, began issuing anticlerical and atheist press and initiated the founding of nonbelievers associations (Gollová 1984, 218). Šťastný himself established the first Freethought association in Bohemia; however, it did not last long because in 1874, shortly after its founding, it was dissolved by Austrian Empire officials.

Due to state interventions, Czech freethinkers began to systematically organize as late as the beginning of the 20th century, resulting in the reestablishment of the association named *Spolek Augustin Smetana* (Augustin Smetana[5] Association) in 1904; in 1906, it was renamed *Volná myšlenka* (Free Thought) in Prague. The association was defined especially in opposition to the establishment represented by political Catholicism. Clearly, nonbelief and atheism were not fundamental presuppositions for membership in Czech Freethought, at least at the movement's formation. The key concept was freedom of thought and the strength to resist any authority that denied or compromised it. Freethought members were thus connected by their resistance to Catholicism and clericalism and often a very sharp criticism of the Church circumstances. The first president of *Volná myšlenka*, Josef Svatopluk Machar, was a pantheist and a militant anticlerical whose lectures irritated Catholic clergy as well as common believers (cf. Machar 1914). The aim of the *Volná myšlenka* association was to propagate freethinking, protect free scientific research, promote freedom of conscience in personal as well as social life and cultivate a sense of solidarity among its members.

The founding members of the association were very active both nationally and internationally. The Czech association was incorporated as a regular member of the international Freethought association as early as 1907, at the time of the World Freethought Congress in Prague. In 1905, a monthly periodical under the same name was launched, followed a year later by another, *Volná škola* (*Free School*), devoted to the promotion of science in education as well as the separation of church and state, which would naturally lead to secular schooling. Several years later, *Havlíček*, a plebeian, sharply anticlerical bi-weekly, was issued, and *Neruda* aimed at becoming a high-quality political broadsheet. Apart from these periodicals, the *Krematorium* (Crematorium) Association was founded as part of the Freethought movement and published its own as well.

Holding world congresses of the International Freethought Federation in Prague in 1907, 1920 and 1936 can be considered a testament to the

association's organizational skills and documents the fact that Czech free-thinkers were fully trusted by the International Freethought Federation. Members of the Czech Freethought association participated in all the world congresses since its founding in 1904 and were considered among the most active, enjoying international respect.

The aforementioned ideological disagreements between these two streams – positivistic and Marxist-proletarian – created tensions, however, resulting in the first split in 1908 due to conflicting attitudes towards anti-clericalism, which was far more radical among the left-wing part. This led to the founding of the union *Svaz socialistických monistů* (Socialist Monists Union) in 1912, a strictly nonreligious organization politically close to the Social Democrats.

In 1915, the Freethought association *Volná myšlenka* was dissolved by the authorities because of its anti–Austrian Empire activities, and some of its members were jailed. Nevertheless, in 1919, after the First World War (i.e., in independent Czechoslovakia), the association was reestablished, obtaining a legal status. The change from a monarchy to a democratic state, however, intensified ideological differences, and the search for a new "positivist" orientation aimed at a "secular religious movement" modeled after Auguste Comte (Milde 1947, 27). Additional reasons for post-WWI conflicts within the movement were the attitude towards Communism and the question of whether the movement should be called "socialist" (Milde 1947, 28). Finally, political neutrality became the movement's standpoint, which caused some members to leave the association and was possibly responsible for a decline in its prestige.

The tension within the Freethought movement between positivists and Marxists (or rather Communists) had several fundamental causes. Marxists criticized "the bourgeois character" of the movement and its misunderstanding of the true base of religion. Traditional Freethought was, according to Marxists, capable of critique of religion only of the Voltaire-like kind, of superficial anticlericalism and of a positivist understanding of religion as a relict, while the Marxist attitude was based on the concept of class struggle. One objective of the struggle was a complete elimination of religion. Left-wing members were thus more radical in their attitude towards religion as well as towards the capitalist society of the early Czechoslovak state. The Marxist faction of the movement was led by Communists who supported their critical stance with Marx-Leninist philosophy. In order to spread their ideas, they began to publish the periodical *Maják* (*Lighthouse*) in 1923.

In 1946, a new association was founded called *Svaz občanů bez vyznání* (Union of Nonbeliever Citizens), drawing on the legacy of both the Freethought association *Volná myšlenka* and the Union of Proletarian Nonbelievers. Such an institutional "unification" of the two movements was due to the postwar situation. Ideologically and politically, the new union leaned towards socialism, and the creation of a nonreligious ethic ranked among its main objectives.

Ideological diversity in the Freethought movement and its practical dimension

From its inception, the Freethought association *Volná myšlenka* was a very diverse platform not aimed at a particular ideologically unified position, much less at atheism. It was headed by people who, although unanimously rejecting clericalism, differed in their positions on atheism and religion. The association's status declared that Freethought as a world-movement "defends freedom of thought in religious, political, economic, social, cultural and any other field. It defends freedom of human conscience" (*Volná myšlenka československá – historie, zásady a cíle – stanovy spolku* 1921, 3), which allowed for the defense of various streams of thought. *Volná myšlenka* did not want to be dogmatic but considered itself a method, a means of (independent) thinking (*Volná myšlenka československá – historie, zásady a cíle – stanovy spolku* 1921, 7). At the same time, the movement was apolitical (i.e., transcending political parties) and ideologically diverse – a form of apolitical politics. Among its main aims was replacing the social roles of old and outdated religions in the state. Freethought maintained the scientific concept of truth. Its objectives were not only theoretical and rationalistic but practical as well and stressed the impact of the proclaimed concepts on individual personal life.

Great attention was therefore paid to secular or natural ethics. The fundamental position was that Freethought's ethics stood ideologically against traditional religious ethics (Kopecký 1926, 33). The proponents of natural morality claimed its validity was based on the period's historicism. It was argued that lay (or natural) morality was older than religious ethics and, because it "had existed before religion",[6] could claim a greater social justification. Sometimes, a morality without god was considered a lay or secular morality, and it was believed that a new ethics would be created on the basis of scientific findings. The principles for this new ethics were elaborated, for example, at the Freethought World Congress in Paris in 1905 and summarized in the following statement: morality is a natural and social phenomenon; it cannot be of absolute character and validity; it evolves similarly as a society; it is validated by rational acceptance, not by imperative (Buisson 1906, 46–47).

The attitude of Czech freethinkers towards religion, as we shall see, was ambiguous. Religion was considered a private affair. The main premise, nevertheless, was that no state or political power should privilege a particular church or a religion legally and/or economically. Freethought required the abandoning of religious state holidays, the nationalization of church property (seen as a kind of public property), the establishment of lay or secular schools and allowing for the possibility of divorce and the right to cremation.

The call for the right to cremation in particular gave rise to an important social phenomenon – the cremation movement. (For more detail, see Nešpor

2011.) Freethinker representatives mainly stressed its medical, aesthetic and economic benefits and argued against its objectors, especially the proponents of traditional church funerals, considered a more primitive form of burial. Philosophically, they justified the 19th century attempts to change funeral practices by stressing the "eternal circulation of matter" (Pelant 1909, 31) and by studies of ancient cultures.[7] They also saw the refusal of cremation as part of the resistance to progress and equated support for cremation with criticism and elimination of clericalism and of the cultural domination of the Catholic Church.

Czech Freethought also defined itself as a movement focused on two spheres of activities – the first being education and upbringing, the second freedom of speech and criticism of authoritative forms of knowledge. The two were not seen as separate but, on the contrary, as interlinked spheres. Freethought, for example, rejected the so-called "majority law" and supported the rights of political as well as religious minorities. The movement refused any form of forced learning and supported free education and upbringing. Therefore, a free school that educated as well as nurturing represented the key institution of a democratic state. Cultural and economic development was seen as dependent on the level of public education. Free school was to encourage independent development of skills and the individual talents of pupils; it was to be achieved by the separation of schools from the Church and modifications of the voting system in schools, as well as by the ideologically neutral worldview attitude of its pedagogues (*Co je to volná škola?* 1907). In order to achieve these goals, schools had to be secularized (laicized), based on democratic and national principles and the knowledge provided built on a scientific ground. Laicization of schooling meant that pupils should be free from compulsory participation at mass (religious service), religious symbols should be removed from school buildings, and a new law should guarantee that religious affiliation or nonbelief should not prevent a person from applying for the post of school principal. It was also required that religious education (even as an optional course) be excluded from schools and that free school's staff should only consist of teachers who left the Church and were devout democrats (Čálek 1920). The state should assume a neutral position in the process of education and upbringing (i.e., should exercise no influence on the worldview or political or religious opinions of the pupils). It is interesting to note that the democratic stance, which is perceived as clearly political nowadays, was seen as the opposite of the religious, ecclesiastic, authoritative position.

Many of the concepts and ideas discussed here were put into practice after WWI with the founding of an independent democratic Czechoslovakia, with some embodied in its legal system. Based on the new needs of the Czech population, a remarkable manual *Právní rádce pro osoby bezkonfesní* (*Advisor for Citizens with No Confession*) was written by the lawyer Richard Aron, offering legal advice to citizens without religious affiliation and nonbelievers on how to proceed when, for example, they wanted to leave

the Church; the relationship between school and church; how to arrange a civil wedding or funeral; how to register a newborn without church affiliation etc. The manual became very popular among freethinkers. Nevertheless, most of Czechoslovakian society, although preferring democracy, was only gradually growing used to such novelties and was not always ready to respect the newly gained rights of nonbelieving citizens.

From this, it is apparent that the building blocks for the formation of Czech secularity and religious indifference were not just a consequence of Communist ideology. In interpreting the issue, there is a need to pay much more attention to historical developments throughout the 20th century, not just in its second half. A number of Communist ideas and attitudes towards religion had begun to form much earlier; therefore, atheism and nonreligion became embedded in the roots of Czech society relatively more successfully than in many other countries of the Eastern Bloc.[8]

Scientific atheism based on Marx-Leninism after 1948

The restoration of Czechoslovakia after WWII resulted not only in regaining lost independence, but also in the unfortunate fact that postwar Czechoslovakia fell into the Soviet sphere of influence. Due to that situation, the position of Marxists grew increasingly stronger even before the Communist coup in February 1948, after which Czechoslovakia became a political and ideological satellite of Soviet Russia. In the transition years of 1945 through 1948, the interwar generation of Marxist thinkers played a major role. For them, religion was a marginal phenomenon to which they devoted only brief attention in their analyses of (particularly Czech) history. Religion was seen and interpreted in accordance with the concept, mentioned earlier, of Czech progressivism, anti-Catholicism and anticlericalism as a backwards, antihumanistic system.

If certain religious movements were regarded positively (such as the Hussite movement and some streams of the so-called radical reformation such as Taborites), it was only because they were socially innovative, and their emphasis on social equality and justice was therefore seen as anticipating Communism. One of the interpretations of the Hussite movement postulated a highly controversial but, during the Communist era, broadly spread idea that the legacy of the Hussite traditions was directly carried on by the Communists. Some other intellectuals promoted a similar idea that the Hussite movement was the first modern revolution caused by "the rise of urban goods production" (Kalivoda 1961, 59). Certain Marxist intellectuals compared the Hussite movement to other revolutions, concluding that it, indeed, was the first revolution of the early bourgeois type.

It was possible, at least in the transitory period when Czech society was not yet explicitly exposed to bolshevization and Sovietization, to connect Marxist interpretations of religion to non-Marxist, often nationalistically anti-Catholic and anticlerical ones (represented, for example, by the

aforementioned Lubomír Milde) in order to create the impression that it was all just a systematic elaboration on one of the most significant features of "Czech thought".

The coup in February 1948 brought about the final establishment of the Communist dictatorship, harsh antichurch and anti-Catholicism policies as well as enforcement of the Marx-Leninist version of atheism as the only correct and acceptable ideology. The Freethought movement *Volná myšlenka*, restored after WWII and since 1946 operating within the *Svaz občanů bez vyznání* (Union of Nonbeliever Citizens, see earlier notation) and headed by the interwar deans of Czech nonbelief had by the end of the 1940s some 30,000 members (some sources even claim as many as 60,000) (Kudláč 2005, 141). Nevertheless, the Communist Party began to prepare for the movement's extermination in 1951. Within several months, the organization was abolished; its property was given to the newly established *Československá společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí* (Czechoslovakian Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge), which was directly overseen by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and copied similar organizations in other countries of the Soviet bloc. Former members of the Freethought movement were advised to join the new organization (Olšáková 2014, 67).

In the new political climate, any other forms of nonbelief turned out to be not just hardly acceptable competition, but especially nonacceptable, supposedly nonscientific, both wrongly explaining religion and purposefully or otherwise hiding its true character. The only right attitude towards religion was Marx-Leninist atheism and its criticism of religion.

It should be emphasized that scientific atheism as a part of the Marx-Leninist ideology was rendered a higher kind of atheism when compared to the so-called old kinds of atheism. The main task of official atheism, called scientific atheism in 1950s and 1960s Czechoslovakia, was to formulate a scientific worldview based on the philosophy of dialectic and historical materialism, which would become the prerequisite for criticism of religion as well as for a new kind of atheism (Kolman 1946, 4–6). In so-called scientific atheism (as a scientific discipline within Marx-Lenin philosophy, its task was a scientific critique of religion), interpretation of religion was fundamentally linked to economic conditions (i.e., to the material culture of its origins), and therefore an analysis of the social role of religion was emphasized as well. Nevertheless, the reality of religion still existing in a socialist society was explained by the fact that social awareness lagged behind economic development. It was thus assumed that religion would disappear completely in the next developmental phase of socialism: i.e., in Communism. Theoreticians of scientific atheism studied the origins, history and persistence of religion in order to determine the next strategy of the antireligious fight. Marxist science was to prove that religion was not an eternal phenomenon but that its "origin, existence and death is connected with particular phases of social development" (Potoček 1962, 61). In this sense,

religion is not an anthropological or a social constant; man had lived and would again live without religion.[9] It is, however, necessary to eliminate the objective conditions for its existence.

It was therefore expected that a newly formed "material (economical) base" would no longer be a suitable environment for the existence, much less the origin, of religion. But because religion would not disappear completely soon, the fight against it must continue and remain a permanent part of the ideological framework of Communism. Some believed that the struggle against religion should not consist of persecution but education (Cvekl 1966, 421). It was not enough for believers to turn into nonbelievers; "citizens must be brought up as ideologically fully aware socialists-Marxists, people with a profound materialistic worldview" (Kadlecová 1967, 158). An atheist education therefore became the core mission of schools and educational institutions (described later) (Bubík 2010, 129–133).

The nature of the Soviet influence on atheist education and propaganda

Although Marx-Leninist ideology had had a tradition in Czechoslovakia since the interwar period (Pauza 1989), interestingly enough, translations of Russian sources did not exist until after 1948, when the rise of the Communist regime profoundly influenced publishing policies. During the 1950s and 1960s, the works of Soviet authors such as Aleksandr Fedorovich Okulov, Aleksandr Petrovich Každan and many others were translated into Czech. At the same time, Western authors, especially contemporaries, stopped being translated. We can find translations of Enlightenment materialists such as Paul Holbach, Denis Diderot and Voltaire but, above all, works by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Ludwig Feuerbach. Bertrand Russell's works were also published and, in the 1960s, Jean-Paul Sartre's. However, even this little trickle of Western production gradually disappeared and was fully replaced by Marx-Leninist, especially Soviet and often very propagandistic, literature.

As for the nature of atheistic education and upbringing, their main objectives were defined as follows: 1) uprooting any possible residues of superstition and religious prejudices from the minds of pupils and 2) bringing them up as materialists and fighters against superstition and prejudices (meaning religious ideas). Well-educated teachers were a fundamental prerequisite for achieving these objectives. Atheist education was to be adopted to suit each particular school subject, be it biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geography, history or literature. However, any form of group activity (including extracurricular ones) was to be used for educational purposes. Scientific knowledge in all school subjects must go hand in hand with a materialistic and atheist worldview, and it should clearly imply that science was antireligious and atheist and that a Soviet teacher was a committed propagator of atheism. The core principle of atheist education thus was not objectivity and impartiality but, on the

contrary, a political commitment: a party spirit, the main feature of which was implacability towards any form or expression of religiousness or superstition. The main method of atheist education was persuasion.

Despite the obviousness of the changed attitude towards religion and the accompanying enforcement of so-called scientific atheism soon after the Communist coup in 1948, a forced "atheization" of society as it happened in the Soviet Union and some other of its satellites (such as Albania) was not pursued. In the 1950s, the Communist regime officially tried to pretend religious tolerance, mostly for pragmatic reasons (the weak position of the Communist Party in rural areas, a stronghold of Christian intelligentsia) and would even allow (although increasingly less often) religious classes at schools. The media, ruled by the Communist Party, followed the prescribed framework. The situation could have been partly caused by the fact that the proclaimed traditional Czech antipathy towards religious institutions and the low participation in religious life, both seen as proof of a high degree of the atheization of Czech society, still proved well overestimated in the 1950s. The 1950 census as well as the results of the party's internal research showed that the position of churches and the role of religion in the lives of ordinary Czech people remained strong. The census revealed that, while there was a slight drop in the number of Catholics, there was an increase in membership in other denominations, particularly the Czech Protestant ones (Czech Brethren Evangelical Church and the Czechoslovakian Church). Above all, though, the census revealed a significant drop in the number of those claiming "no confession", from more than 7% in 1930 to 4% in 1950. In reality, this drop was even greater because, in the 1930 census, 10% of the Czech population (14% in Bohemia, 4% in Moravia) claimed "no confession", but only 3% of Germans did.[10] Such data was, of course, in sharp conflict not only with the aims of the new regime but also with the presumptions it was based on.[11]

The reaction of the Communist regime to the situation was harsh and unequivocal. Apart from specific political measures limiting the activities of religious groups[12] and keeping the information on religiousness secret (for example, the question about religious affiliation was no longer included in any census conducted during the Communist regime), the government began to consistently focus on "the right and intense" atheist ideological formation. Banning any groups and associations that could have presented an alternative, "an ideological competition" to the official Marx-Leninist atheism, was part of the effort, as was the establishment of a central institution, under the direct control of the Communist Party, responsible for ideological formation and atheist education. The institution was based on a Soviet model in 1952 and was named *Československá společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí* (Czechoslovakian Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, hereafter referred to as the Society) and renamed *Socialistická akademie* (Socialist Academia) in 1965. Its official aim was to popularize science and introduce a scientific worldview

to the masses. In reality, however, it was state-organized and Communist Party–supervised indoctrination, at first mainly in the social sciences and humanities. So-called scientific atheism became one of the central themes of the Society's activity, and great attention was paid to its propaganda.

After the unfavorable results of the 1950 census, the representatives of the Communist regime commissioned partial analyses on the influence of religion. Based on these, the regime knew that the religious worldview was still fundamental, especially in rural areas. Religious rituals such as baptisms, weddings and funerals were highly popular, and in the mid-1950s, more than half of school children regularly attended religious classes, which the regime officially tolerated. In some regions, the religious class attendance reached 75%. Official Communist reports interpreted the situation as a result of "objective" conditions (the influence of economic factors and the conservativism of rural areas) as well as of "subjective" causes, the leading cause being the "insufficient raising of political awareness and of scientific atheist propaganda". Together with underestimating the viability of religion, this has led to a strong emphasis on topics related to atheism and so-called atheistic education in the activities of Czechoslovakian Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. Therefore, even official party documents after the late 1950s (such as *Communist Party's Central Committee Degree on the Continuous Development of Scientific-Atheist Propaganda*, 1955) started to place atheist education among the topmost priorities.

The activities of the Society were to play a key role in the popularization and spread of atheism in the countryside. The Society's leaders were aware, however, that a one-sided atheist indoctrination was likely to fail, and thus they included it in many disciplines – from astronomy and biology to economics, history and philosophy. The tasks of the popularizing lectures were twofold: to show that religious views contradicted the findings of all scientific disciplines and to point out that religion was an obstacle to the further development of society and was incompatible with the newly established ideals of the Communist state.

Members of the Society were greatly involved in other Communist regime propagandistic activities aimed at the consistent atheization of Czech society. These included publishing books openly promoting atheism or at least taking an antireligious stance; these publications were, however, not only scholarly or popular-educational but included fiction and poetry. During this time, Karel Havlíček Borovský's satires on the Catholic Church were reissued, and some foreign novels such as *The Gadfly* by Ethel Voynich and *Penguin Island* by Anatole France (Olšáková 2014, 420) were translated and published.

From militant scientific atheism to dialogical Marxist atheism

In the second half of the 1950s, books systematically dealing with atheism and its propaganda began to be published. It may come as a surprise that,

in the first seven years of the Communist regime's existence – years marked by severe antichurch provisions, arrests of priests, annihilation of religious orders and persecution of publicly known people openly claiming their religious affiliations – almost no publications on atheism appeared. For propaganda purposes, older (prewar) works were used. The translations of Soviet materials were then printed (as mentioned earlier) and dominated the book market until the end of the 1950s when, finally, local works by members of the young generation, fully identifying with the dogmatic form of Marx-Leninism, began to appear. As we shall see later, some of these authors eventually turned critical towards the dogmatic form and found themselves in conflict with the ideological establishment.

The first of such works was in all probability *Klasikové marxismu-leninismu o boji s náboženstvím: Určeno propagandistům z oboru vědeckého ateismu* (*Classics of Marx-Leninism on the Fight Against Religion: Designed for the Propagators of Scientific Atheism*, 1955) by the most prominent Marxist thinker of this generation, Ivan Sviták. He fully embraced Marxism after 1948 and became one of its most active propagators of his generation. Sviták believed that Marxism, specifically Marx-Leninism, was the culmination of a humanistic tradition that began in the Renaissance and was aimed at the liberation of humans from the fear of supernatural forces, fear that took attention away from mundane life and one's consciousness. Sviták called this process the turn to worldliness and believed that the philosophical systems of some Renaissance humanists (such as de Montaigne), Enlightenment thinkers (such as Holbach and Voltaire) and especially Feuerbach, Marx and Nietzsche were instrumental in the process.

Sviták also formulated an interesting concept of scientific atheism. The aim of scientific atheism was to be not only a theoretical framework for criticism of religion, albeit the most complex and thus undeniable, but also a source for the education and formation of modern humans, freeing them finally from the constraints of religion. Thus, Sviták greatly emphasized ideological endeavors and considered the popularization of scientific findings and Marxist philosophy to be key activities necessary for the spread of the atheist worldview.

Although never abandoning atheist positions (in fact, not until his death in 1994), Sviták turned more critical towards the dogmatic Marx-Leninist scientific atheism of the Soviet provenience in his later works published in the 1960s. He argued sharply against confusing atheism with the antichurch crusade of the Communist regime. Atheism to him was a specific expression of modern thinking based on a true, scientific understanding of religion and its functioning while the antireligious crusade was merely a mass political ideology. He wanted religion and its changes to be studied from a sociological point of view (Sviták 1964, 224).[13]

Sviták was not alone in his criticism of the dogmatic form of scientific atheism within the 1960s Czech Marxist discourse. In fact, a significant change occurred in the 1960s. While some Czech intellectuals, connected

to the official state and party structures, continued repeating Marx-Leninist clichés, others began to clearly emancipate their thinking from Marx-Leninist dogmatism, mostly due to changing political circumstances as the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party officially criticized Stalinism.

A number of other thinkers moved even further away from Marxist criticism of religion and called for a dialogue between Marxism and religion, particularly Christianity. They mostly valued Christian ethics and social dimension (such as Machovec 1972) or humanism and the existential aspect of contemporary Christianity (such as Gardavský 1967).

Milan Machovec began to reformulate his concept of man and society in the late 1950s under the influence of contemporary events (the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Berlin Crisis) and the anxiety over the future course of humankind capable of mass atomic annihilation, as well as the continuing fragmentation of society, informed his new views. Machovec therefore saw dialogue as a way to overcome social dangers. For him, dialogue was the highest form of mutual human communication, in which two or more parties wittingly aim at opening up to one another. Dialogue began with the individual and should grow into an all-society dialogue, taking into consideration all points of view in mutual understanding. Machovec considered Christianity and Marxism two systems enabling such a dialogue because they were based on a deep humanism. His attitude towards Christianity (and, for that matter, towards Marxism as well) was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, he strictly rejected a religious interpretation of the world, including key dogmas concerning, for example, the afterlife; on the other hand, religion – and Christianity in particular – depicted human character perfectly and had a deep understanding of humanity and morals, as documented in the Christian concept of conscience (Nešpor 2008, 239). Thus, it was their shared humanism which enabled both Christianity and Marxism to begin and eventually develop a dialogue.

What the dialogical and open attempts to reconcile Christianity and Marxism looked like can best be illustrated by Vítězslav Gardavský's works. Gardavský ranked among those thinkers who tried to base their atheism on the presuppositions of Marxist philosophy. Gardavský's thinking is best presented in his *Bůh není zcela mrtev* (*God Is Not Completely Dead*, 1967). He thought that, without understanding Christianity, it was impossible to fully grasp Marxism, which stems from the same culture and is therefore a continuation of it of sorts.

Like Sviták, Gardavský understood atheism as an epistemological system leading to a critical understanding of the world. It did not evolve linearly. Different forms of modern atheism (from the Enlightenment's rational atheist anticlericalism to the reflective Marxist atheism) revealed their creators' particular historical and social motivations but were not necessarily subsequent stages. The majority of them were reductive atheisms of "one issue" (for example, grasping the anthropological dimension of religion and basing

the criticism of religion on it, as can be seen in the works of Feuerbach). Unlike these reductive kinds of modern atheism, the reflective atheism based on Marxism was comprehensive, approaching the phenomenon of religion in its entirety and based on Marx's concept of religion as the expression of true destitution, which, at the same time, was a revolt against true destitution. Its typology consisted of five types:[14] *practical, conformist, anticlerical/antitheist, abstract humanist* and finally *Marxist*. *Practical atheism* is an example of nonreflective atheism based on indifference. For Gardavský, a practical atheist was an indifferent nonbeliever formed by the evolution of civilization. He adhered to atheism because it seemed to be a kind of historical and social necessity but was not, in fact, interested in such issues at all. The consequence of such an atheism was existential emptiness leading to pseudo-values (such as consumerism) or to modern forms of pseudo-religious phenomena, such as sport fandoms (Gardavský 1967, 176n). *Conformist atheism* was the result of the tendency to adapt to new conditions and political requirements. It was often presented in a declaratory manner to emphasize the person's political and ideological loyalty. In reality, however, it was only a formal stand, covering an inner indifference and revealing a sense of duty (i.e., under the Communist regime, one had to be an atheist, whatever that means) (Gardavský 1967, 180).

The third kind, *anticlerical* or *antitheist atheism* was, in a way, the opposite of the two previous kinds because it was based on inner conviction: the idea that religion in its institutionalized form had been an obstacle to human progress (anticlerical atheism) or that religious ideas were but primitive concepts of the world, which science could easily refute (antitheist atheism). Both forms of atheism are reductive, ignoring the complexity of the functions of religion and its specific manifestations in the history of humankind or leading to "deization" of the secular (Gardavský 1967, 182).

Abstract humanist atheism was usually the outcome of a personal religious crisis. Unlike the previous types, it was deeply aware of the complexity and multilayered character of religion, but it was, in contrast, a very elitist and individualized form of atheism, ignoring its political and social dimensions. In sharp contrast, *Marxist atheism* accentuated the political and social dimensions and was, in fact, the only genuinely reflective atheism. It was aware of the historical conditioning of religion, as well as its complexity. It rejected simplified interpretations of religion but pointed out the cases and situations in which religion was a true obstacle. Such an atheism can be seen as the *first philosophy* of Marxism: its metaphysics (Gardavský 1967, 188).[15]

Generally, Gardavský and Machovec arrived at conclusions similar to those of many Marxists on the western side of the Iron Curtain: for example, Ernst Bloch (1954)[16] and Roger Garaudy (1965). The pinnacle of these tendencies was the international conference in Mariánské Lázně in April 1967. (For more details on the conference and its ideological background, see Mervart 2017.)

All this well illustrates the certain degree of ideological liberalization that took place in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. In the late 1960s in particular, even the antichurch state policy was mitigated, and dogmatic atheists of the Marx-Leninist kind were marginalized. The regime's official attitudes towards religion were modulated by progressive Marxists instead. Apart from Machovec and Gardavský, discussed earlier, sociologist Erika Kadlecová headed the State Office for Church Affairs at the end of the 1960s. Although she remained an atheist, her approach grew more like the non-confessional sociology of religion as she tried to explain the relationship between religion and society and the changing functions of religion in connection with modernization and secularization.[17]

From the dialogical atheism of the 1960s to the normalization of scientific atheism

The period of liberalization culminating in the Prague Spring (January–August 1968) ended abruptly with the Soviet invasion and the ensuing so-called normalization, which basically meant a return to conservative Marx-Leninism, of which dogmatic scientific atheism was a part. As a result of the revision of the liberal attitudes towards religion, most of the aforementioned thinkers of Czechoslovakian liberal (critical) Marxism were professionally and politically persecuted. A new institution was established to oversee the dogmatic correctness of the interpretation of religion as it was decided that the activities of the Czechoslovakian Society for the Spread of Political and Scientific Knowledge and the Departments of Marx-Leninism were not sufficient. The institution was established as a branch of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences in 1972 in Brno[18] and named the Institute of Scientific Atheism. The founding document declares that the Institute is to focus on "empirical research of social consciousness with special attention paid to the issues of worldview, morals, atheism and religion."[19]

Jiří Loukotka, a specialist on scientific atheism, was the institute's first director (see Loukotka 1961). In Loukotka's perspective, religion was interpreted as something false, the falseness and fictitiousness of which must be uncovered and thus overcome. He believed that the only approach to religion was that of scientific atheism's critique of it and not, for example, the approach of religious studies. Apart from discussion on the "methodology" of studying the relationship between scientific atheism and religion, Loukotka was also interested in popularizing the scientific atheist worldview. He never faltered from his opinion that religion was an outdated interpretation of the universe, and its main function was the ideological petrification of class (i.e., unjust) society. He depicted religious narratives as primitive, inadequate explanations of natural phenomena or as "purposeful" interpretations of historical events.

The new institute, however, not only fought religion theoretically from the position of scientific atheism and by popularizing atheism, but also

provided a platform for frequent escalated conflicts with less loyal members of churches. The institute's employees wrote evaluations that served as a base for decisions about "the ideological appropriateness" of manuscripts prepared for publication as well as for assessment of a particular clergyman's activity; these could result in the ban of the publication of a manuscript just as in a ban of the clergyman's work (i.e., withdrawal of the necessary state agreement for his services).[20]

The institute also conducted sociological research on the religiousness of selected social groups (youth, working class, agriculture workers) considered important or possibly problematic in terms of their attitude towards religion. Although from the point of view of present-day sociology, it is possible to doubt both the methodology of the research and its ideological engagement, it nonetheless yielded interesting data, which mostly demonstrates that during the so-called normalization era (the 1970s and 1980s), the attitudes of various social groups to religion was far more complex than the official political structures were willing to admit. One research project *Sociologické problémy sekularizace v českých zemích* (Sociological Issues of Secularization in the Czech Lands) headed by František Křenek focused on the rural population. From the research, he concluded that 30% of the Czech population were believers (i.e., they identified with a particular religious system and a religious group), and a relatively large number, some 40% to 45%, were undecided. Even if the research must be viewed with a certain reservation, it provides a general view on the attitude of the Czech population towards religion and demonstrates that, even during the peaking neo-Stalinist normalization, the majority of the population could not be labeled atheist. Rather, the most typical attitude towards religion was indifference.

The prevailing indifference towards religion and thus a certain failure of the state-controlled atheist indoctrination is confirmed by other researchers as well. Similar data were collected in 1979 by the Public Opinion Research Institute. The research indicated that only 15% of the respondents agreed with the atheist propaganda state policy while 67% thought it better to simply ignore religion. In other words, more than two thirds of the Czech population were indifferent towards religion. Interestingly enough, similar data were obtained (even if possibly interpreted differently) in unofficial research conducted outside the state structures.[21]

During its existence, the Brno Institute of Scientific Atheism cooperated quite closely with other institutions of a similar focus: for example, Jan E. Purkyně University in Brno (today's Masaryk University), the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Scientific Atheism of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The Institute of Scientific Atheism of the Slovak Academy of Sciences published the journal *Atheism* (the only of its kind in Communist Czechoslovakia), and many of the Brno Institute employees contributed to it and, in fact, represented the journal's key pool of authors.

Founded in 1972, the journal's full name was *Ateizmus: Časopis pre otázky vedeckého ateizmu* (*Atheism: Journal for Issues of Scientific Atheism*); it ceased to exist after 1989 due to the Velvet Revolution's political changes. In terms of its scope, the journal published Czech and Slovak translations of works by significant theoreticians of scientific atheism, predominantly Soviet ones. It also published the results of sociological research focused on the religiousness of the Czechoslovak population and articles on the theory and methodology of such research, which were mostly concerned with the theory's and methodology's agreement with the official Marx-Leninist ideology.

Another focus of the journal was the implementation of Marx-Leninist atheism in interpreting particular historical events or the current situation of Czechoslovakian society. This focus was represented in by far the largest number of articles, including those devoted to scientific-atheist education (see Chudá 1976, 474–479; Kubovič 1988, 276–285). The journal also mapped the history of Czechoslovakian atheism via articles on and biographical sketches of significant figures – prevailingly, of course, those representing Marxist atheism, while only marginal attention was paid to representatives of other forms of modern atheism.

Although the main mission of the journal was the formation of the ideological background to "progressive atheization", certain shifts in its approach to religion occurred during its 17-year existence. These shifts to a large degree copied changes among its authors and editors. The late 1980s especially saw the publication of articles abandoning the strict framework of Marx-Leninist ideology and reflecting trends and debates west of the Iron Curtain instead. Among those were, for example, discussions on various forms of secularization, the changing role of religion in the global world and even the environmental dimension in contemporary religions (see Horyna 1987).

Some other leaders of the Institute attempted to demonstrate that Marx did not use expressions such as "scientific worldview", "scientific ideology" or "scientific atheism" but thought in terms of "the end of the criticism of religion". This is an example of the successor to Jiří Loukotka as the director of the Institute, Ivan Hodovský. Although Hodovský still attempted to prove the superiority of the Marx-Leninist concept of religion, he pointed out the need to abandon oversimplified rejections of religion as an outdated relict. Unlike his predecessor Loukotka, Hodovský no longer refused to study religion and religious phenomena as something methodologically (and ideologically) absurd but thought the findings of such a study could be beneficial for scientific atheism.

The Brno Institute was significantly restructured in 1983. It merged with the Psychological Laboratory of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno and was renamed the Institute for the Study of Social Awareness and Scientific Atheism. The new institute was to become a research center in the field of atheism and the philosophical, sociological and psychological study

of social and individual consciousness. An important part of the institute's activity was the preparation of a textbook, *Scientific Atheism*, and the *Small Encyclopedia of an Atheist*.

By the end of the 1980s, thanks to the arrival of young scholars, the institute gradually began to transform into an institution that, apart from the traditional ideological mission, began to focus on the modern sociology of religion, the study of current Catholic and Protestant theology and the history of Christianity. This meant an important step away from the dogmatic-ideological position rejecting even the possibility and meaningfulness of the study of religions and towards a study of religions in the sense of the *Religionswissenchaft*, even if it was not yet possible officially.

Generally, we can conclude that the effort of the Communist regime to establish scientific atheism as the ideology with which the majority of Czech population would identify failed. There were various reasons – from the loss of credibility of the Communist regime after the Soviet invasion in 1968 to the traditional Czech skepticism towards any ideology. It all led to a paradoxical situation – the majority of the Czech population in the 1970s and 1980s was skeptical towards both the official state-controlled atheism policy and religion as well. Both the official atheism and religion were placed in the common person's category of "better to ignore" stuff. This phenomenon is apparent in the attitude of the Czech population towards religion as well as in the post-1989 forms of atheism formed in the liberal democratic society (see Bubík 2010, 164–172).

The transformation of Czech atheism at the turn of the millennium

The Velvet Revolution in November 1989 opened the way for fundamental changes in political, economic and social conditions. Part of the transformation was also a redefinition of the attitude of Czechs towards religion and the search for a new place for religions within the newly forming pluralist society (Bubík 2014). Thanks to the influence of dissidents such as Václav Havel, the building of the new political system in the early 1990s had a clear moral dimension. Moral devastation and the distortion of interpersonal relationships were considered the greatest misdemeanors of the "old regime". Religions, especially the traditional ones, and their representatives were regarded as important helpers in the renewal of morals (Václavík 2010, 130).

In the 1990s, institutionalized forms of atheism, especially scientific atheism, were discredited because they were naturally and logically seen as the key aspect of the Communist ideology the Czech society desired emancipation from. It was therefore basically impossible for any institution of the Communist regime to continue its activities in any form. This does not mean, however, that they all simply ceased to exist. Many were, in fact, transformed to suit the new needs and established new objectives

accordingly. This was the case with the Brno Institute as well, which in 1990 turned into the Institute of Ethics and Religious Studies[22] and in 1991, together with Masaryk University in Brno, initiated the establishment of the Institute of Religious Studies.

Because of the 1990s' social and political climate, institutions that continued to focus on the explicit promotion of atheism, especially if they were connected to the Communist regime, obviously had no way to succeed. However, as the Communist regime had quite thoroughly destroyed all associations and organizations of non-Marxist atheism, their reestablishment was not easy either. In December 1990, Freethought association *Volná myšlenka* was renewed, but, although it adopted the legacy of pre-WWII Freethought, it never even neared its influence. The association is currently registered under the name *Volná myšlenka – humanistické a etické sdružení občanů bez vyznání* (Freethought – Humanist and Ethical Association of Citizens without a Confession). Nevertheless, there are certain doubts that this organization is truly the successor of the *Volná myšlenka* dissolved by the Communist Party, and even if it adheres to contemporary secular humanism, it only reproduces the antireligious stereotypes employed by the former Communist regime. Thus, it is no coincidence that many of the activists of the current *Volná myšlenka* are often published in *Haló noviny*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.

The main theme of the current *Volná myšlenka* is the critique of the Catholic Church and its public and political activities. Freethought's activities are, in fact, limited to protesting the lawfulness of church restitutions. Other activities are basically null; it ceased to publish its regular periodicals (such as *Maják* quarterly),[23] and its web pages in February 2018 only listed news events dating back to 2014.

Anticlericalism and anti-Catholicism, regarded as near synonyms, have been typical ingredients of public discourse and related debates on the issue of religion in Czech society at least since the mid-1990s. The relatively open attitude of the post-Communist Czech society towards religion changed at this time. The temporary openness was clearly apparent in the sociological research of the early 1990s as well as in the 1991 census, in which 44% of the population claimed a particular religious affiliation, less than 40% claimed to have no confession and 16% refused to answer the question.[24]

The 2011 census showed a further significant decline in traditional religions and the rise of religious indifference or even apatheism, even if the data should be viewed with a degree of reservation. Unlike the previous censuses, in 2011 the questions concerning faith were deemed optional and as many as 45% of respondents chose not to answer, while only 14% of Czechs claimed some religious affiliation, 7% declared to be believers but refused to name their religious denomination or group and 34% claimed to be nonbelievers.[25] Naturally, it is impossible to say how to interpret the changes and what they imply based solely on the census data. More detailed research is needed in order to confirm a plausible hypothesis: for example,

whether this is a continuation and strengthening of the indifference towards religion or if the census showed only the loss of relevance of the issue of non/religious identity.

At the beginning of the 21st century, new forms of atheism began to appear in Czech society, drawing less on the traditional Czech ones but rather on the current Western so-called New Atheism represented by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Samuel Harris and Christopher Hitchens. Its followers are especially younger generations who have no significant first-hand experience with the Communist regime and therefore do not see atheism in its context and with all the connotations atheism had in the late 1990s.

The philosopher Tomáš Hříbek is representative of this form of atheism; he is interested in the both theoretical definition of the phenomenon of atheism, particularly in the context of contemporary epistemological and ethical debates, and its popularization. He introduces New Atheism in the Czech environment and makes foreign authors' arguments available to the Czech public in a simple manner. He focuses mainly on repeating what are considered the fundamental conflicts between scientific findings and religious views as presented by Dawkins in his popular *The God Delusion* (Czech transl. 2009). Hříbek also discusses the ethical consequences of religion and atheism in the spirit of contemporary humanism.

A similar concept of atheism is promoted by the *Občanské sdružení ateistů v ČR* (Association of Czech Atheists), founded at the end of the 2000s. Unlike the aforementioned renewed Freethought organization, this association is very active in promoting atheism, organizing public lectures and holding monthly meetings of members and sympathizers, and on social networks. The association has a regularly updated website, and its Facebook profile had some 6,000 followers as of February 2018. There are three main spheres of interest – first, the association propagates new atheism; second, it points out the supposedly negative effects of religion in Czech society, especially in connection with church restitution, and third, it criticizes the role of religion in growing global terrorism. Although these themes resonate with the views of a large portion of the Czech public, the association's actual influence is marginal.

Generally, mass institutionalized atheism, typical in the first half of the 20th century, is now only a historical reminiscence. Similarly to religious faith, atheism is increasingly more of a private affair in Czech society, and the general attitude to it can best be described as apatheism.[26]

One can therefore ask whether contemporary Czech "atheism" is, rather than a result of the political-ideological pressures of the former Communist regime, a product of the gradual modernization of Czech society in which the state has played a paternalist role with its comprehensive and relatively well-functioning social welfare system, added to other factors such as demographic change in post-1945 society, resulting in the ethnic and cultural homogenization of Czech society.[27] Czech "atheism" can more appropriately be considered a form of apatheism, manifested by a high degree of

indifference to and disinterest in religious questions rather than an expression of self-conscious, well-reflected and informed rejection of religious faith.[28] Nevertheless, it is not an apatheism apathetic to traditional forms of religiousness and to church institutions. On the contrary, it is openly hostile or at least has a distrustful attitude to anything the churches and denominations, the Catholic Church above all, represent. It would therefore be more accurate to speak of anticlerical apatheism, even if it may seem a contradiction in terms.

Notes

1. However, 45% of the population did not answer the census questions concerning religious faith.
2. For example, Tomáš G. Masaryk, František Žilka, Jan B. Kozák and others can be considered proponents of the idea of progress, or progressivism. This concept often merged with humanist strivings as discussed and formulated by Masaryk.
3. Among the founding figures were Herbert Spencer, Jacob Moleschott, Charles Renouvier, Wilhelm Liebknecht and César De Paepe.
4. The Young Czech Party (or simply Young Czechs) was a political stream in the Austrian Empire rooted in German liberalism, adopting its political anti-Catholicism and anticlericalism.
5. The association was named after the excommunicated Catholic priest Augustin Smetana (1814–1851), who became a publicly known figure in the revolutionary year of 1848 as a result of being persecuted by the Catholic Church. His name then was seen as being synonymous with resistance against Catholicism and its power position in society.
6. The topic is interestingly discussed by the founder of Czech sociology Inocenc A. Bláha; he defends the supremacy of lay morality in his "*Mravní výchova náboženská nebo laická*" (1927).
7. The first crematory in Europe was built in Milan in 1876. In the Czech Lands, the cremation movement began in 1880, thanks to Vojtěch Náprstek. It is interesting to note that the first crematory in the Czech Lands was erected in 1916 in Liberec, a town unofficially considered the "capital" of Czech Germans.
8. Some of the text concerning the Czech Freethought used in this chapter has already appeared in Tomáš Bubík. "Atheism, Agnosticism and Criticism of Religion of Robert Ingersoll in the Context of the Czech Freethinking Movement." *American and British Studies Annual* 10 (2017): 46–60.
9. Erika Kadlecová (1966, 101), for example, claims that no signs of religion were found with the sinanthropus; these can be documented later with the Cro-Magnon man.
10. The role of religious rituals was equally strong in the 1950s. More than 60% of children were baptized, 61% of weddings were church weddings and the majority of the population preferred church funerals (77 %).
11. An important role was played by demographics and socio-economic changes after 1945, especially the expulsions of Germans, due to which Czechoslovakia lost a significant portion of its inhabitants, many of whom were Catholic or members of Protestant denominations. The expulsion also disrupted the socio-economic situation in the borderland (so-called Sudeten land) as it was depopulated and then forcefully repopulated.
12. There were new legislative measures that subjected the Catholic Church, as well as other denominations and religious groups, to strict state control. The measures

were based on Act no. 217/1949 Sb., which established a State Office for Church Affairs, and Act no. 218/1949 Sb., on the economic security of churches and religious societies. The first act laid the legal grounds for ideological interventions into the churches' and religious groups' activities and control over their personnel matters. The new attitude of the state towards churches and religious associations was sealed by the (renewed) requirement of a pledge to the republic every clergyman had to pass. For more details, see Václavík (2010, 100–105).

13 As a historian of Czech sociology, Zdeněk R. Nešpor (2008, 291) fittingly notes, Sviták saw the regime's ideological fight against religion as purposeless and, above all, as being in opposition to "a true understanding" of Marx and Engels's concepts of the inevitability of the ideological superstructure in any social system and of the complicated relationship between religion and other "mature" ideologies.

14 The typology was focused on atheist attitudes in the Czechoslovak society of the Communist regime and probably had no further general ambitions. It was introduced in the closing parts of his book *Bůh není zcela mrtev* (1967, 175–188).

15 Gardavský's concept of atheism as metaphysics is well analyzed in "*K předpokladům marxistického unievrzalismu v díle Vítězslava Gardavského*" by contemporary Czech Marxist philosopher Vít Bartoš (2017).

16 In an original way, Bloch analyzes the relationship between religiousness and utopia, thus connecting religion and Marxism by what he names "totality of hope".

17 Some text concerning Gardavský´s and Machovec´s thinking used in this chapter has already appeared in Tomáš Bubík. 2010. *České bádání o náboženství ve 20. století*. Červený Kostelec: Nakladatelství Pavel Mervart and Tomáš Bubík. 2009. *Úvod do české filozofie náboženství*. First edition. Pardubice: Vydavatelství Univerzity Pardubice.

18 The first attempts to establish a similar institution within the Czechoslovak Academy of Science date back to the late 1950s but were not put into practice for personnel and organizational reasons.

19 www.archiv.cas.cz/fondy_ab50.htm (10 January 2007).

20 Directive of the State Office for Church Affairs 19 May 1955 No. 4874/55–1 and 30 May 1955 no. 5242/55-I/1. Legal documents concerning the operations of churches and religious organizations and the role of the state between 1948 and 1989 are available at http://spcp.prf.cuni.cz/lex/z1a.htm (Accessed 24 August 2017).

21 A concise analysis of the research is available in Nešpor (2007, 431–434).

22 The Section for Psychological Research of Conscience split from the former institute and joined the Psychological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science.

23 The periodical was issued between 1994 and 2010 (according to the National Library in Prague's catalog).

24 Even though some Czech sociology of religion scholars doubt the relevance of the data, the data nonetheless document certain tendencies in the Czech attitudes towards religion and atheism at the turn of the millennium. Thus, while there was a rather friendly attitude towards religion in the beginning of the 1990s, which some church representatives took as a religious awakening, it was followed in the late 1990s by disillusionment, leading to the growth of religious apatheism at the beginning of the 2000s, which can well be illustrated by sociological research (for example, ISSP 2008, EVS 2008) and the 2001 and 2011 censuses.

25 In comparison to the 2001 census, the number of people explicitly declaring affiliation with a particular church or religious group dropped (from 32% to less than 21%), but the number of people considering themselves nonbelievers also

decreased (from 59% to 35%) while the number of those refusing to answer such questions increased dramatically (from 9% to 45%).

26 Apatheism is an attitude towards religion resulting from existential security. Within it, religion is more and more irrelevant, and its social importance diminishes.

27 Before WWII, the ethnic structure of the population in the Czech Lands was very diverse. Apart from some 7 million Czechs, there was a traditionally strong German community of almost 3 million, some 150,000 Jews, almost 100,000 Poles and other ethnic minorities. Due to the Second World War and its aftermath (the Holocaust, the expulsion of Germans), Czech society became homogenized to such a degree that almost 97% of the population claim Czech nationality at present.

28 On the issue of various forms and interpretations of atheism in the context of current sociological research into Czech society, see Václavík et al. (2016).

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5 Atheism and Freethought in Estonian culture

Atko Remmel and Meelis Friedenthal

Throughout history, Estonia has been a place of clashes and interactions of different languages and ethnicities, different cultures and ideologies. This raises the question of whether to define the study according to the geographical boundaries of present-day Estonia or to focus on a particular culture. In this chapter, our attention is on representations of "atheism" and "secularity" within Estonian language culture. We opted to use these terms since they are most commonly used to denote the phenomena that are of interest to us. Scare quotes are used here to denote the vagueness of these concepts as these terms are typically used in the Estonian context in a somewhat overlapping sense. As has been noted before, "atheism" is often used as a proxy for a number of forms of nonreligion (Lee 2015, 134),[1] and it is indeed the only widely known secular tradition in Estonia, signifying a broad variety of beliefs, attitudes and activities (Remmel 2016b). It is therefore justified not to talk about one atheism, but different atheisms, since atheism has had various and not always compatible definitions, depending on the time, place and context (Eller 2010).

Historically, atheism has generally been an prerogative of the elite (Hyman 2010, 1). Therefore, the earliest point of somewhat developed religio-critical thinking in Estonian language culture can be set in the second half of the 19th century, when the Estonian intelligentsia began to develop in connection with the "national awakening". This could be the reason criticism of religion in Estonia has a connection to nationalism and has often been subordinate to politics. We therefore think it justifiable to describe the development of secular thought following major political changes in Estonia's recent history, dividing it into four periods. We are interested in finding answers to the following questions: What was the meaning and social position of secularity during a particular period? Who were involved and how? How have the ideas within secular traditions changed and developed over time?

One of the earliest discussions about atheism in the territory of Estonia dates back to the 17th century, when the provinces of Estland and Livonia[2] were under Swedish rule. A professor of philosophy at the University of Tartu, Michael Dau, noted in 1699 that atheism could be divided into

practical and theoretical and that one could find a large number of practical atheists, especially among Catholics (Friedenthal 2012). The last remark is quite revealing about the anti-Catholic sentiments that were common among Lutherans in the Early Modern era. The Swedish imperial policy of confessionalization in the 17th century introduced the Augsburg Confession through church visitations and school education and shaped a strong Lutheran identity, which remained a characteristic of the region for several hundred years. Lutheran pastors exhibited Catholicism-critical attitudes, which can also be found in the preface of Estonian-language New Testament, printed in 1715. The preface introduced the theme of the violent Christianization of Estonians in the 13th century by the corrupt Catholic church and presented Lutheranism as a correction of these misdeeds (Viires 2001). Over time, the motif of violent Christianization lost its anti-Catholic context and contributed to general anticlerical thought. These critical ideas concerning the church, which originated from educated elites, formed a curious conglomerate among peasants combined with the remnants of village Catholicism and pagan practices (Jonuks 2012). Over the course of the 18th century, already existing anti-German attitudes among Estonians became gradually more pronounced as a result of the books by the Baltic-German writer Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850). His works, written in the spirit of Romanticism, depicted ancient Latvians and Estonians in the vein of "the noble savage" (Plath 2008) and their position during the Livonian crusades as "a struggle for freedom" against German oppressors. Merkel's objective, originating from the ideas of the Enlightenment, was to criticize German landowners and the enforcement of serfdom. His motif of "ancient golden pagan times", however, was absorbed into the national consciousness of Estonians and Latvians and acquired a general anti-German, and later also antireligious, flavor.

Interestingly, a contributing factor to such developments also could have been the Herrnhuter (Moravian Brethren) movement, which was active in Estonia during the 18th and 19th centuries and was often in disputes with the Lutheran church. The Herrnhuter movement became extremely popular among peasants (in 1854, it had about 70,000 members) and contributed a great deal to the education and national awareness of Estonians (Võsa 2012, 241). Indeed, the first generation of Estonian national awakening figures often had a Herrnhuter background. The attitude of these men towards the official Lutheran Church, governed by the Baltic-Germans, was suspicious or even openly hostile (Laar 2005, 132), thus helping to reinforce the association between the Church and oppressive regimes.

Up to the mid-19th century, membership in the Russian Orthodox church in Estonia was only marginal and consisted primarily of Russian merchants, officials and members of the so-called Old Believers and Setu community. As the Russian Empire gradually enacted Russification policies in the 19th century, one of its goals was to convert the Lutheran population into Russian Orthodoxy, and many benefits were promised for the converts. The

peasants also felt that "Russian priests are like us, they are not wiser than us" and criticized Lutheran pastors for supporting Baltic-Germans (Kreutzwald 1976, 138). Often, however, these new converts later regretted their decisions but were not allowed to convert back to Lutheranism, which created further confusion concerning religious affiliation.

Atheism and anticlericalism up to 1917

The period from the middle of the 19th century through the formation of the independent Estonian Republic can be described as the introduction of different secular traditions from the East and West. All of them carried political undertones, and their meeting point became Estonian national thinking. These traditions were thus, in part, assimilated into the developing Estonian national narrative and, ever since, have had associations with Estonian identity.

Slightly simplified, religio-critical thinking in Estonia in the late 19th century was a mixture of four elements: 1) Marxist and Social-Democratic thinking originating from Russia; 2) Western European anticlericalism and freethinking; 3) the development of sciences (especially the theory of evolution) and, finally, 4) Estonian nationalist identity politics. It is virtually impossible, however, to point to concrete individuals as pure representatives of a particular strand since "the already eclectic views of the parties concerned were constantly evolving and changing" (Kalling 2012, 288).

Marxist thinking based its arguments on philosophical materialism and the concept of class struggle. An important figure here was the publisher and journalist Juhan Lilienbach (1870–1928). He published 20 atheistic works up to 1917 (including translations of Paul Lafargue, Georgi Plekhanov and Robert Ingersoll), which did not, however, spread widely (Vimmsaare 1974). These books, leaflets and brochures, containing atheist and church-critical material, were primarily distributed by the Estonian organizations of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The argumentation level of the texts was determined by their focus on the working class, with an emphasis on debunking church "miracles" and ridiculing the clergy and church practices.

Western European anticlerical thinking was made available to the wider public mainly through translations. The journalist and educator Ado Grenzstein (1849–1916), for example, began to serialize his own translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche in the newspaper *Olevik* in 1901; journalism was extremely influential in molding the attitudes of the forming Estonian nation. For Grenzstein, the translation had mainly a pedagogical purpose: "to put Zarathustra in the service of the enlightenment of the Estonian people and the development of the Estonian nation" (Sooväli 2015, 144–145).

Church critique, stemming from the perceived conflict between science and religion but also connected to national identity, was voiced by a group

of radically minded students called "Jaaksonia". The group consisted of Estonian-born leftist intellectuals who were also influenced by European freethinking, which, as an organized movement, was absent from the Estonian intellectual landscape. The members of Jaaksonia viewed themselves as champions of the theory of evolution and defended it from religiously motivated criticism, in turn also criticizing religion itself. They disseminated their views through lectures and articles published in various newspapers. They did not have a clear-cut atheistic agenda but instead contrasted theological thinking with a scientific approach. The first attempt to popularize Darwin's theory in Estonia came from the speech of a Jaaksonia member, Richard Aavakivi (1873–1906): "Fighting for Being" in 1896 (Laul 1956, 182).

Poets and writers were mostly behind the church criticism originating from Estonian nationalist thought. Due to the lack of professional Estonian historians, their works had a tremendous influence on Estonians' understanding of their history (Tamm 2008) and emerged as *the* sources for the development of the anti-Christian Estonian national narrative. Their critical attitude originated from the romantic glorification of national history, already found in the works of the first generation of Estonian intelligentsia in the middle of the 19th century, mixed with anti-German sentiments in which the church was seen as the henchman of foreign oppressors but which also included ridiculing Christian morality and hypocrisy.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a turning point for Estonian nationalism. The events in the Baltic provinces had primarily a character of a national and political awakening and were directed against the ruling government as well as the Baltic-German landowners. After the revolution, however, the clergy was accused of not protecting their parish members from the punitive squads, and Estonians' participation in church services fell considerably (Rohtmets 2016a, 262–263). For Baltic Germans, who did not approve of Estonians' national aspirations, church criticism seemed to undermine the status quo, which provided a reason for accusing the Estonians of "atheism". As the daily newspaper *Postimees* mentioned in 1910: "Ridiculing the faith and vilifying the clergy and nobility went hand in hand with the sickly vanity and glorification of nationalism".

Estonians' primary forms of organizing were various societies and clubs, including, for instance, the Pärnu Tenant Society or the Temperance Movement, where Communists and clergy often cooperated (Raid 1978, 62, 223). From the viewpoint of the Baltic-German clergy, nationalism and the connected anticlerical attitudes of such groups were so apparent that, for the pastors of Livonia, participation in nationalist organizations was already restricted in 1876 (Andresen and Jansen 2010, 321–322), and in 1913, sacristans (predominantly ethnic Estonians) were also advised to keep themselves away from societies in general "because of the antireligious spirit that dominates there" (*Postimees* 1913). Thus, one can note the emergence of the motif of Estonians as "an antireligious nation", a characterization not

religiously motivated but based on national antagonism between high-class Baltic Germans and lower-class Estonians. Estonians were actively trying to distance themselves from such a reputation, but according to contemporaries, the motif became rooted at least to some extent. The Estonian-born pastor Villem Reiman ([1910] 2008, 383) put it as follows: "The evidence that Estonians lack the depth and warmth of religious feeling is floating in the air".

Despite the whole nation being accused of denial of God, public atheism during that period was still a curiosity, as evidenced by the case of a school teacher who was dismissed in the Olustvere municipality because he was inciting Estonians against Germans and was "an atheist and socialist" (*Kodumaa* 1907). A scandal following the unregistered marriage of the public figure Lui Olesk (1876–1932) in 1905, proclaimed in the newspaper (Hinrikus 2008; Andresen and Jansen 2010, 326), also proved that "the secular option" was not yet socially acceptable.

The occurrences of "atheism" and related words in the contemporary media provide a hint about its meanings and connotations. These words are used exclusively in a negative context and mostly in the form of adjectives ("atheistic"), hinting that they are more of a negative label than a description of a specific attitude or beliefs. "Atheism" often appears with an explanation in parentheses ("denier of God"), hinting that the meaning of the word is not widely known. Most of the time, "atheism" seems to indicate a deviation from normal church life (insufficient churchgoing or heterodoxy), but occasionally an explicit denial of God is also mentioned. The meaning of "antireligious" is also quite broad, sometimes denoting even liberal theology (Remmel 2016b). While all the other terms for nonreligious positions have clearly negative connotations, "freethinking" seems to have quite a neutral or even positive undertone, perhaps because it always appears in the news as a curiosity from faraway places and is associated with science and the struggle against the church's ambitions.

Atheism and secularity in the independent Estonian Republic (1918–1940)

The interwar period can be described as a "domestication of secularity", with atheism in its variations, freethinking and secularism, becoming entrenched in Estonian society and culture, along with the final polishing of the anti-Christian national narrative. Secular thinking was strongly connected to politics, predominantly Communism and Social Democracy. These alignments also determined the social distribution of the secular traditions that followed the boundaries of class society. While Bolshevik atheism was mainly a working-class "thing", the intelligentsia sided with Western European antireligious thought on the grounds of the science-religion controversy and had a preference for the "freethinker" label. Nevertheless,

this distinction is not absolute, and there were also a number of Marxist intellectuals.

After Estonia gained its independence in 1918, the Baltic Germans were gradually pushed out of political power and the church government. The Lutheran Church was reestablished with the ambition of becoming a people's church (Rohtmets 2016b, 142), and the Constitution of the newborn Republic of Estonia stipulated the separation of the Church and state as well as the Church and school. Due to strong left-wing influences in the Parliament, an attempt was made to remove religious education (RE) from schools, supported by an internal crisis concerning the methodology of teaching RE. This resulted in a heated debate and was dealt with in the subsequent referendum, where 72% voted in favor of RE. A decision was made, however, that the subject would be optional for pupils and teachers but obligatory for schools (Valk 2007). The right to register divorces and marriages was handed over to the state registry office between 1923 and 1926, and the Lutheran Church of Estonia lost its monopoly on such ceremonies (Kiviorg 2011, 132).

The elements of the previous period – left-wing political movements, Western anticlerical philosophical movements and sciences, national narrative – still set the tone in secular thinking, but their proportions had changed somewhat.

For the left-wing movements, a distinction needs to be made between the "acceptable" Social Democrats and the "unacceptable" Communists, the latter being more radical and receiving their guidelines directly from Russia. For Communists, atheist propaganda as a means of freeing the working class from the bonds of religion was directly connected to the world revolution, which also explains why many of the atheist propaganda brochures in Estonian were printed in the Comintern[3] printing house in Russia. Atheism was not as much an objective itself, but more of an instrument for achieving further goals.

Communist propaganda on atheism was the most active in the beginning of the 1920s, with atheist ideas disseminated in the press and through leaflets, lectures and cultural clubs and societies. Communists also organized party youth groups in schools in order to urge students not to attend the lessons in RE and church confirmation (Erelt 2003). Understanding that "if we want to fight ecclesiastical customs, we have to replace theirs with our own ways, proletarian customs" ("*Ilmalik leer*" 1922, 147), the Communists began to organize so-called secular confirmations camps, the first of which was held in Tallinn in 1922. They usually lasted two months and focused on an introduction to the theory of the Marx-Leninist class struggle and the proletarian revolution (Saarniit 1956, 279). In order to prevent people from participating in church activities, tours, hikes and cycling trips to the countryside were organized on Sundays and religious holidays. During these events, educational lectures and antireligious events were held (Raid 1978, 97–98). Similar processes were taking place in Russia, where

secular alternatives to church services were created (Stites 1991, 297), but unfortunately, there is no information on how these processes were interrelated.

After the failed coup attempt on 1 December 1924, the Communist Party in Estonia was banned, and most of its members were imprisoned or emigrated. At the end of the decade, the party activity revived somewhat through legal and illegal associations and, in connection with the recurring debate over RE, the party continued its efforts at spreading atheism. The "secular confirmation camps" began again in 1929. From 1929 to 1933, the party organized secular "masses" – public meetings where organizers spoke about atheism and the participants sang antireligious songs to the tune of church hymns. At the beginning of the 1930s, the Tallinn Workers' Union also organized antireligious children's days and children's song festivals. Secular funerals and marriages were conducted among workers who sympathized with Communism (Raid 1978, 113, 30). The Workers' Cultural-Educational Association was created in 1931, which also had an antireligious circle and contacts with antireligious organizations in the USSR. One of their achievements was the establishment of the antireligious journal *Usk ja Tõde* (*Faith and Truth*) in 1932, consisting mainly of translations of Soviet atheistic periodicals (*Bezbozhnik*, *Antireligioznik*). Only five issues of the journal were published before the group was shut down in 1933 by the authorities.

Another group involved in atheist propaganda was the Tartu Workers' Esperanto and Cultural Association, which vigorously promoted Marx-Leninism under the facade of Esperanto language learning. This association was also shut down in 1933 (Raid 1978, 111, 112). Although they had some influence on workers' attitudes during the Great Depression, with fewer than 200 members (Kuuli 1999, 46), Communists remained a marginal movement that had no wider societal support. Communist atheism had quite a negative image, due to both the antireligious policy in Russia and the memory of the puppet state, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia (1918–1919), which enacted the policies of the Red Terror (Mihkelson 1992).

The positions of the Social Democrats, rather hostile towards religion and religious education in the beginning of the 1920s, softened in the 1930s, probably due to the desire to distance themselves from the religious policy of Communists. "How can you blame Estonian Socialists for what happens in Russia? . . . There is not much hostility towards religion among our Socialists" (Rei 1931). This was probably true since Estonian Communists blamed them for the same ("*Ateism ja sotsialistid*" 1932). The clergyman Jakob Aunver (1933) also confirmed: "The contemporary source of antireligious thought is Soviet Russia".

The strand of Western freethinking and Enlightenment ideals was most prominently represented by the leftist intellectual group Humanitas, formed in 1926 with the goal of spreading modern education, naturalism and

materialism. Its leading figure, the Marxist biologist Aleksander Audova (1892–1932), was also associated with the aforementioned Esperanto community. By preferring the label "humanism", they distanced themselves from Communists, although there seems to have been no connections with the Western European Freethought movement either. Members of the society published articles and organized lectures and discussion evenings, which took place around ten times a year. Unlike the publications of the Communists, which tended to be sloganeering and superficial, the Humanitas message was well articulated, with an emphasis on science and education that would push religion aside. The subjects of the lectures ranged from general philosophical topics to a direct critique of religion: e.g., "Religion and its Value", "The Meaning of Life", "Socialism and the Church".

When the leader of the group and its most prolific speaker, Audova, emigrated to Russia in 1932, he was succeeded by a professor of mathematics, Jaan Sarv (1877–1954). The public activity of the society dwindled thereafter, but Sarv continued to organize so-called secular services on Sunday mornings in his home for a narrower circle, which began and ended with piano pieces, between which Sarv gave humanistic lectures (Prink 1967). In the 1930s, when other possibilities for Marxist propaganda were reduced, the Estonian Communist party began to exert an influence on Humanitas. The activity of the group consequently increased once again but now with a more visible Marxist attitude. The activities of the society ceased in 1940.

Humanist critique of religion was also represented by the magazine *Ratsionalist* (*Rationalist*) (1932–1933), founded by a later Communist, Max Laosson (1904–1992). *Rationalist* focused mainly on religion in connection with education policy and questions regarding national identity, launching its mission involving "freeing our culture and country from the ballast of Christianity" (*Ratsionalist* 1932, 2). The ideas of Sigmund Freud, which were introduced and referenced in a number of articles, were a major influence.

The third main source of the anti-Christian stance was the national narrative. The narrative presents Estonian history in the form of the Great Battle for Freedom, in which political events after the violent Christianization in the 13th century were interpreted as a continuous and ongoing struggle for the survival of Estonian culture and language (Tamm 2008). Within this story, Germans and Russians were portrayed as the main enemies of Estonians, although the juxtaposition of Estonians and Christians was also quite frequent, the Church being treated as a henchman of foreign oppressors and with the purported survival of ancient animistic beliefs among Estonians presented as proof of the resistance against the violent Christianization. Most of the anti-Christian potential of this line of thought was realized in the second half of the 1930s with the rise of the historical novel. A number of authors glorified the ancient past and depicted violent Christianization, the works being a product of the national narrative and, at the same time, a

driving force for its formation. Such an attitude is also visible in the history textbooks of the time.

This narrative was generally anti-Christian but not explicitly atheist. During this period, the association between Estonians and atheism, originating from Baltic-German accusations, had entirely disappeared – atheism was now mainly associated with Russia and Communism. The visibility of atheism and secularity in society was somewhat higher than earlier and was no longer regarded as a curiosity but as a reality that must be taken into account. There emerges a strong link between education and secularity, and the intelligentsia was often deemed secular(ist).

Open atheism, however, was still rare – 98% of the population of Estonia in 1934 belonged to some denomination (78% were Lutherans), although only one fourth of them were actively engaged in church activities. Only 0.7% of the respondents were "without faith" (Reiman 1935). The church was still seen as a backbone of morality and also the main provider of the rites of passage. After the secular funeral of well-known author Eduard Vilde, a newspaper read: "To date, only a few individuals, who have not had a relationship to the church or who for philosophical reasons did not want themselves to be associated with the church, have been sent to their resting place in a secular way, without the word of God". The article also mentioned the lack of secular funeral traditions but expressed hope that "the funeral of the great writer will lay the foundation for secular funeral customs" (*Uudisleht* 1933).

As in the previous period, the meaning of the term *atheist* was quite ambiguous and was often used interchangeably with *materialist, anti-religious, unbeliever, Godless* and *irreligious* (Remmel 2016b). Apart from the denial of the existence of God, these terms also denoted anti-clerical attitudes, worshipping of nature (neopaganism) and deviation from church norms: "an atheist is a person who does not have the kind of religiosity which the church demands, who is not bound to dogmas" (Ast 1920). In the same vein, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) annually reported the number of people "left to atheism" (*Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri Usu Kiriku aruanne 1936. aasta kohta* 1937), but, as already evidenced by contemporary academics, this actually meant a growing indifference to institutional religion (Reiman 1935).

Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union in June 1940. In addition to the implementation of the Soviet antireligious policy, the Communist Party launched atheistic propaganda through the media and lectures. Efforts were made to organize cells of the League of Militant Atheists, as already existed in other parts of the Soviet Union (see Peris 1998), but with little success. Six issues of the journal *Atheist* were published in 1941, consisting mostly of translations from Russian and aimed at revealing the class nature of religion. During religious holidays, various crowd-engaging events were organized (Raid 1969, 76). All atheistic activity ceased when Estonia was occupied by Nazi Germany in the summer of 1941.

Atheism during the Soviet occupation (1944–1991)

With the Soviet reoccupation of Estonia in 1944, the religious situation in Estonia was shaped by the same currents that influenced the Soviet religious situation in general. Religion faded away from the public sphere and gained a negative reputation. While atheist positions were generally accepted, mainly due to the successful presentation of the science and religion conflict model and the earlier anti-Christian nationalist narrative, atheism also suffered due to its close association with the hated Soviet ideology. Low respect for atheism resulted in a serious lack of propagandists of atheism, with the few cadres who were engaged being overloaded, leading to poor quality propaganda, which in turn reinforced the already problematic reputation. As a result, atheist propaganda was frowned upon and (semi-)scientific research on atheism was rather rare.

Latvia and Estonia were the only Soviet Republics with a Lutheran background, which – in contrast to Orthodoxy in Georgia, Catholicism in Lithuania or Islam in Asia – had a weaker link with national identity. Consequently, the Church did not appear as the main enemy in the struggle with nationalism. The KGB was also quite successful in coercing the churches into cooperation within only five years after the reoccupation (Jürjo 1996, 151), and wider social resistance was extinguished with mass deportations of 1949. Consequently, the Soviet authorities only had to deal with some clergymen who deviated from the general milieu of obedience (Remmel 2015). The religious situation in the Estonian SSR was not problematic – "official" churches and "sects" were fairly tame, which later gave a rise to the interpretation that the Baltics were a testbed for a more tolerant religious policy (Pilli 2007, 143). No archival material to corroborate such a statement has been found, however; thus, the relative tolerance can be considered an indicator of the weakness of the churches.

Other than that, the history of atheism in Estonia followed the general developments in the Soviet Union. During Stalin's reign, the KGB controlled the church and people through the general atmosphere of fear (Jürjo 1996); the propaganda of atheism was rather secondary. The death of Stalin was followed by a "religious renaissance" from 1954 through 1957, evidenced by a rise in ceremonies provided by the church (baptisms, confirmations). Soon after, an antireligious campaign was initiated as part of a larger plan of "Marxist Enlightenment" to modernize Soviet society (Anderson 1994, 6–37; Stone 2008; Luehrmann 2016, 186). The campaign lasted from 1958 to 1964 and brought about developments in three directions: (1) atheist propaganda in the press and through "*Znanie*" (knowledge) society lectures that created an atmosphere of hostility toward religion, implementing atheism into the education system; (2) the development of new Soviet ceremonies to disrupt the religious traditions; and (3) "administration" or antireligious legislation and active monitoring of its implementation in order to cut down church activities.

The driving force behind the atheist agenda was the Communist Party. Apart from the campaign years, however, atheism was not one of the top priorities of the Estonian Communist Party (ECP). The Central Committee of the ECP only addressed atheism and religion in their decisions on 18 occasions from 1954 to 1989, with only few of them born from a local initiative. Most of them were issued routinely, at intervals of a few years, and mainly functioned as reminders of the struggle against religion. The demands and guidelines were vague, and control over the enforcement of decisions was weak (Remmel 2015, 364–365).

Although atheist propaganda should have been supervised by the Atheist Commission of the Republic, established under the ECP Central Committee in 1962, the committee never became active. The main forum for leading Estonian propagandists of atheism consequently became the Scientific-Methodological Council of Atheism of the *Znanie* Society.[4] The council did not have the power, however, to force anyone to carry out their decisions apart from the subordinate local *Znanie* atheist commissions. As a result, the main feature of the propaganda of atheism in ESSR was its random character.

Most atheist propaganda was carried out in the form of lectures of the *Znanie* Society. It was considered sufficient if people attended at least one atheistic lecture per year (Remmel 2011, 227), but the figures for the atheist lectures (Table 5.1), considering the hypothetical number of participants per lecture at about 50 and the Estonian population of 1.5 million, indicate that atheistic propaganda was extremely far from reaching that goal. The scope of the lectures was actually smaller, since in order to receive credit for ideological work, even speeches given at secular funerals were recorded as atheist lectures.

As concerns the printed propaganda, apart from the Khrushchev campaign years, the number of articles and books published was low. During the campaign, atheism rubrics were established in newspapers and magazines, but the themes – largely consisting of superficial critiques of the church – were soon exhausted. By the late 1960s, many such rubrics were closed or began to discuss scientific achievements or curiosities. The amount of original Estonian material was minimal, with most of the articles being translations from the Russian press. The choice of suitable material was also limited since criticism of religion from the Russian Orthodox context was largely irrelevant for the Estonian Lutheran background. This meant that Soviet Estonian atheism was somewhat isolated.

As Soviet atheism was considered the supreme form of all forms of atheism, non-Soviet atheist thought was mainly represented by “progressive” authors such as Leo Taxil, Mark Twain and Jaroslav Hašek, with comic books by Jean Eiffel also falling into this category. “Bourgeois” atheism mainly reached the Estonian reader through the critical mediation of Soviet authors, although some short texts were translated into Estonian (e.g., Voltaire, Diderot,

Table 5.1 Atheist propaganda in Soviet Estonia according to *Znanie* society reports, a chronicle of articles and reviews, and a chronicle of books.

Year	*Lectures*	*Articles*	*Books*
1949	94	?	?
1950	179	?	?
1951	517	?	3
1952	643	?	3
1953	832	?	19
1954	542	48	3
1955	1141	12	7
1956	908	22	2
1957	897	8	2
1958	1406	40	6
1959	2062	117	12
1960	1931	167	7
1961	1680	122	10
1962	2618	101	10
1963	2625	85	17
1964	3175	58	7
1965	3347	31	9
1966	3319	26	5
1967	2980	14	4
1968	2899	35	4
1969	2836	27	3
1970	2466	14	3
1971	2577	33	4
1972	2832	15	3
1973	2797	14	4
1974	3047	9	2
1975	3184	11	5
1976	3064	11	6
1977	3030	10	2
1978	3105	9	4
1979	3467	12	3
1980	3749	16	6
1981	3800	12	6
1982	4166	16	2
1983	4915	20	3
1984	4876	24	1
1985	4627	7	6
1986	3461	7	4
1987	?	12	7
1988	?	11	1
1989	?	6	1

Holbach, Bertrand Russell). Religion, from an ideologically correct angle, was also sometimes addressed in Estonian fiction. In the propaganda of atheism, radio, TV and cinema were very rarely used and, in summary, explicitly stated atheism was not all that visible most of the time.

The field of "scientific atheism" can also be characterized as having a scarcity of original material, mainly because "the people involved in scientific atheism were extremely few in number" (Vimmsaare 1963, 15). This situation did not change until the end of the Soviet empire, and only 50 to 60 books by local authors appeared on the topic of scientific atheism, most of them small brochures, published lectures and methodological guides.

Shakhnovich (2015) argued that Soviet "scientific atheism" could be considered an equivalent of the study of religion. However, even taking into the account the compulsory ideologization of science at that time, Estonian "scientific atheism" remained largely propagandistic. Nevertheless, a distinction should be made between "scientific atheists", who were mostly employees at the faculties of arts of universities and involved in the teaching of so-called red subjects, and those historians, folklorists or natural scientists who occasionally linked their topic with atheism due to *Zeitgeist* (e.g., the collection *Loodusteadused ja religioon*) (*Natural Sciences and Religion*, 1966). The constant dearth of scientific articles on atheism "gave an opportunity to publish some interesting material" (Raid 2003), which was actually written on other topics (e.g., Estonian history) but associated with atheism in order to get published.

Apart from "scientific atheism", the only "official" possibility to study contemporary (folk) religion was under the aegis of folkloristics, although the topic was generally neglected by researchers (Valk and Kulmar 2015, 183). Thus, "scientific atheism" in Estonia focused mainly on two fields: history and sociology. Smolkin-Rothrock (2010, 51) identified two main narratives of the atheist propaganda: "about the confrontation between science and religion, as well as the place of religion in modern society in general, and in Soviet life in particular". In addition, a third can be identified as well, one that connected atheism with the local culture. Since the majority of the locally produced atheist literature dealt with the national situation, this narrative was often the only distinctive feature of Soviet Estonian, Latvian or Czechoslovak atheism. The Estonian "scientific atheist" take on history used four strategies:

1 emphasizing the motif of violent Christianization of Estonians
2 variations of church criticisms from Estonian history presented as atheism
3 highlighting the fact that many respected Estonians (authors, intellectuals) were atheists
4 presenting atheism as inherent to Estonian culture in general, as in "Estonians are a religiously lukewarm nation" (Kabur and Tarand 1961, 11) or "[Estonian] folklore was always anti-religious" (Erport 1952).

A collection of antireligious and church-critical folk texts was even published (Lätt and Rüütel 1963), attempting to foster the connection between

national identity and atheism. The trope of critical attitudes of Estonian intellectuals towards the church during the 1920s and 1930s was also used to present an inevitable link between education, science and atheism. The highest profile original publications on atheism were the collections of articles "On the History of Religion and Atheism in Estonia" (1–3, published in 1956, 1961 and 1987).

The sociological approach mostly discussed the development of secular Soviet rituals or the dynamics of religious associations in Estonia. Some attempts were made to assess the changes in society in general (e.g., Vimmsaare 1981), mostly referring to only one public survey, conducted in 1968, which included some questions about religion and atheism.[5] About 80 studies were conducted by students (Vimmsaare 1986), but most of them did not find their way into wider dissemination.

Atheist propaganda was a "concealed" curriculum in schools: questions about religion and atheism were treated in the scope of subjects such as literature, history, physics and chemistry, only occurring, however, when the teacher was interested in bringing up the subject. In order to meet the requirement for "atheist upbringing" in the school curriculum, a general practice was for a homeroom teacher to talk about the topic once a year before Christmas. Optional courses in atheism were held in a few schools but soon died out. The general situation is quite aptly outlined by Vimmsaare (2000, 35): "Atheist party members repeatedly complained that the Soviet school is areligious, not atheistic as they would have liked".

At institutions of higher education, a compulsory subject entitled Fundamentals of Scientific Atheism was added to the curriculum in the course of the antireligious campaign. The way in which the subject was taught, however, depended on the general spirit of the university, the particular lecturer's preferences and, last but not least, the availability of a lecturer. Due to a lack of specialists, the course was only continuously taught at the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute (Sillaste 1975). Similarly, atheism clubs were created at some schools, universities and cultural institutions, but their survival depended on the existence of activists. Most of them only functioned for a few years during Khrushchev's campaign, the exceptions being the "Atheos" club, which functioned from 1966 to 1988 at the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute and organized lectures and sociological studies.

While the antireligious propaganda and restrictive policy played a major role in suppressing churches, the most successful method for creating cultural interruption in the religious tradition was the socialist rituals, which were presented as being based on folk traditions, taken over by the church in the past and now being refurbished and reestablished (Baturin 1971, 13). Although certain new traditions were created, the most important fields of struggle were the maturation ceremony/confirmation, marriage, burials and secular cemetery days for commemorating the dead.

The youth summer days were among the first attempts to create substitute rituals and the greatest success story. Initiated in 1957,[6] they took place

as a two- or three-day summer camp, full of hiking, sports and competitions, but also lectures on various topics, occasionally including atheism. The original idea was to offer an alternative for secondary school graduates who did not attend church confirmations. The Communist party quickly realized the potential, however, and attached the label of an antireligious struggle to it (Leitsalu 2007). Youth summer days became extremely popular, and in 1961 it was reported that "broadly speaking, our battle against church confirmation has been won" (Remmel 2008). In addition, "spring days" for children who graduated from kindergarten began in 1963, consisting of performances and games for children while their parents listened to lectures on different aspects of family life and, again, occasionally on atheism. They became even more popular than the youth summer days in the 1970s.

All the new rituals were developed by enthusiasts working as registrars in cooperation with ethnologists, folklorists and atheist propaganda activists. Despite their being underfinanced, the enthusiasm and high professionalism soon proved to be fruitful. The percentage of church marriages was around 30% in the late 1950s, but by the mid-1960s, it had dwindled to a rather marginal number (Raid 1978, 296). Religious funerals and cemetery holidays proved to be the most resilient – even in the 1980s, nearly a third of burials took place according to church customs.

As with Soviet atheism in general, Estonian atheism experienced a crisis in the late 1960s. As Stepanova (this volume) points out, atheism "is only sustainable when the subject of its critique exists". Religion was exiled deep into the private sphere and had very little visibility in society. The atheist struggle against religion consequently seemed irrelevant, not only for ordinary citizens but also for party officials. In order to remain relevant, the position of atheism in Soviet ideology and its message needed reconsideration (Remmel 2011, 215; Smolkin-Rothrock 2014). In the mid-1960s, "professional atheists" began to emphasize the need to focus on "the life-affirming content" of Marxist atheism instead of mere criticism of religion. Nevertheless, the contents of the new positive message remained unclear, and the "ordinary" atheism propagandists had difficulty changing their critical agenda. As a result, by the 1980s, it was summarized that "people behave as if they were afraid of atheist lectures" (Remmel 2011, 227).

The attitude toward atheism was therefore ambivalent. On the one hand, the atheist grand narrative of science, education and religion as incompatible was generally accepted. On the other hand, atheism was still considered part of Soviet ideology and therefore had a bad reputation, which was complemented by the poor preparation of atheist specialists and the low level of argumentation. The period from late 1960 up to the late 1980s may therefore be described as a "gap", when both atheism and religion had low visibility and were rendered irrelevant. Most people were distanced from the

church; by 1987, before the relaxation of the Soviet religious policy, only about 5% of the population were church members. The prevailing attitude towards atheism and religion was indifference (Vimmsaare 1981; Remmel 2017, 129).

Borowik et al. (2013, 635) have noted that "we do not know how the atheism as experienced by people living under the Communist regime was understood". According to the Estonian media and archival materials, it is possible to provide at least some answer. The meaning of "atheism" depended greatly on the context. In the materials of the Central Committee of the ECP, "atheism" denoted atheist propaganda and implementation of secular rituals. In church archives, "atheism" was the state religious policy and party ideology. "Professional atheists" distinguished between "scientific atheism" as a scientific discipline: "conscious" atheism, an active denial of god ("strong atheism" in Western literature) and "spontaneous" atheism, a nonsystematic attitude that is the result of life experience ("weak atheism" in the West) (Vimmsaare 1981, 108). For ordinary citizens, especially since the late 1960s, "atheism" began to denote merely the absence of religion (Remmel 2016b).

Secularity in the Estonian Republic

In connection with recent sociological studies, Estonia has been recognized as one of the "most atheist" countries. Indeed, the visibility of religion is low, and the indicators of religiosity are also the lowest in Europe. Secularity is normative, and the general attitude towards religion can be described as indifference, with occasional anti-Christian moments when "religion" suddenly becomes visible. Yet, although Estonians have drifted away from institutional religion, they have a plethora of different beliefs and practices as "alternative religiosity" is making its way towards becoming a new mainstream religion.

During the last years of the Soviet Union, there was an upsurge of religion in public life, and the years 1987 through 1992 have even been described as a "religious boom", when numerous new religious movements entered Estonia. Religion in general acquired more a positive image in the media, and the figures for participants in religious rites skyrocketed. In 1991, the Estonian Republic was reestablished after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the Constitution reaffirmed the principles of freedom of religion, with article 40 stipulating the principle of institutional separation of the state and religious associations.

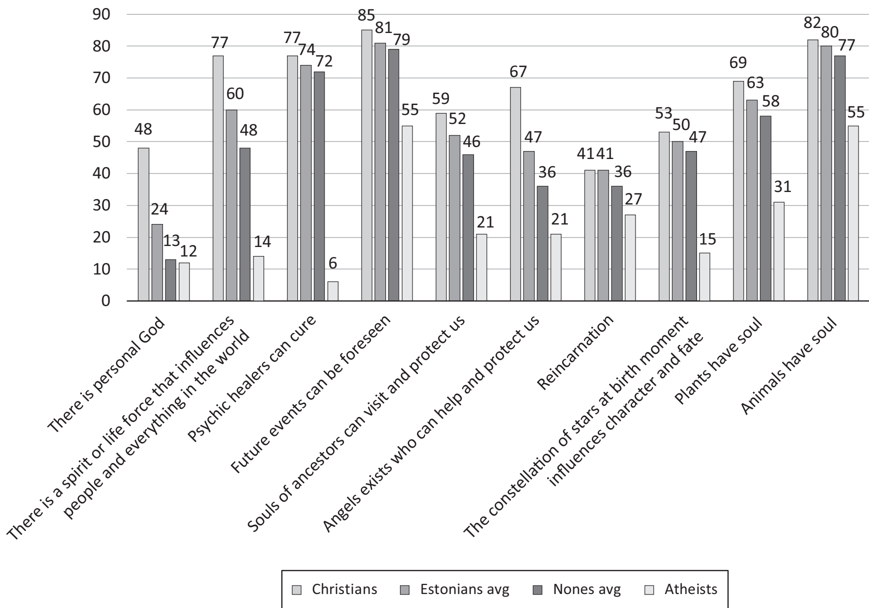
The religious fervor declined in the early 1990s. Due to an intermediate "religious gap", religion was regarded much as a curiosity, often with negative connotations: hypocrisy, manipulation and anachronism (Remmel 2012). The position of atheism was no better as it was still perceived as part of Soviet ideology and associated with "the brainwashing of the past

decades" (Veldre 1995). The visibility of atheism was therefore rather low in the 1990s. The few who publicly presented atheistic views distanced themselves from Soviet atheism and relied instead on the conflict model between rationality, education, science and religion (Mikelsaar 1995). Therefore, for much of the time, the religious situation in contemporary Estonia could be described as the continuation of the religious indifference that began back in the 1960s, based on lack of visibility of religion (Remmel 2017). Secularity is considered normative, as exemplified by a portrait article about the Estonian American singer Daniel Levi Viinalass, who "astounded the public with his Christian worldview" (Tults 2015). Indeed, about two thirds of ethnic Estonians (see Table 5.2) consider themselves in some way "not religious". Nevertheless, these secular identities are very fuzzy, mostly only labels picked in the survey and therefore not describing "engaged" positions (Lee 2014) that are present (e.g., as identity markers) without the direct presence of religion. Interviews with Estonian nonbelievers have also confirmed that, since religion is not a "problem" and secularity is normative, there is no need to identify oneself in a secular way – there is even a reluctance to pick an identity (Remmel 2019 [forthcoming]), which also explains the relative unpopularity of the atheist identity, since more ambiguous labels are preferred.

It is therefore logical to assume that identity labels say next to nothing about one's attitudes or beliefs – e.g., for persons who are identifying as secular, Estonian atheists seem rather religious (see Graph 5.1). Yet, this "irreligious incoherence" (if we extend Chaves's (2010) notion of "religious incoherence" to secularity) actually illustrates the local understanding of atheism. Being the only known secular tradition, it has a broad and ambiguous meaning. In most cases, Estonian atheism does not denote denial of God, but rather a distance from Christianity, which, despite its marginal status, is still considered the norm for religion. Strictly materialist positions were held by less than 2% of respondents in total, and half of them described themselves as "indifferent" rather than "atheist" (Remmel 2016a). One cannot help but conclude that, after living 50 years under an atheist regime,

Table 5.2 (Non)religious identity labels of ethnic Estonians according to survey LFRL (2015). Answers to the question: "Irrespective of being a member of a religious denomination or not, do you consider yourself . . ."

Christian	26%
Follower of native Earth belief	6%
Religious or spiritual seeker	7%
Nonreligious, who is not interested in these topics	24%
Spiritual but not religious	27%
Atheist, who denies God and everything supernatural	7%
Something else	2%
Don't know	2%



Graph 5.1 Beliefs of ethnic Estonians according to chosen identity labels (LFRL 2015).

Estonians have only a vague idea of what atheism actually is. Agnosticism as a label is practically unknown.

Generally, the most important indicators for a religious person are religious socialization, age and nationality. The majority of secular people in Estonia are not socialized into religion due to the low visibility of religion and lack of RE at home and school. To date, all attempts to install RE at schools have been met with fierce criticism. In practice, RE is taught in approximately 10% of schools for a marginal portion of the students (Schihalejev 2015). More than 50% of the Christianity dominated group were over the age of 50, pointing to a generational phenomenon linked, once again, to the socialization of religion. As concerns nationality, only 19% of ethnic Estonians "considered some religion of their own" (14% were Lutheran); among other ethnic groups, the percentage of those who identifies as religious was much higher (~50%) (Census 2011).

The most important event influencing the understanding of secular was the introduction of the Eurobarometer 2005 results in the Estonian media. The fact that only 16% of Estonians believed in God (the lowest score in Europe) quickly inspired a popular meme about Estonia as "the world's most atheist/least religious" country – a radicalization of the motif

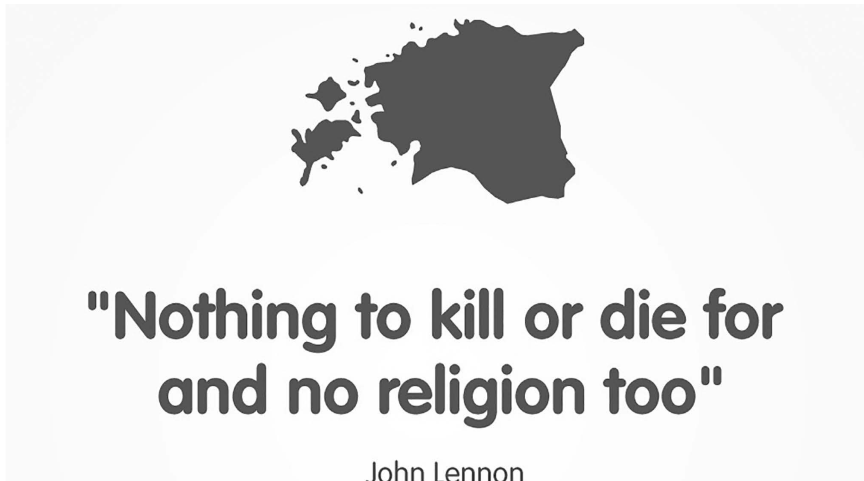


Figure 5.1 A winner of the 2008 advertisement competition for young designers. Using the lyrics of John Lennon's song "Imagine," it depicts Estonia as the least religious country in the world (Kuldmuna 2008).

"religiously lukewarm nation", originating in the 1960s. The following surveys strengthened the image of extreme secularization: for example, the Gallup poll in 2009, according to which only 16% of Estonians considered religion to be either "important" or "very important" (Ringvee 2013). Over the past ten years, the idea of being "the least religious" has established itself as part of Estonian national identity, even though it is constantly questioned on the basis of the popularity of alternative spirituality.

The cultural undercurrents that produce Estonian "practical atheism" based on the lack of contact with religion also have an impact on culture itself and can be described through the notion of "inCREDulous atheism" (Norenzayan and Gervais 2013), which denotes the shortage of "cultural inputs" in order to keep religious tradition going. One of its coproducts is "religious illiteracy", which denotes the inability to recognize references to religion or its manifestations and a lack of vocabulary to describe one's own thoughts and feelings about religious matters, but also very little or no understanding about the functions that religion could fulfill in society. Rooted in a lack of religious socialization and knowledge about religion, this phenomenon began in Soviet times. "The only function of the clerics is satisfying believers' religious needs, nothing else" – this notion of the Soviet era functionary (Remmel 2011, 151) describes quite well the present-day understanding of many secular people. In addition, religion is seen as a truly last resort for people in need (Remmel and Uibu 2015) and, occasionally, as a provider of life-cycle ceremonies: about 25% of children are baptized,

15% of marriages take place according to church customs and 31% of the deceased are expedited by clerics (Remmel 2019 [forthcoming]). Since most life-cycle ceremonies are secular and ceremonies are provided by either state or private bodies, religious ceremonies in Estonia function somewhat similarly to secular humanist ceremonies in the United Kingdom (Engelke 2012) – they offer a personal touch.

Another peculiarity is the "secularization of language" (Remmel 2019 [forthcoming]). On the one hand, (some) words related to religion have gained negative connotations (e.g., *usklik* [believer], which has connotations of mental abnormality and ignorance or something alien). On the other hand, words (and objects) related to religion seem to change or lose their meanings or become ambiguous since there are no realities in people's lives that correspond to them any longer. (*Kirik* [church] denotes only a building, not a set of people or an organization.)

De-Christianization of material objects and holidays can also be observed. A number of secular informants wear crosses around their necks, but without any religious meaning – they are merely memorabilia. Many religious holidays are public holidays in Estonia but have "run dry" of their religious content. Despite the fact that 40% of Estonians attend church at Christmas (for 28%, this is the only occasion they visit church at all), most regard this event as "just an old tradition" or "a family gathering" (Remmel 2016a). Similarly, Easter is mostly understood, without any reference to religion, as "the greeting of the spring", commonly referred to as "egg holidays".

Criticism of religion is expressed also by some popular Estonian writers and poets, connecting these attitudes to the national narrative, which is, in a sense, the continuation of the tradition of the 1920s and 1930s. The analysis of atheist arguments, presented in the comment sections of online newspapers, indicate, not surprisingly, the strong influence of Soviet-era atheism, with religion being associated with backwardness and brainwashing. The most striking feature, however, is still the influence of criticism stemming from the national narrative (Remmel 2012). Translations are also available at present for works by the New Atheists (Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and David Mills), translated primarily by people more or less related to the NGO Estonian Skeptic. New Atheist ideas seem to be more influential among younger atheists, with the main source of information being the internet, particularly talk shows found on YouTube. Their general reception is rather critical, however, mainly due to the resemblance to Soviet atheism. Within the framework of the world philosophy translation project, many European thinkers who have expressed religion-critical views have also been translated (de Montaigne, de la Mettrie, Diderot, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Russell, Hume etc.), although their impact is impossible to evaluate.

With the usual lack of contact with religion, representations of public atheism (and/or secularism) are directly dependent on the visibility of religion in the public sphere. From the 1990s, atheist arguments appeared

periodically primarily in the context of the debates over the establishment of RE at schools. Since the 2000s, criticism of religion has become visible in the context of Islamic terrorism, immigration and Estonian identity politics. For example, the Freedom Monument depicting a cross was erected in Tallinn in 2007, causing controversy because of the perceived Christian symbol. The participation of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in state holiday celebrations is also sometimes under discussion.

The situation, however, seems to be changing. The visibility of religion in the public sphere has grown steadily since 2014. This change can be explained by the debates surrounding the election of the new archbishop of EELC (2014), the discussion around the same-sex union legislation law (2014), the migration crisis (2015) and the newly elected president's refusal to perform the inauguration ceremony in the church (2016–17). A certain reliance on "Christian values", particularly concerning same-sex union, abortion and the immigration debate, has also appeared in the rhetoric of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia and various other small groups. These debates attempt to redefine the role of Christianity and the church in Estonian society (cf. Ringvee 2017), yet there seems to be no clear religion-related agenda in the opposing camp. Even the debates over RE or church-state separation issues have no place in any party's political agenda. Can it be that, for the first time in Estonian history, atheism has turned apolitical?

This situation also explains why there are no secular organizations in Estonia. The only one that has a specifically religio-critical agenda is the NGO Estonian Skeptic, which, as of 2018, had eight official members, who disseminated their views mainly through Facebook, where they have around 4,000 followers. Since local forms of atheism and skepticism are good indicators of the dominant religious tradition in society, one must assume that the main religious tradition in Estonia is alternative spirituality; Christianity rarely attracts the attention of Estonian skeptics. It will therefore be interesting to see how the secular camp will respond to the current increase in the visibility of Christianity. No change refers to the irrelevance of institutionalized religion, but the result may also be an increase in atheist attitudes, similarly to the Czech Republic, where religion seems to be more visible than in Estonia.

Conclusion

Compared to those of other countries, secular traditions in Estonian culture are rather young, only reaching back to the late 19th century. "The secular option" only became more present during the interwar period and was established as a norm during Soviet rule. Estonia currently has a reputation as of one of the most secularized countries in the world, an image now closely tied to Estonian national identity. The justness of this claim is questionable, mainly due to the high presence of different forms of alternative spirituality, although Estonian society can be described as extremely de-Christianized.

The main reason may be the weak connection between Lutheranism and Estonian national identity due to the influence of a national narrative critical of Christianity, differing thus from the other Eastern European "least religious" country, the Czech Republic. Both national narratives employ the "golden past" motif, but while Czechs situate it in the days of the reformer Jan Hus, Estonians situate their golden era in pre-Christian times and partly blame the church and Christianity for its demise.

The leading force behind religio-critical thinking thus seems to be the Estonian national narrative, although Marxist atheism has also been significantly present while Western-European and American influences have had a smaller influence. Historically, different secular traditions in Estonia have often followed the lines of social classes divided by education: intellectuals tended to be more influenced by freethinking ideas while Marxist atheism has been more prevalent among the working class. These boundaries dissolved during the Soviet period.

Secular traditions in Estonia have been political or politicized practically all the time, with atheism being more a tool than a goal. This is also reflected in the succession of the targets of criticism: the Baltic-German church at the beginning of the 20th century and Christianity in general during the interwar period and the Soviet reign while, in independent Estonia, the main "enemy" seems to be alternative religiosity. Since alternative religiosity does not (as yet?) have any political ambitions, this could be the reason atheism in Estonia at present has ceased to be political.

There has been little original thought within secular traditions in Estonia, with the vast majority of the ideas and schemes being secondhand from the West or the East. However, the association between nation(alism) and secularity seems to be a rather original contribution to the history of secular thinking.

Notes

1 Lee (2015, 32–33) argued for a distinction between "nonreligion" (defined by a difference from religion) and "secularity" (defined by irrelevance to religion). Most of the phenomena we address here fall into Lee's category of "nonreligion".
2 In the Early Modern period, the provinces of Estland and Livonia comprised most of present-day Estonia. Estland was under Swedish rule from 1558 to 1721 and Livonia from 1629 to 1721 (Kasekamp 2010, 43–55).
3 Communist International (1919–1943), an organization with the goal of the worldwide overthrow of capitalism.
4 An organization dedicated (mostly) to disseminating party ideology under the banner of popular scientific lectures.
5 There was a direct connection between the commissioner of religious affairs and leading propagandists of atheism; therefore, the latter had a yearly update on the dynamics of religion in Estonia. Since this information was not public, the 1968 survey was the only one referred to in publications.
6 The first postwar ceremony, name-giving, was initiated in Latvia in 1954 (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2007).

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6 Freethought, atheism and anticlericalism in 20th-century Hungary

Margit Balogh and András Fejérdy

The 20th century was hard on Hungary. In the early decades, the country existed as part of a dualist state, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, created through a compromise in 1867. It had a conservative-liberal leadership, representing many nations and faiths. That state fell apart after defeat in the First World War. Short-lived civil radical and Communist regimes failed to deal with the crisis, and in autumn 1919, a "Christian national" counter-revolutionary system took control of a country that had been reduced to a fraction of its former size and become ethnically homogeneous, although still multiconfessional. After 1945, Hungary came within the Soviet sphere of interest and was run by an atheist single-party system for four decades after 1949. After regaining its freedom in 1990, Hungary passed from the 20th to the 21st century as a pluralist democracy.

This chapter discusses the presence and effects of Freethought, anticlericalism and atheism in Hungary in a varied historical context. Our analysis covers the state's relations with churches and religions, the programs and activities of intellectual-cultural groups and institutions either connected to the government or representing contrary, anticlerical/Freethought or atheist views. By investigating how these factors interacted, we provide an account of how atheism and Freethought in Hungarian society changed during the century. We hope it will provide the basis for further research and for a comparative analysis of the question across Europe.

Compromising liberalism – limited separation

The dual monarchy – which came into being through the Compromise of 1867 and survived until 1918 – brought to Hungary what is usually called the "age of *polgárosodás*". The term *polgárosodás* roughly translates as "the rise of civic society" and incorporates the processes of modernization, individualization and secularization that had been in progress since the early 19th century (Gerő 1992). The government did not, however, fully implement the classic liberal principle of separating church from state. The principle found some application, with compromises, in religious legislation and education, but none at all in the secularization of church estates.

The process of *polgárosodás* began to take effect on the denominations during the Hungarian Revolution, which broke out on 15 March 1848. After the failure of the struggle for independence from the Habsburgs, however, the principles of the 1848 Act on "religious affairs" could not be implemented, and the church was not separated from the state. The process only resumed after the Compromise of 1867, after which Hungarian legislators passed laws establishing a legal framework for the operation of the churches in the liberal Hungarian state.

The process came to a climax in the freedom of religion provided under Act XLIII of 1895, displaying a level of tolerance almost unequaled in all Europe. Free practice of religion and choice of denomination were combined with guarantees of civil and political rights independent of religion and a newly-created option of a nondenominational status. The act also established a three-category system of religions – "received", "recognized" and "not recognized" – that remained in effect until 1947. Churches in the first – received – category were those that enjoyed state support and the right to completely free and autonomous operation. The category of state-recognized religions extended to those with lesser rights of self-government, mainly smaller Protestant denominations (such as the Baptists) and Islam. These could operate freely but could not claim state support. The "not recognized" (or "tolerated") denominations, commonly referred to as "sects", were placed under the general rules of association and assembly and were subject to permanent police supervision (Balogh 1997a, 287–293; see also Balogh and Gergely 2005).

The compromises involved in the conservative-liberal politics of the Age of Dualism were manifested in education. The ministry, led by József Eötvös, eventually abandoned the strict separation of public and private education and allowed church schools to be financed from public funds. This compromise preserved the dominance of religious schools in Hungary for the duration of the monarchy. The establishment of village and state schools eventually brought the proportion of nonreligious primary schools to 30% by the outbreak of the First World War, although only 10% of pupils attended them. The state maintained an even smaller proportion of secondary schools. In their case, state secularization policy concentrated on the syllabus, attempting to increase, step by step, the proportion of "extraordinary subjects" and, through a compulsory syllabus introduced for all secondary schools, that of modern – secular – subjects (Nagy 2000, 33–47, 52–62).

In addition to equality under the law, the principles of equality and reciprocity of religious denominations should also have implied financial equality, where church and school needs were met from public funds. Church property was not equalized among the received denominations, however, or nationalized during the Age of Dualism (Balogh 1997a, 293). This was due, above all, to the conservative-liberal political elite's view of the large-estate system as a guarantee of the survival of historic Hungary, causing them to oppose reform in this area even after the turn of the century, when

land became an increasingly serious issue. In the 1890s, tensions generated by land hunger began to manifest themselves in agrarian socialist movements demanding redistribution of land and led to large waves of emigration (Romsics 1999, 62–64; Csunderlik 2017, 29–30).[1]

A "new" Hungary – a radical civic counterculture and its institutions

In the late 19th century, Hungarian society was transforming through the effects of lively industrial and economic growth. The government was sufficiently liberal to permit the spread of modern intellectual currents but too conservative to implement civic liberal ideals consistently. By the turn of the century, this incongruity had set off a kind of cultural revolution: a radical left-wing opposition culture emerged, largely out of the educated urban class and some sections of the working class, challenging the "old" culture represented by the ruling conservative-liberal establishment and creating its institutions. Modern literature, and particularly the output of "coffee house" writers and journalists, was instrumental in propagating the new civic culture. Its most prominent forums were the literary magazine *A Hét* (*The Week*), founded in 1890, and the magazine *Nyugat* (*The West*), founded by the new – culturally West-oriented – generation in 1908 (Romsics 1999, 70–72; Csunderlik 2017, 23–25). As Social Democracy advanced, a substantial opposition culture emerged from urban workers' movements, with reading circles, choirs, red flags and Mayday celebrations (Csunderlik 2017, 27–28). We will now focus on the various representatives of positivist-inspired Freethought and their "think tanks".

The rationalist ideology of "Freethought", which covers a wide range of intellectual movements, appeared at the turn of the century. The only knowledge it regarded as authentic was that based on personal experience and scientific investigation; thus, it rejected all religious dogmatism, tradition and authority. Its Hungarian representatives exposed themselves primarily in the struggle with religion and rested much of their argument on Darwinism. Evolutionary theory challenged the creation of the world and, like the Kant-Laplace theory explaining the formation of the solar system, was a powerful anticlerical weapon in the cultural struggle at the turn of the century. The literary translator Lajos Mikes and the atheist thinker József Fekete, for example, ascribed the formulation of "scientific thinking" entirely to Darwin (Darvin, 1909, 31). Fekete used the Darwin centenary of 1909 to propagate atheist-materialist views: "there are not two worlds, a higher and a lower, a better and a worse one on Earth and the other beyond, a material and a spiritual, or one for God and one for humans", he wrote in the book published for the anniversary (Fekete 1909, 9). Authors representing various religions saw their main enemy not in Darwin but in the German Monist Ernst Haeckel, whose social and scientific program – also based on Darwinian evolution – was popular in Hungary. The Protestant writer

Kálmán Osváth described Haeckel as having “put the stamp on the marriage between evolution and atheism” (1909, 125; Tasi 2016, 324–332).

Apart from Darwinism, the younger generation of freethinkers was also influenced in their conception of history and view of society by Marx’s historical materialism. Although they did not look on it as an “infallible device” “to discover the causes of social phenomena”, they considered it “an extremely useful working tool to produce probable explanations, discover regularities and draw conclusions that may guide our actions” (Székely 1912, 107). The rejection of the story of creation propagated by the church implied the illegitimacy of the country’s largest landowner, the Catholic Church, and a logical inference from evolution was that it was only a matter of time before an anachronistic political regime would change, and unequal land ownership would cease (Csunderlik 2017, 37–39, 41–43, 45–50).

The various schools of freethinkers shared the aim of putting the social order under the laws of reason, which meant freeing state, society, education and science from the “contamination” of church and religion. This implied no less than consistently implementing liberal policies in all of the areas in which the conservative-liberal political elite of dualist Hungary were satisfied with the jumble of that outlined earlier. They wanted to place religion in the private realm; classify the churches as private enterprises; deprive every public institution, particularly education, of its religious aspects; radically reform the large-estate system and secularize the church estates. It was inevitably the Catholic religion and Church that the freethinkers attacked most fervently because their international strength appeared to them as the greatest obstacle to social evolution.

Early in the century, moderate and radical representatives of Freethought worked together in various organizations and institutions, but the gaps between them widened by the middle of the first decade. A conservative wing broke off from several organizations, and followers of civic radicalism set up their own autonomous structures. The *Szabadgondolkodás Magyarországi Egyesülete* (Hungarian Freethought Association), comprising mostly lawyers, doctors, journalists and teachers, was formed in Budapest on 28 May 1905, nearly a quarter of a century after its counterpart in Germany (1881). Similar associations were founded soon afterward in other cities. Prior to the foundation of the association, many of the freethinkers and civic radicals had been active in the Freemasons (Csunderlik 2017, 62–65).

Freemasonry in Hungary played a major role in the Age of Dualism and was heterogeneous from the start. Radical- and conservative-oriented lodges operated in parallel after 1867 and united only in 1886. The resulting Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary remained the highest body of Freemasonry until 1919–1920, but under its umbrella, traditional, reverential, conservative, conservative-liberal and radical lodges all remained in operation. The majority of lodges – such as the influential Eötvös, Comenius and Archimédesz lodges – began to follow an increasingly anticlerical line after the turn

of the century, launching Freethought movements and vehemently demanding the secularization of church property. Swelling anticlerical activity led to several lodges coming under the control of the emerging civic radical movement by the 1910s. Most prominent in radical Freemasonry was the Martinovics lodge, founded in 1908 by the sociologist and politician Oszkár Jászi (1875–1957). It aimed to bring together civic-radical and Social Democratic intellectuals. The leading group of radical lodges – associated with “the” masonic newspaper *Világ* (*The World*), founded in 1910 (Csunderlik 2017, 50–55; Schőn 2000, 189) – proved incapable of shifting the haute bourgeoisie out of its constraining compromise with the large estates. Anticlericalism did not find a fellow cause with other elements of liberal ideology and thus remained sterile rather than becoming a fertile area for the renewal of liberal ideals (Csunderlik 2017, 51–53).[2]

An important fixture in the left-wing radical opposition culture of the first decade of the 20th century was a magazine founded by the revolutionary socialist Ervin Szabó and his pupils in 1904, *Világosság* (*Enlightenment*). The editors of this short-lived magazine (it lasted until 1907) defined it as a channel of “freethought, atheism, materialism, monism, socialism, the workers’ movement, and popular science”. They looked on Freethought not so much as principled atheism but as a socio-political program aimed at transforming the present order. When Sámuel Kun took over editorship of *Világosság* after the failure of Szabó’s attempt to use it as the base for organizing a revolutionary workers’ movement within the Social Democratic Party, the magazine again “set out to serve freethought, nondenominationalism and anticlerical agitation”. It published, for example, a highly influential article on the idea of nondenominationalism by Jenő Posch, a secondary school teacher who had distanced himself from the church, and articles by the Zurich botanist Arnold Dodel-Port disseminating Darwinism and the ideas of Haeckel. The editors were later behind the establishment of the Hungarian Freethought Association and published the Freethought principles passed at the International Freethought Federation conference in Paris in 1905. The magazine’s articles on ideology and science, religious-criticism essays and translations of foreign writing on the subject had a considerable influence on the reception of Freethought in Hungary (Csunderlik 2017, 60–62; Schőn 2000, 187; Kemény 1963, 304–325).

The periodical *Huszadik Század* (*Twentieth Century*) and the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (Social Science Society) were also instrumental in propagating “progressive”, secular/civic opposition culture. *Huszadik Század* was founded in 1900 by students of a prominent atheist-rationalist professor of constitutional law and jurisprudence, Gyula Pikler. Initially, the views of Herbert Spencer were influential on the magazine (the first issue contained a letter he had written to the editor), but the moderate outlook gradually gave way to a more radical line. Its first editor, Gusztáv Gratz, conceived the modernization of Hungarian society through internal reform of the existing socio-political system. He resigned in 1903 and was replaced

by Oszkár Jászi, who urged the concept of a "new Hungary" to replace the old (Csunderlik 2017, 55–60).[3]

A similar course may be traced in the case of the Social Science Society, founded in 1901. Its leaders were forthright in pursuing intellectual openness and the free confrontation of different views. Deepening conflicts between conservative and radical members caused the organization to become the think tank of civic radicalism in Hungary (Csunderlik 2017, 55–60). While *Huszadik Század* increasingly followed the ideas of Marx and historical materialism, the Social Science Society followed the civic radical program that Jászi had formulated in his highly influential, visionary book *Új Magyarország felé* (*Towards a New Hungary*, 1907), in which he contrasted "old" with "new" Hungary, idealized progression and demonized reaction (Csunderlik 2017, 55–60; Pók 2010, 113–133, 2015, 133–152). The short-lived Civic Radical Party, formed in 1914 under Jászi's leadership, engaged in substantial political activity only in 1918 and 1919 (Kenyeres 2017, 16–19).

A college branch of the Hungarian Freethought Association, a student society for the "other", the "new" Hungary, was the Galilei Circle, a grouping mainly of civic radical students. It was formed on 22 November 1908, during a prolonged period of tit-for-tat incidents between students (the *kereszt-heccek*).[4] The passage of liberal laws at the end of the 19th century had sparked a dispute as to whether crucifixes could remain in state educational establishments. After a provocative incident in 1900, when a plaster cross was knocked off a relief of the Holy Crown of Hungary at Budapest University, a cultural battle began in the universities. Members of the Szent Imre Circle, founded in 1900, started placing crosses in prominent places, only for them to be immediately removed by the devotees of secularization. The two sides, calling each other respectively "clericalists" and "Jews", often came to blows. The actions came to a head in autumn 1907, when Szent Imre Circle members demanded the dismissal of Gyula Pikler, president of the Sociology Society, from his post as professor of jurisprudence, while others stood up for him. The freethinking students, defending Pikler, founded the Galilei Circle with the intellectual support of *Huszadik Század* and the financial support of the radical Freemasons' lodges. With a membership of between 1,000 and 1,200, the Galilei Circle followed the anticlerical program of civic radicalism until the outbreak of the First World War, during which it propagated antimilitarism and was duly dissolved by the police in 1918.

Despite its relatively diverse institutional base, Freethought was confined to a somewhat narrow social base of urban intellectuals in the opening decades of the 20th century. The Catholic Church did condemn the bad influence of the press and considered it dangerous that "a few people or elements in coats – their name being sometimes radical, sometimes Social Democratic – breeze into a village in the afternoon, and after half an hour of speeches and incitement, twist the souls of the faithful" (Gianone and Klestenitz 2017, 176), but Freethought gained little actual recognition or

influence among broader society. The greatest (press) reaction was prompted by the "free teaching" congress held in Pécs in 1907, at which the discussions were marked by public clashes between "old" and "new" Hungary (Vörösváry 1908; Káich 1976, 46–55).

1918–1919: the period of revolutions

The military collapse in autumn 1918 brought to an end the tolerant climate of church policy that had characterized the Age of Dualism. On 31 October 1918, the Independence and 48 Party led by Count Mihály Károlyi, the Civic Radical Party led by Oszkár Jászi and the Hungarian Social Democratic party led by Ernő Garami and Zsigmond Kunfi formed a coalition government with a program that included several anticlerical and antichurch elements. As we have seen, the Social Democrats and the civic radicals regarded as urgent but not immediate tasks the full separation of church and state, the treatment of the churches as private bodies and the taking of church estates into public ownership to eliminate the "remnants of feudalism". The leaders of some denominations opposed the radical social and political changes but promised loyalty to the government as long as it worked to restore order and consolidate society.

The 133-day Hungarian Soviet Republic – lasting between 21 March and 1 August 1919 – aimed to implement a dictatorship of the proletariat on the Bolshevik model. The new regime – in which several members of the Galilei Circle served – attacked the secular (political, economic and social) authority of the church with passionate anticlericalism and even with enforced atheism. Several laws were passed restricting religion and the churches, only a fraction of which took effect. Overall, the adoption of doctrinaire Marx-Leninist principles in practical church policy did not succeed, although the church schools were nationalized in April, church estates were taken into state control and religious education was banned from schools.[5] Clerics were deprived of the vote, devotional societies (such as the *Papi Eucharisztia Társulat* [Clerical Eucharistic Society], *Országos Központi Oltáregyesület* [National Central Altar Association], rosary societies and the Society of the Sacred Heart) were dissolved and their institutions and press organs seized. The underlying principle was laid down in Hungary's first written Constitution, passed on 23 June: the churches were to be separate from the state, and religion was a private matter. The governing council set up the National Religious Affairs Liquidation Committee to make an inventory of church land, buildings and movable property that had been taken into public ownership, gather it together and make it available to the government. The "church liquidation", which could have led to enormous destruction, was soon thwarted by the fall of the Communist dictatorship (Balogh 1997b, 331–336).

The regime that took up power after the overthrow of the Hungarian Soviet Republic on 1 August repealed the secularization decrees before they

came into force. Károly Huszár, the minister of religious affairs and education appointed on 16 August, put out a circular stating that the relations between the state and the churches that existed before 31 October 1918 were to be restored. The ministry also assured the churches that the nationalized property would be returned, and the churches would receive financial support from the government.

The Soviet Republic had not just failed to carry through its anticlerical policy. The attempt at enforced secularization by the dictatorship of the proletariat and its crass antireligious propaganda had precisely the opposite impact on society of that intended. The committed faithful were joined in the defense of churches, priests and religion by many people from other sections of the population who shared a fundamental antipathy to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently, every secular program in Hungary was discredited or at least frustrated for several decades to come (Balogh 1997b, 333–336).[6]

The "Christian course" and secularization

The "Horthy era", the period of Hungarian history between 1919 and 1944 when "Regent" Miklós Horthy was in office, was defined by two traumas: the harsh political system of the Soviet Republic and the enormous loss of territory imposed by the Treaty of Trianon. These caused a system to be built on an ideology of Christian-national counter-revolution and irredentism. The two self-defining adjectives adopted by the regime, "Christian" and "national", were both directed against freethinking and "Freemasonry". The decline of the country, the loss of its territory and the Trianon "shock" was declared to have been caused by liberals, freethinkers and Freemasons, which meant "foreigners", "Communists" and "Jews" (Nagy 2000, 72). This almost automatically gave rise to extremely harmful nationalism and xenophobia, particularly anti-Semitism. The social-liberal thinking based on understanding and discretion that had formed an important part of Hungarian intellectual and political life since the 1867 Compromise ebbed away during this period. The historical Christian churches took on an elevated position as the prime bearers of the Christian-national mentality and ideals, becoming part of the system with a consolidating and maintaining function. The state held up the churches and church dogma as a kind of shield in front of society, "protecting" the people from the liberalism and social movements that had been highly visible in pre-war Hungary (Balogh 1997c, 337–334).

The borders drawn by the victors in the war reduced the territory of the country by two thirds, greatly reducing the population and also bringing the multinational nature of Hungarian society to an end. The proportion of non-Hungarian speakers fell from 45.5% in 1910 to 10% in 1920. The changes were also reflected in the confessional composition of the population. The loss of the Romanian, Serbian and Ruthene population caused

a drastic decrease in the number of Greek Catholics, and the proportion of Lutherans, with the loss of German- and Slavic-language speakers, fell from 7.1% to 6.2%. In contrast, the proportion of Catholics went up from 49.3% in 1910 to 63.9%, and that of Reformed Church members from 14.3% to 21%. It is remarkable that it was in the interwar period that the category of "no religion" appeared in census data for the first time. The number of people classified as such went up from 1,245 in 1920 to 3,841 in 1938 but, even then, made up no more than 0.1% of the population (Balogh 1997c, 337; Kocsis 2005, 287–293; Romsics 1999, 155–157).

In the Christian-national system, the Freethought traditions of civic radicalism were revived in the magazine *Századunk*, published between 1926 and 1939, but failed to regain their prewar influence. The main representative of the movement, after its old leader Oszkár Jászi went into exile in 1919 (Romsics 1999, 170–172, 184–185), was Rusztem Vámbéry. In his book on religious history, *A vallás, mint az erkölcs őre* (*Religion as the Guardian of Morals*), for example, he engaged in atheist propaganda by arguing that despite popular belief, moral correctness was not a direct function of religiosity. Taking a Marxist argument, he emphasized that the state supported religions because "it has a need for the drug that morals based on belief in an afterlife offer to dampen the pain caused by the injustice of the economic order" (Vámbéry 1927, 17).

Vámbéry criticized the increase of church involvement in education – including nearly every level of public education – in interwar Hungary: there was more emphasis on ideological-political education, and the Christian and national spirit gained greater significance. Irredentism was promoted, and left-wing radical ideologies, principally Communism and socialism, but even bourgeois democracy, were strongly condemned or criticized (Balogh 1997c, 340–341; Romsics 1999, 145, 149–150). Vámbéry stood up, in contrast, for broad freedom of thought and particularly freedom of study, constantly subject to restriction by governments who saw the critical spirit as a threat to their authority. He also stressed that only reactionary regimes wanted to suppress scientific truth, an objective that would never be proposed by a progressive government. He also admitted that, in his own time, it was not the church but the state that was the main obstacle to the freedom of science and education, but church scholarship never set out "to search for the truth, but only to prove and confirm eternal truths by earthly means" (Vámbéry 1935, 322).

Under a compromise signed with Prime Minister István Bethlen in December 1921, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party returned to political life and played an active part in Parliament for the first time in the country's history, although its role and influence gradually waned. The party's main newspaper, *Népszava*, was obliged to exercise restraint in publishing ideological propaganda. Its propagation of Marxism and atheism was therefore indirect and usually contained in reports of foreign events. In 1926, for example, it provided a detailed account of a speech by Otto Bauer to

the congress of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Bauer took the view that the struggle was not primarily between atheism and religiousness, but between proletarians and the bourgeoisie, and that the fight against religion was one of the main battlegrounds of the struggle. Therefore, the fight must be taken "against traditional and backward religiousness", and the masses must be enlightened in the spirit of atheism. True intellectual liberation, however, could only be the result of social transformation ("*Az ausztriai szociáldemokrata kongresszus*" 1926, 9–10). With similar use of foreign examples, the Lutheran-pastor-turned-freethinking-journalist Lajos Szimonidesz agitated for atheism in a long article welcoming the increase in the number of atheists in Germany:

> This great movement is one link in the chain of the intellectual liberation that is spreading through Europe, has created a new national church in Czechoslovakia, strengthened freethinking nondenominationalism in Austria, and elsewhere resulted in great displacements of traditional religion. These figures show, however, that Germany is where unadorned atheism has taken on the greatest momentum since the war. (Szimonidesz 1928, 8)

Having been forced underground after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the Communist Party launched the legal Marxist magazine *Társadalmi Szemle* (*Social Review*) in 1931. In its two years of publication, before the entire editorial staff was arrested on the pretext of unlawful assembly in 1933, it pursued a line that diverged from that of the Social Democrats, presenting a dogmatic view of Hungary's political and economic situation. One of the editors, the Marxist philosopher Pál Sándor, wrote in an authoritative article: "*Társadalmi Szemle* has set itself the objective, in Engels' words, of promoting the doctrines of Marxism in the integrated and planned task-complex of the workers' movement, and delving into Marxism to conduct studies of Hungarian affairs in the Marxist spirit" (Sándor 1932, 387).

These attempts to propagate atheism, Freethought and Marxism remained isolated and exerted an effect in very restricted circles. The religious revival that had developed in reaction to the antireligious intellectual currents of the turn of the century gathered strength in nearly every church during the Horthy era. The "religious renaissance", consisting of an enhanced manifestation of religious life, appeared primarily among the middle classes, especially in cities, while the working classes continued to move away from religion and the rural population retained their folk religious practices – in increasingly archaic forms. Nonetheless, despite the expressly Christian nature of public affairs and education and the broad revival of religion, it is possible to detect the spread of secularization through society in the Horthy era.

Of the changes in family life with repercussions on religious upbringing, the least significant was in baptism and church funerals. The statistics for 1928 (*Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv* 1929, 21, 1948, 29), for example, showed that among Catholics, the number of baptisms was 97.3% of the number of births, and the number of funerals was 96.49%, of that of deaths. The corresponding figures for Greek Catholics were 88.52% and 88.20%, for Reformed Church followers 96.10% and 96.86%, for Lutherans 95.49% and 97.08% and for Unitarians, 55.26% and 61.54%, respectively. This means that, apart from the small and highly secular Unitarian Church, baptisms and funerals were nearly universal. Even some active Social Democratic Party members, who were obviously secularized (for example, never going to church and describing themselves as atheists), held funerals in church and had their children baptized (Nagy 2000, 91–92).

The picture becomes more complex when we look at marriages, mixed marriages, divorces, remarriages and attendance at church. For example, contrary to popular belief, many people only went through the civil marriage ceremony between the two world wars. Of marriages between Catholics, 9.7% were not confirmed in the church, and the corresponding proportions were 9.6% for Reformed Church adherents and 5% for Lutherans. Of mixed marriages, 40% did not involve the services of the church, including 42.2% of cases in which the groom was Catholic and 67.7% of those in which he was of the Reformed faith (Nagy 2000, 92).

Divorce and remarriage after divorce also show steady increases. At the turn of the century, barely 0.3% of women in the "Trianon territory" were divorced, but the proportion increased to 0.7% in 1920, 1.2% in 1930 and 1.4% in 1941 (Nagy 2000, 94). The diminution of church religiousness during the Horthy era is also apparent in church attendance. At the beginning of the period, half of fathers and three fifths of mothers went to church with the required regularity. During the 20 years of the Horthy era, despite the Christian-national ideological and political environment and strenuous government efforts, secularization advanced, and by the end of the period, only two fifths of men and less than three fifths of women met the church attendance requirements (Nagy 2000, 95–96).[7]

Aconfessional jurisdictionism, religious and Church oppression and artificial secularization

The greatest challenge to Hungary and Hungarian historical churches after the Second World War derived from the country being cast into the Soviet sphere of influence after 1945. Consequently, even though coalition governments formally led the country in the first few years, the actual power was in the hands of the Communists from the beginning, and nearly every aspect of civic order – concerning property, politics, society, ideology and culture – was eliminated by 1949. Multiparty parliamentary democracy was

thus replaced by a single-party Communist system that remained in place for four decades.[8]

The coalition government started out with a church policy that followed the "free church in a free state" principle of civic liberalism and implemented this separation in the secularization of church property and the narrowing of the churches' activity in public affairs, culture, politics and education. The land reform decree of 17 March 1945 nationalized estates larger than 1,000 *hold*s outright and permitted holders of smaller areas to keep no more than 100 to 300 *hold*s.[9] The dissolution of Catholic and Protestant organizations and associations started in summer 1946. Under Act XXXIII, passed on 16 June 1948, 6,505 schools were nationalized and, starting in the school year 1949–1950, religious education was made optional, but right from the start, administrative means and other kinds of pressure were used to frustrate registration for these classes. At the same time, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the elderly and children's homes were also nationalized.[10]

The formal separation of church and state was set out in section 54 of Act XX of 1949, the socialist Constitution having been largely modeled on the 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union: "To ensure freedom of conscience, the People's Republic of Hungary shall separate the church from the state". In practice, however, freedom of religion was interpreted to mean only the freedom of individual religious practices while the churches, deprived of their institutions and reduced to providing church services and the sacraments, were put under increasingly close state supervision.

The decade between 1949 and 1958 was dominated by anticlericalism and attempts to destroy the churches as political opponents. This strategy, perhaps self-evidently, was expected to result in atheization and ideological "religious conversion". Postwar atheism, unlike the previous scattered and personal atheism, became a mass phenomenon. Having been unorganized and religiously tolerant, atheism was now organized and belligerent: paradoxically, nonreligiousness itself became a kind of religion, and the indifference of academics gave way to sectarian intolerance. The programmatic atheism of Communism was built on the theoretical foundations of "scientific atheism", although this expression did not come into wide use in Hungary even in party propaganda (and tended to appear only as an unattainable demand rather than a reality). Under the more "discreet" name of dialectic materialism or Marx-Leninism, however, a decision by the Soviet Communist Party of 1954 that the struggle against religious prejudices was identical to the ideological fight by the scientific and materialist worldview against the unscientific religious worldview gave rise to new educational institutions in Hungary, including several college and university departments and a Marx-Leninist Evening University with 43,000 students!

The 1956 Revolution did not bring immediate changes in church policy but did exert an influence on church policy in the medium term. In the wake of the 1956 trauma, the authorities realized that religion and the churches could not be destroyed by force. The Kádár government, which had come

to power through Soviet military intervention, needed international recognition, and its desire to settle the unstable internal situation and implement new economic plans persuaded it to look for means of coexistence with the churches. The new principles of church policy, to replace the oppression of the churches openly aimed at liquidation, were passed by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on 22 July 1958. This retained the strategic goal of wearing down religion and church organizations but was now focused on ideological persuasion as the means to eliminate religion and instill atheistic ideology (Fejérdy 2017, 37–44).

Accordingly, in the early 1960s, at the same time that attempts in Hungary to transform agriculture on the socialist model by speeding up the peasant way of life were being relaxed, the Communist Party espoused the aim of nurturing "socialist consciousness", partly through a "scientifically-based" program of atheism. Party decisions of this kind, however, could not be implemented in wider society from one day to the next. One major impediment was that local officials and party members were reluctant to promote atheistic propaganda for fear of causing trouble. In particular, they did not want to provoke their relations, acquaintances and fellow villagers.

The most important basis for programmatic atheism thus became education. The 1961 education law (and the party decisions that lay behind it) made "ideological education" an explicit requirement for schools. In the early period, the educational system as a whole was a single overall ideological operation, but in the mid-1960s, as individual subjects became more prominent in the curriculum, this aspect of education began to be concentrated in a separate subject, Fundamentals of Our Ideology. After 1972, the Central Committee again formulated the demand that "the school syllabus as a whole should convey our Marxist ideology". The version of Fundamentals of Our Ideology that was introduced into every school the next year was no longer primarily aimed at repudiating religion but at ensuring that young people learned Marxist ideology (Mészáros 1995). Atheism was also propagated in channels beyond education – on the radio and on the increasingly popular medium of television.

Scientific atheism was not taught in Hungarian universities, but the Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (MTA, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) could award a candidate's degree (doctorate) in philosophy in Marxist (or scientific) atheism. There was also a need for written material to base this education on. The first bibliography, consisting almost purely of Soviet literature, appeared between 1953 and 1958. With the word *anticlerical* in its title, it was compiled by staff of the "sub-library of religious history and atheist literature" of the library of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). The first bibliography concentrating on atheism – and with a title incorporating the word – appeared in 1961 (Ákos et al. 1961). With 83 poorly produced pages, the bibliography consisted of 321 items and was based on Tugov's *Osnovy nauchnogo ateizma*. It included only 131 Hungarian-language items, and apart from a few in German and Slovak, the rest were in Russian

and thus could not have had a wide influence. The most popular Russian-speaking author was one of the main propagators of atheism, M. M. Seynman: the list contained three of his works in Hungarian and another three in Russian. The great majority of Hungarian books were translations of classic authors. The dozen or so Hungarian authors were party propagandists (such as Rezső Bányász and Róbert Vértes), young historians (Béla Balázs and József Galántai) and philosophers (József Lukács). The thin offering included such things as a propaganda pamphlet by the Youth Academy of the Communist Youth Association, *Mi a vallás?* (*What is Religion?*). The Szabó Ervin Library also produced a more substantial – 151-page – compilation for librarians covering Marxist and bourgeois critiques of Christianity and religion, the irreconcilable conflict between science and religion and anticlerical propaganda (Ecsedi and Gáliczky 1961). Books recommended to beginners were marked with one star and those for more advanced readers with two stars. There was also a warning: the fight against religious views demanded restraint, a graded approach and patience, because without these, "propaganda does more harm than good to the cause".

In the campaign to propagate atheism, the task of winning over intellectuals fell to a religious criticism magazine launched in 1960, *Világosság* (the title of the old Freemasons' newspaper). Published by the *Tudományos és Ismeretterjesztő Társulat* (Society for Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge), which had been founded in 1953 as the successor to the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság*, it defined itself between 1970 and 1989 as a magazine of materialist views, and rather than the oversimplified anticlericalism of the 1950s, it carried worthwhile articles on religious history and presented the anticlerical legacy of the Enlightenment. The educated Marxist elite that emerged in the 1970s regarded atheism as a radical dimension of the Marxist worldview,[11] making a crucial distinction between "enlightening" and "liberal" critiques of religion (Ágh 1965, 87–93) and, instead of rationalist criticism and "exposure", preferred to analyze the social role of religion. The magazine's editor was József Lukács, the principal ideologist of the Kádár era, who also led research in religious sociology and religious psychology in the Sociology Research Group of the MTA and in ELTE. The level of interest in this area of study is clear from the international meetings of religious sociologists from the socialist countries: the first was held in Jena in 1965, the second in Prague the next year, the third in Budapest in spring 1968 and the fourth in Moscow in 1969 (Lukács 1986, 82–89; Vitányi 1968, 328–332). The main objectives of these conferences were to discuss religious issues, draw up a scientific position on religion and harmonize research efforts in different countries. The central issues at the Budapest conference were the future of religion and how religion related to youth. One interesting conclusion of the discussions concerned ceremonies: atheization was mostly aimed at the externals and ceremonies of the church, with town or village halls being presented as the competitors of churches. Unlike countries such as Bulgaria and the Soviet Union, however, Hungary did not

have explicitly atheistic community centers or museums. The conference attendees finally came out with the idea that socialist society needed to create and develop certain ceremonies related to important stages in people's individual lives (Ágh 1968, 390–393).

The most authoritative Hungarian Marxist philosophers – including József Lukács – also engaged in Christian-Marxist dialogue. Their writing on this theme addressed the question of the separability of religion and capitalism, from which the possibility emerged of anti-capitalist intellectual cooperation (Nagy 2000, 133).

All measures of religiousness demonstrate that a decrease in religious devotion on the social scale only began in the 1960s, during the Kádár-era period of restoration and consolidation, but then followed a trend that was substantially faster than in Western Europe. The proportion of people attending church services every week in Western Europe decreased, for example, by about half up to the early 1980s, while in Hungary, even in the best case, it decreased to a fifth (Tomka 1988, 527–528).[12] The number of divorces followed a similar course: the proportion of divorced women in the 30 to 34 age group rose from 2.1% in 1949 to 3.2% in 1960, 4.5% in 1970 and 7.2% in 1980 (Nagy 2000, 94). Indicators of adherence to Christian traditions and customs across the broadest spectrum of society – baptisms, marriages and funerals – showed similar trends (Tomka 1988, 532–542).

The rapid decrease in religiousness that began at the turn of the 1960s may be explained, following Miklós Tomka and Péter Tibor Nagy, by the psychological effects of the 1956 trauma and by the effects of government policies towards the churches, education and intellectuals described earlier and by ideological, social and cultural factors. Specifically, we should mention the formation of agricultural cooperatives, the breakdown of village society and culture, accelerating social mobility and the accompanying individualization. The spread of consumer-society culture – traced through the increasing availability of television – and the "blind antireligious cultural mood" should be highlighted here (Tomka 1995a, 39; Nagy 2000, 131–139). One should also note that, while intellectual resistance to the system in the 1950s was often based on religious ideology, pursued through the practice of religion, the situation fundamentally changed during the 1960s. The gradual adoption of consumer habits and the development of attitudes towards popular music and the sexual revolution led to a differentiation among educated people. Intellectuals who promoted liberalization, as well as confronting militant Communists, faced opposition from church traditionalists who were suspicious of modernization. The intellectual battlefronts were being rearranged, with a major part being played by the ideologically controlled study of history. At the launch of the economic reform in 1965, historians "rehabilitated" the values and "lifestyles" of 19th-century capitalism. The model held up for admiration was drawn from the period of Hungarian history in the final third of the 19th century, a time when the social and political role of the churches was diminishing (Nagy 2000, 136).

Despite the targeting of religious ideology and the "desacralizing" of celebrations of the stages of individual development, it would be an oversimplification to regard direct political intervention as the principal, let alone the only, cause of religious decline. Nonetheless, the significance of ideological pressure shows up in the almost exact congruence of changes in the proportions of religiousness in Hungary with the change of government policy towards the churches. Religious society thus proved more resistant to the open oppression of the church than to a religious policy that accepted the temporary persistence of the churches and used them as a tool of legitimacy, even though that policy was aimed at educating society to be atheist. This is true even if the paradigm change in church policy was, to a certain extent, a political response to social transformations that exerted an indirect effect on secularization.

That the effects of religious oppression can be measured and traced is also borne out by data from international religious sociological surveys that include Hungary (Bögre 2002, 31).[13] In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the new generations that had grown up since 1956, due to the loss of religion caused by the breakdown of traditions and in search of balance in religious life, manifested a slight rise in religiousness. Statistical averages indicate that around the political transition of 1990, Hungary had apparently caught up with Western European countries in measures of religiousness (Szántó 1988a, 13–33, 1988b, 137–145). An examination of comparative figures for intergenerational religious changes, however, immediately reveals that the generation born before the war had largely been unable to maintain religion among their children: the surveys showed that those born prior to 1941 were considerably more religious than those born after. In 1990, belief in God was at a very low rate among the under-40 generations, and in the ranking of countries by this measure, Hungary came third from the last, above only the former German Democratic Republic and Russia (Bögre 2002, 31; Tomka 2000, 39–40).

Pluralist democracy

In the transition from Communism to democracy in 1989 and 1990, relations between the state and the churches was one of the most prominent issues. Previous agreements that restricted the free operation of churches in Hungary were gradually revoked during 1990, and a package of legislation setting out the new church policy of the incipient civil democratic state was passed.

Most recently, Act C of 2011 on churches, denominations and religious communities (amended by Act CCVI of 2011) has, to a certain extent, returned to the law of the Age of Dualism by introducing a differentiated status among organizations performing religious activities. It tightened the provisions of Act IV of 1990, which somewhat generously permitted 100 persons declaring shared beliefs to establish a church, thus opening the

law up to abuse. Tax benefits attaching to church status gave rise to "the religion industry", involving the acquisition of church status by organizations that did not perform religious activities (e.g., a car parts web shop and even a brothel were declared churches). The new rules did not restrict communal practice of religion because it did not make it conditional on church status (whereas during the Communist period, communal practice of religion without legal status counted as illegal activity) although the formula for recognition as a church set off an intense dispute, because the 2011 law provided for the role of Parliament, which is difficult to reconcile with state neutrality concerning religion.

There are several sources available for measuring the extent of the religiousness and secularization of Hungarian society. Research by Miklós Tomka (1991a, 1991b, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1998), spanning several decades, has produced a fairly precise account of how religiousness changed during the 20th century. It indicates that the number of people considering themselves religious or practicing religion reached the lowest known level in the second half of the 1970s, increased by the early 1990s and largely stagnated after that. Hungarian society is now divided into three roughly equal categories of religious views. People who align themselves with the church make up 33% to 36% of the population. They are defined as people who pray regularly, attend church at least occasionally, register their children for religious education and consider that the church has a necessary role in solving various social questions. Three quarters of them report that their religiousness guides them in their everyday life and major decisions, but only half – which means 13% to 17% of the population – say that they closely follow church doctrines, go to church every Sunday and occasionally undertake some work or function for the benefit of the church or are members of some devotional community.

The group of people who are religious "in their way" make up 35% to 38% of the population. They declare themselves to be members of some denomination, pray with some regularity, make use of church services for key life events (baptism, marriage and funerals) and even occasionally pay the church maintenance contribution or "tax" but do not keep regular contact in other ways. They regard the church or churches as "a good thing" but do not regard them as authoritative and only expect the public involvement of the church in the social area. This group has a highly variable individual style of religiousness, with strength and content that often include elements in opposition to the official church line.

"Nonreligious" people make up 26% to 30% of the population. Most of them are not registered with a denomination, received no religious education and are only superficially informed about religion. They treat religion as no more than an engaging folk custom or outdated ideal. They have little interest in the question of the supernatural, or if they do, they seek answers to questions (which mostly remain open) in terms of various cultures. In general, they are not antireligious, but they do not see the point or use of

religion and thus tend to oppose the public involvement of the churches. According to Tomka's calculations, a fifth of this group, or 5% to 6% of the population, are expressly atheist (Tomka 2003, 213–221). (This is a higher figure than those who declared themselves as such in the 2011 census.) Surveys of different kinds unanimously find that a great part of Hungarian society is not religious or does not accept the key criteria of religious faith. There is no such unity, however, regarding trends within religious social groups. While some surveys claim that in the period after the political transition, and not just the initial transitional years, secularization slowed and religion flourished, and the latest political changes – including the 2018 parliamentary elections – indicate a strengthening of conservative and Christian values and thus an open preference for the churches, others find that – during the decade following 1998 – the proportion of people actually practicing their religion fell from 20% to 13% (Keller 2010, 144).

The discrepancies in these findings arise, above all, from the changing role of religion in many people's lives and the increasing proportions accounted for by previously marginal or completely unknown small churches in addition to the historical churches (Hegedüs 1998, 113–126). As traditional Christian religiousness is increasingly joined by forms of religiousness based on Christianity but distanced from it, the statistical findings of the early 21st century are probably not of equal value to those of the first half of the 20th. In the intervening period, society has been modernizing rapidly, causing a reassessment of religion and the role of the churches. For various types of religiousness, it is fairly easy to identify behavior that can be classified as "rejection of religion". In this sense, we can speak of two major groups in Hungarian society today: about two thirds of the population belong to various religious types and one third to the nonreligious type.

Since the political transition, there have been almost no organizations that openly represent atheism or Freethought. The first swallow was the website ateizmus.lap.hu, created in 1996 and for a long time standing alone, although it was last updated in 2006. It carries such things as Bertrand Russell's essay "Why I Am Not a Christian" and writing by an ex-minister of the church, Dan Barker, on the contradictions in the Bible. The bilingual electronic periodical *Empiria Magazin* started in 2002 and has articles dated 2015 on social and cultural affairs in the United States of America. The website szabadgondolkodó.lap.hu began in late 2004 but has not been updated since 2009.[14] Although there are no specific sites for it, modern atheistic culture is present in the world of the internet and Facebook, and tens or even hundreds of thousands access non-Hungarian websites to get atheist "intellectual nourishment", but this has not yet been a subject of research.

In 2005, it seemed that several atheist churches were ready to raise their flags, but at present, we can only find traces of the *Magyar Ateista Egyház* on Facebook. Its content has a strong anticlerical flavor. Earlier initiatives led to what seem like ideological whimsies, such as Tuba, Szavam (My Word),

Ateista Párt (Atheist Party) and CSIRKE (CHICKEN, Group Interreligional Initiative). The action plan of the atheist party/church/association includes such demands as introducing a new crime of intellectual rape, state financing for a dedicated atheist television channel, restriction of degree awards in science courses to those who admit evolution, banning the Bible on the same grounds as banning Hitler's *Mein Kampf* etc. (Világnézet 2007).

In Hungary today (2018), there are four atheist organizations, with tiny membership and marginal influence:

1 The *Magyar Ateisták és Humanisták Társaságát* (Ma.HAT, Hungarian Society of Atheists and Humanists), which was registered at the companies court in 2005. Its leader and vice-president since 2006 has been Miklós Szalai, who on the website calls himself a historian and philosopher. Before it had even properly started up, internal wrangling and a leadership proclaiming neo-Stalinist ideals caused it to break into three parts. These have become such secret societies that nothing may be known of their operation.
2 The *Szkeptikus Társaság* (Skeptical Society) was founded in 2006 and hosted the European congress of the European Council of Skeptical Organisations (ECSO) in 2009. Its official objective is to fight charlatanism and pseudo-science, and it recommends itself to people who would like to build up a skeptical and atheistic community in Hungary.
3 The *Ateista és Agnosztikus Klub* was formed in 2007. It attracted attention when it declared, in a reflection on a statement by E. Szilveszter Vizi, the president of the MTA, concerning the Year of the Bible (2008), that the Bible was no more than a collection of myths (Fáy 2008, 34).
4 The *Magyar Szekuláris Egyesület* (Hungarian Secular Association) was formed in 2013. This is the most enduring and substantial group. Its declared aims are to strengthen the demand for scientific thinking and critical thinking based on fact and to promote social responsibility and justice, the *real* separation of church and state and secular values. It also mainly uses the internet to pursue its activities. It has translated the text of several films of the British Humanist Association into Hungarian, and the president of the association regularly speaks on civil radio on a wide range of issues affecting people, not only on churches and religion. A Secular Association poster, referring to one of the most contentious issues in Hungary today, migration, claims that rather than defending Christianity against Islam, we should be defending secularism against religion. Arguing for equal rights, the association takes a position differing from, or expressly opposing, the official view on several issues of public interest, such as gay rights, transsexuality and marriage. In autumn 2014, it attracted about 50 people to a Sunday assembly, the Hungarian launch of a movement nicknamed the "atheist church". The openly atheist outlook does not have a place in the current political mood in Hungary, however, and the Secular Association last published

news of itself two years ago, in March 2016 (its website has very few visitors: 352 watched the film of the Sunday assembly and 89 the president's ninth radio interview). Even the weekly "atheist pub meeting" died out after a year and a half. Other than these initiatives, we have no knowledge of a representative organization for nonreligious people or any anticlerical or faith-challenging campaign.

Only a very few Hungarian scientists are publicly known as declared atheists. The molecular biologist Zsolt Boldogkői became nationally famous for his intensive popular-science activities targeted against pseudo-science in medicine. He once declared that "science is indeed competent in the question of religion, because many of their statements overlap". There is a perceptible but modest influence from famous international atheist thinkers. Several popular science books by the British geneticist Richard Dawkins have been translated into Hungarian, and the philosophical work of the American Daniel Clement Dennett was honored by his election as an external member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (from which he resigned in 2016 in protest against the closure of the newspaper *Népszabadság*). Three of his books have been published in Hungarian, dealing with evolution, consciousness and intentionality (Dennett 1996, 1998, 2008).[15] A number of major academics – Gergely Ambrus, János Boros, Csaba Pléh, Miklós Zágoni and György Kampis – have written about his work, but only in exposition, without argument. An episode worthy of note was a position statement issued by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2008 defending the Darwinian theory of evolution and classifying creationism as unscientific.

In Hungarian society today, neither "atheism" nor "Freethought" are to be found in the center of political contests or in public affairs, but there is an increasingly popular attitude that faith – or lack of faith – is a private matter, even though religion is the most personal public affair. Education has been the responsibility of the Christian Democratic People's Party since 2010. Its leaders take the view that modern education policy should represent ideological tolerance rather than meaningless "ideological neutrality", and since atheism is an ideology, it cannot be prescribed as an ideology to be followed (cf. Hoffman 2010). This idea coincides with an operation that provoked an unusually heated political row in 2014: the Christian Democratic People's Party and the Young Christian Democrats' Association successfully had a statue of Karl Marx removed from Budapest Corvinus University. The leaders of the campaign made severe accusations against Marx's philosophy, claiming that he was a racist, misogynist, anti-Semite and atheist. While Marx's work is appreciated in the West and is included in university syllabuses, reactions in Hungary, owing to 40 years of Communist dictatorship, were heated, and the removal or retention of his statue could not remain the internal affair of a university of economics that bore his name between 1953 and 1990.

Conclusion

This historical account shows that, for the greater part of the 20th century, Freethought and atheism were of limited significance in Hungary and remain rare today as ideologies of conviction.

In the Age of Dualism, several intellectual groups came out with Freethought and atheist programs, but they were primarily aiming to change the Catholic/feudal/high-finance social system of the monarchy. Apart from taking a place in radical liberal or revolutionary socialist (Marxist) sociopolitical programs, the principles of atheism and Freethought were manifested primarily in demands for educational freedom – and at the same time in the dissemination of materialist-evolutionist views that rejected the reality of the transcendent. Agitation for atheism or nondenominationalism, however, was rare.

After the First World War, the legacy of the freethinking and Marxist "counterculture" of Dualism was the atheism of a radical anticlerical and antireligious system, which was also centered on a practical program of social transformation. Between the wars, in the "Christian course" of the reaction against the revolutions, radical liberal, Marxist and Communist groups retained their freethinking or atheistic views but had, at most, limited opportunities to create influential organizations or to propagate their ideologies.

The Communist dictatorship that built up after 1945 and aimed at an ideological monopoly had atheism as an integral part of its system; until 1956, this took the form of a hardline political atheism aimed at rapidly eliminating religious ideology and was disseminated in every area of life. After the early 1960s, practical political atheism became more differentiated and gradually changed into theoretical and activist atheism aimed rather at gradual persuasion and reeducation. The objective of the ideological reeducation of society – despite considerable intellectual and financial expenditure – was only partly attained. Along with gradual modernization, materialist-atheist education and the antireligious nature of the system were instrumental in the secularization of society, but surveys following the political transition of 1990 show that the proportion of expressed atheists in the one third of the Hungarian population that is nonreligious is relatively low. Consequently, there is at present no influential atheist organization or society in Hungary, and apart from a narrow circle of people propagating atheist views, there is only unreflecting, practical, passive "consumer atheism".

Notes

1 For greater detail on the agrarian socialist movements, see Hanák (1988, 204–221) and Gyáni (2002b, 174–182). On emigration, see Gyáni (2002a, 276–284).
2 On the Freemasons, see Jászberényi (2005, 94–99), Vári (2018), Fukász (1961, 55–84) and Raffay (2012).
3 On the diverging outlooks, see Pók (1990, 134–136); 2010, 113–133) and Litván (2007, 30–31).

4 For a full treatment, see Csunderlik (2017).
5 Before this, on 4 March 1919, the education minister of the civic democratic government had issued a decree stating that students could not be required to attend worship outside the religious education and ethics classes in the curriculum.
6 For a more detailed description in English of events affecting the church during the Károlyi and Kun regimes, see Leslie (1988, 189–197).
7 The figures are based on Bolyki and Ladányi (1987, 82). In 1939–1940, 43% of Catholics over the age of six attended Sunday mass (see Tomka 1991a, 160). A mobility study carried out by Tárki in 1992 (based on a sample of 3,000 representative of Hungarian society by level of education, sex, age and region) and the ISSP 1991 panel (with a sample of 1,000) both included a question of parents' attendance at church services. Respondents were asked to recall how often, when they were ten years old, their mothers and fathers attended church. Péter Tibor Nagy also made use of his own surveys of adult residents of Budapest.
8 For an account of post-1945 church policy developments, see Balogh (2008, 49–60), Fejérdy (2016, 145–154), and Szabó (2003).
9 On the implementation of land reform in the diocese of Veszprém, see Horváth (2017, 531–574).
10 On the nationalization of schools, see Szabó and Ligeti (2008).
11 Good examples of this are two books published in 1974: Pais, *Ember és vallás* and Murányi, *Vallás és illúziók*.
12 Péter Tibor Nagy's (2000, 136–137) figures based on retrospective surveys show the same trend.
13 The main results are given in Tomka (2010). For a recent overview and further bibliography, see Bögre and Máté-Tóth (n.d.).
14 There are other sites with somewhat meager content: babona.lap.hu ("superstition"); boszorkány.lap.hu ("witch"); inkvizició.lap.hu; naturalistafilozófia.lap.hu; valláskritika.lap.hu ("religious criticism"); a skeptical site, tudományesvallásuw.hu ("science and religion") and five or six atheist blogs with various individual views.
15 His *Kinds of Minds: Towards an Understanding of Consciousness* appeared in 1996 and a book of essays, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, in 2008.

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7 The trajectories of atheism and secularization in Latvia

From the German Enlightenment to contemporary secularity

Māra Kiope, Inese Runce and Anita Stasulane

It has been argued that the concept of secularism has been frequently misinterpreted. Historically, the term *secularism* was attached to George Jacob Holyoake's writings, from which we have the most cohesive definition: "Secularism means the moral duty of man in this life deduced from considerations which pertain to this life alone" (1871, III, 1). The key emphasis is obviously placed on "this life alone", which immediately identifies the exclusion of the spiritual and eternal dimension of human existence from the discourse on the individual and social life of an individual. Regarding the cultural context, it is therefore apparent that, first of all, the right of the Judeo-Christian tradition to participate in creating Western rationality is struck out. The actual ideological standpoint in the future gives rise to misunderstandings in terms of the interpretation of *secularism* as a term.

Assuming Holyoake's classic description and discussing definitional approaches to secularism, the editors of the *Oxford Handbook of Secularism* note:

> The lack of consensus over the meaning or purpose of secularism should no longer be any surprise, given its multiform history and multipurpose potential. Most words, terms and labels that seek to capture something that is simultaneously social, philosophical, legal, demographic, historical, and cultural are typically difficult to adequately define. . . . Our considered view, shared by most of the contributors to this volume, judges that it is best to conceive of secularism as multipronged and multifaceted. And its meaning surely varies for different societies.
>
> (Zuckerman and Shook 2017, 1–20)

Recent academic research under the shared title of "the post-secular turn", inspired by Jürgen Habermas (2008, 17–29), has, among other things, opened up a gate of critical retrieval on the phenomenon of secularism. Although "post-secularism" has to be regarded as an inherently contested yet still ambiguous concept, it evokes discourse with the same essential question posed by Habermas a century and half ago: "What is missing from secular life? Answer: attendance to how experience points beyond itself,

and how we access this dimension of 'verticality'" (Staudigl and Alvis 2016, 589–599). The core point in the context of the discussion initiated by Habermas concerns the transformation of society. One way or another, observing the post-secular discussions, it can be said that secularism is a mind-set that led to a transformation of society based on a nonreligious vision of life, thought and morality.

Considering the views of secularism and post-secularism, this chapter analyzes the trajectories of atheism and secularism in Latvia, starting with the 18th century. It should be noted that the trajectory of secularism and atheism, which began with the formation of the Latvian nation in terms of modernity, is essential. The first generation of Latvian intellectuals was looking for paradigms to develop a vision of the Latvian nation as modern, independent and equivalent to other European nations and used the model of the German Enlightenment because it was found in the surrounding German culture. It was a paradigm in which the development of a nation's culture was closely linked to the issue of political freedom and the self-determination of the nation by placing it in a highly secular context.

Secular thinking and its prerequisites

Baltic-German intellectuals, inspired by the popular Enlightenment in German-speaking countries, undertook the task to educate Latvian peasants and laid the foundation for the future emancipation of Latvian culture (Daija 2017). In the mid-19th century, when the law on the abolition of serfdom was passed, emancipated Latvian peasants could become the owners of their own properties, and university education became more accessible to them. The new social strata of Latvian society – intellectuals, the so-called *jaunlatvieši* (Neo-Latvians) – began their activities at Tartu (Dorpat) University. Latvian intellectuals used the German Enlightenment mind-set to formulate the idea of the Latvian nation's right to be a modern nation alongside all the European nations. Neo-Latvians' relying on the German Enlightenment implicitly marked their efforts as secular nationalism,[1] which had the power to become nationalism as a secular religion over time. Inspired to act in accordance with these ideas, ethnic Latvians consequently became the new social class on the political stage of Latvia. The origins of nationalism and the creation of the nation-state are typically traced back to the French Revolution. A significant aspect of the French Revolution and coinciding French nationalism was therefore a secular and antireligious perspective (cf. Rieffer 2003, 232–233). In its turn, the French Enlightenment deeply affected the German Aufklärung, which was the ideological source for Neo-Latvians striving for the nation's sovereignty.

Johann Gotfried Herder (1744–1803), who taught at the Riga Dome School (1764–1769), regarded the nation as the basic unit of humanity and the identity of the individual as dependent upon his or her culture (White 2005, 167). Following Herder's ideas, Neo-Latvians began to write

poetry, fiction and popular scientific articles in Latvian in order to counteract the local German view that the Latvian language was only useful for the everyday life of peasants. Herder's idea about culture as "something not potentially relevant to politics but as something indispensably necessary" (Barnard 1983, 250) also resulted in Neo-Latvians marrying cultural nationalism with political claims to transfer property from Germans to Latvians and make the nation prosperous by making the individual affluent (Puisāns 1995, 75).

One of the key persons during this period of time was the son of the German Lutheran pastor in Livland, the central part of Latvia, and a prominent writer of the German Enlightenment, Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850), whose book *Latvians* (1797) confronted the Enlightenment ideals with the situation of Livland's peasants. Merkel described the life of Latvian peasantry in a very somber tone, and the Christianization of the Baltics by German missionaries in the 13th century was announced to be the cause of the grievous situation. Merkel described the imaginary spectacle of Latvian ancient life and the religious pantheon, which later became the basis for a mythologized Latvian identity in the works of National Romanticism (Stradiņš 1995). The discourse, which has continued up until the present in Latvian culture, was installed: the "myth" about the 700 years slavery of Latvians under the German landlords.

The German Enlightenment was followed by German Romanticism as a medium of thought for the ideology of Latvian political nationalism. Using this paradigm, the formation of modern Latvian culture was initiated in Latvian Romanticist literature. The new culture, as the core of the nationalism of the emerging Latvian modern nation, was formed in a twofold way: by copying the elements of ancient European cultures and by forming the Latvian cultural heritage. Monuments of Latvian literature were created, beginning with the Greek mythology pattern. Poets filled the imaginary pantheon of ancient Latvia with its own gods and goddesses, such as the warlike *Pērkons* (Thunder), *Auseklis* (the wistful morning star), *Laima* (the deity of fate, fortune), *Trimpus* (the jovial Latvian Bacchus) etc. Andrejs Pumpurs wrote an epic poem *Lāčplēsis* (*Bear-slayer*) for Latvians to have their own national epic similar to the French *Song of Roland* and German *Niebelungslied* (Puisāns 1995, 88, 92). Thus, the national political secularist thinking was anchored with neopagan mythology.

Secularism in the first part of the 20th century

Secularism as a vision without transcendence at the end of the 19th century was promoted by socialist thinking. A poet and student at Tartu (Dorpat) University, Eduards Veidenbaums (1867–1892) published the first article in Latvian, in which the social injustice and oppression of Latvian peasants by German landlords were explained in terms of the Marxist class struggle (1886). In addition, the poet pointed out the sad role of the Protestant

clergy, mostly German in origin, who defended the interests of landlords. The poetry of Veidenbaums was full of bitter irony about the religion as it was presented as a tool for the repression of justice.

There was a great deal of suitable soil for socialist ideas in towns, especially in Riga, which was one of the most industrialized areas in Tsarist Russia in the late 19th century. The earliest working-class organizations in Latvian towns were not political, however, but were concerned with providing workers with mutual aid, education and entertainment. These societies appeared during the 1860s, and by 1890 there were 250 of them in Riga alone, becoming a forum for Social Democratic agitation (White 2005, 67).

The idea of a socialist future emerged in the ideology of the Latvian socialist and Marxist intellectuals' movement of the *Jaunā Strāva* (New Current) at the threshold of the 20th century. Ideas were appropriated from the German socialist movement rather than from Russian Marxists. The movement was led by two lawyers: Rainis (1865–1929), who later became the most outstanding Latvian poet, and Pēteris Stučka (1865–1932), who became the chair of the Latvian Soviet Republic (1919). The idea of socialism, as explained by Rainis and Stučka, made converts among the workers, small artisans and landless peasants, who were quick to appreciate that the new wise men were talking about their daily bread (Puisāns 1995, 102). Later, the New Current became part of Russian Social Democracy and was fully influenced by the Bolsheviks' atheist and anticlerical as well as antinational stance. Among Latvian intellectuals, the idea of the new human being apart from the Creation appeared to be very attractive. In the doctrine of Rainis, the trends of materialism, scientism, socialist futurism and atheist humanism were overlapping, bearing in mind the goal of improvement of mankind, to build "the state of the future" (Ziedonis 1969, 287) – Latvia.

The idea of Latvian political nationalism was finally implemented by the foundation of the Republic of Latvia (1918). It was simultaneously the beginning of the "National Church", with the appearance of the first generation of Latvian Lutheran pastors. It was a sign of national triumph in the religious sphere, which Lutheran German pastors had dominated since the Reformation in Livonia.

The imperial legal and political heritage, meanwhile, weakened the opportunity to create a sustainable democratic system. In terms of the foundations that were established to create new religious politics in Latvia, several cases of negligence occurred that could not entirely ensure the formation process of a secular and democratic state. This also gave rise to great public discontent regarding the interference of the church in state affairs, which was termed by the leftist politicians as clericalization (Runce 2013, 261–262).

One of the most influential political parties in Latvia was the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party, which gathered radical leftists, whose ideological conceptions were rather antireligious and deeply secular. Their role model for religious politics was French *laïcité*. This dictated the tone of the political and the intellectual environment of Latvia, except for Latgale,

where the key element of the culture, traditions and identity of each ethnic community was still religion (Runce 2013, 172–262).

Secular nationalism, which was elevated to the level of religion, manifested itself in the *Dievturi* (God-keepers) movement, when the goddess-making practice of National Romanticism appeared to serve as an example for the new national religion *Dievturība* (God-keeping), established in 1925. *Dievturība* was actually an ideological system whose "main objective [was] the promotion and strengthening of Latvianness" (Pūtelis 2001, 19). Its distinctiveness was invented as the religious theater rites of the "ancients" and noisy intolerance for Christianity as an alien religion that was forced on the Latvian ancestors by "fire and sword", if one were to use the stereotypical language about the violent Christianization of Latvia. In the stage of formation (1925–1940), *Dievturība* was more political nationalism than neopaganism *par excellence*, as it is in current-day Latvia, since its origins were connected to the search for national identity that followed the formal founding of the Republic of Latvia (1918). The *Dievturi* political program featured a plan to enfranchise ethnic Latvians while erasing the influence of other ethnic minorities:

> Thus, in the first period of its development, Neopaganism in Latvia displayed itself as a form of a politicized phenomenon and Dievturi became part of the nationalist policy in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century by offering a Latvian national religion.
>
> (Stasulane and Ozoliņš 2017, 238)

Secularism in Marx-Leninist thinking was represented by Pēteris Stučka, the leader of the Soviet government in Latvia (1919), who later resided in Soviet Russia. In the manner of historical materialism, Stučka reproduced the Marxist idea that religion is a form of social consciousness, which depends on the material basis or the economic relationship (Stučka 1980, 464). This type of secularism was the most radical because it was related to the complete transformation of the foundations of society, but it was not particularly widespread because the state turned against Communist organizations and ideology.

In interwar Latvia, discussions of atheism and freethinking rarely took place. The majority of the left-wing circles and intellectuals were negative about the role of the church and religion as its form of institution, but they were not exactly atheist. The church, in their intellectual and political vision, was just an old-fashioned institution slowly fading away under the process of modernization and progress caused by the secularization of society.

Freethinking matters were discussed in literary works published in newspapers. The poet Jānis Sudrabkalns (1894–1975) wrote on the freethinking of Shelley (Sudrabkalns 1921). Freethinking that allows a person to emancipate from religion is addressed in the literary works and critical reviews (1924) of Andrejs Upīts (1877–1970), whom the Soviet regime would later

recognize as a prominent Latvian writer of socialist realism. In literary magazines, several articles were published devoted to Latvian writers who were known for their antireligiosity: for example, the Neo-Latvian writers Juris Alunāns (Goba 1927) and Jānis Akuraters (Upīts 1927). In opposition to the media discussion, conservative and religious magazines published their articles discussing how freethinking interferes with the development of a personality (Štekels 1928). The criticism of freethinking was characterized by the defense of the interests of the state as well as the educational interests of the individual. The prominent Latvian lawyer, chairman of the Latvian Lawyers Society, diplomat and Parliament senator Kārlis Ducmanis (1881–1943), pointed out that freethinking in Latvia was born amidst Latvian politicians under the influence of the Russian *intelligentsiya*; it was connected to the individualist anarchist worldview, which was contrary to the task of preserving the state. Religion could not be just a private matter; freethinking was, in fact, the abandonment of traditions (Ducmanis 1928).

Criticism of religion in the press at that time is mainly focused on the teaching of faith at schools, which was a compulsory subject in the pre-war curriculum in education system of Latvia. For example, the authors criticized the fact that too much attention was being paid to religious issues in the schools, and there were even teachers who used lessons of their subjects to talk about religious issues (Fr. M. 1924; Upīts 1929). In the meantime, open antireligious claims were coming from the socialist workers' press on every occasion, including sports issues: "If we are sportsmen, it's clear we must fight against the church and religion. The only question remains, how to do this practically?" (Zvanītājs 1930). The following proposals were made: first, reports about the church and religion had to be held in the Workers' Sport Club and second, all the freethinking members of the club should demonstrate what the genuine behavior of a freethinker involved. The best way was to highlight his or her freethinking on every possible occasion: for instance, not going to a pastor or priest but to state institutions for weddings, newborn registration, funerals etc.

The most important life ritual, for which the state offered an alternative to the religious rite, was marriage. In Latvia, a divorce business flourished, attracting many foreigners. Article 50 of the Latvian law was adopted as the basis for determining that a marriage may be dissolved without additional evidence if the spouses lived separately for at least three years. In 1931, 398 marriages were ended. The state law banned priests from baptizing children and marrying couples without prior registration in state institutions. The law was perceived by Catholics as state interference in church affairs and as a humiliation to Catholics. The newspapers wrote that the law equated people to cattle that were recorded on official lists. The law of the state imposed a penalty, but the priests often ignored the demands of the state, even if they were sentenced to short-term jail. Only in 1927, as a result of Catholic pressure, did the government issue amendments to the Constitution that indicated that children could be baptized or registered and a couple

could marry in the church or in the state office of their choice, but after the ritual, the priest had to report the event to the state within seven days (Lipša 2009, 63–70).

Any kind of modern "anti" ideologies, tendencies, and methods of social criticism (anti-Semitism; antireligiosity; anti-Christianity, including atheism and freethinking) were forbidden when Kārlis Ulmanis (1877–1942) established the authoritarian regime in 1934. The coup not only changed the political, cultural and economic landscape of Latvia, but also affected the religious life. Similarly to Mussolini's regime in Italy, the political technologists of Ulmanis's authoritarian regime gradually began to create a new "religion" – the cult of the state. All religious confessions had to accept the new situation and had to reconcile themselves to the loss of political freedom, the increase in control and the enforced integration in the processes of political and public life dictated by the authoritarian regime. Propagandists expressed their vision of the new state, which in a certain way became the essence of the religious policy of Ulmanis's regime, emphasizing that that new human beings would be religious beings who knew their duties before God, the ruler, the state, society and their families (Hanovs and Tēraudkalns 2012, 267). The religious and ideological politics, implemented by Ulmanis's regime, caused on the one hand the alienation of society from the politics of authoritarianism and on the other hand an increase in nationalism. This was not unique but a consequential feature of European authoritarian culture with some peculiar local specifics. It was political nationalism turned into a civic religion with the cult of the leader. The church as an institution was trapped in a labyrinth of authoritarianism, and larger religious denominations lost their ability to communicate their message to society. In the public sphere, matters of religion were confused with the nationalist ideology; in fact, secular nationalism was respected as a religion while the demands of the religion in respect to conscience were defaulted by a great deal of noise.

The Soviet secular mind-set

The very core of the transformations that were implemented by political means during the second turn of the Soviet regime in Latvia (1944–1991) was the aim of generating a new Soviet human being. The atheist propaganda, which was connected to repressive political measures, was the main instrument of the transformation. The atheist lexicon declared: "The aim of atheism is to help the people understand the meaning of one's lifetime on Earth and mobilize their will for happiness on Earth" (Гришанов 1973, 11). Atheist propaganda was about to create a secular society mind-set.

One of the means of "expanding atheism in society as the process of secularization in the USSR" was declericalization, "which is at the same time the process of secularization of national relationships, i.e., liberating them from those religious forms which are characteristic for every national group" (*Атеизм в СССР* 1986, 103). In practice, the main work of declericalization

(1945–1954) was carried out by special KGB professionals in the sphere of religion. The activities of the special commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs in every Soviet Republic were determined by secret instructions. Negotiations with church representatives had to be secret without any written documentation in order not to provide any evidence about the intrusion of the Soviet state in church affairs:

> faithful pastors and priests were discredited and declared enemies of the Soviet power. Such methods can be traced by reading the reports of representatives sent to heads in Moscow, as well as the clergy dossiers which consist of regularly gathered information on the clergymen, including their political views . . . as consequences, previously mentioned information led to arrests or dishonoring of clergymen in front of their congregation or society as a whole by means of publications in the press.
>
> (Krūmiņa-Koņkova 2015, 149–150)

After the repressive period (1945–1954), a question emerged about implementing the entirely secularist mind-set in Soviet Latvia. The Central Committee of the Communist Party, in its decision *On Errors of Scientific Atheist Propaganda Work Among the Population* (1954), expressed discontent and pointed out that the lectures in atheism were often held by incompetent and uneducated persons lacking propaganda skills, who were only able to tell funny stories about clergymen (*Par reliģiju un baznīcu* 1966, 74); atheists looked at every technological improvement as atheist evidence because God was not able to do "miracles" like that, but the fact that a tractor exists in no way proves that God does not exist (Froese 2004, 46).

After 1954, the Soviet authorities began to implement atheism in a more sophisticated manner. Repressions were still in use, but more attention was paid to strengthening the organization of atheist propaganda. The special target of atheist propaganda was Latgale, which, unlike the mostly Protestant regions of Latvia – Kurzeme and Vidzeme – was predominantly Catholic and remained religious throughout the decades of Soviet occupation. The only institute of higher education in the region, the Pedagogical Institute of Daugavpils, became a center of atheist propaganda in Latgale. The atheist propaganda as the scientific subject was discussed for the first time at a conference held in Krāslava in 1964, when the tutors of the local regional school presented the results of research work with 172 families of Catholics and discussed the methods of individual work with believers (Мамаева 1969, 85).

Atheist propaganda books were mostly devoted to recovering the social roots of religion. History was changed to illustrate the postulate of atheism, claiming that religion emerged from the primitive fear of natural forces. The church was shown as the product of a class society, which helped to oppress slaves, peasants in feudalism and workers in capitalist society. The

method of anti-historical proof was used, for instance, to demonstrate that the cross was a symbol that appeared in the Middle Ages, and thus the death of Jesus on the cross was simply invention (Skuja 1964). Latvian-adapted translations of world atheist literature were used in the propaganda, especially those written in a sarcastic manner by French Enlightenment authors (Holbahs 1959).

After the Stalinist repression period, declericalization was directed at discrediting priests as untruthful and sinful persons. The philological analysis of the apostasy books of ex-priests reveals an identical structure as well as stylistic techniques as they were actually written by professional writers, who simply used words and facts from the ex-priest's *auto-da-fé* report for the KGB officer. The paradigmatic model in the Soviet Union was made by an Orthodox theologian from Tallinn Aleksandr Osipov, who published an apostasy letter in the newspaper *Pravda* (1959) and a book (1983). The structure was always the following: 1) actual biographies of ex-priests were used to show that the "addiction to religion" in socialist society only came from religious education in the family; 2) observations of noncompliance of the "real" life of clergymen and of the preached life were exposed as the source of doubt about the truthfulness of faith; 3) this led to the fracture of faith; 4) in the process of making the decision to leave the priesthood, some Communist was always present to strengthen them because, as the rule, the priest felt guilty for the empty years when he was spreading "the opium of the people" (i.e., religion); 5) the "author" wrote about the Soviet citizens who cheerfully invited him into the new life (cf. Trukšāns 1967; Zvejsalnieks 1963).

Latvian cultural history was pictured as genuinely anticlerical. In a very typical manner, the instructive material for the atheist lecturers of the Knowledge Society declared: "The colonizers' [Christian] ideology dominated in Latvia until the 1880s" (Mortuļevs 1972, 2). Some Neo-Latvians, who popularized ideas of natural science promoting the "shaping of the materialist and atheist confidence in the consciousness of the reader, and criticizing the German pastors" were mentioned (Mortuļevs 1972, 2). Meanwhile, even the most radical Neo-Latvians "due to the lack of Marx-Leninist class consciousness could not reach the level of dialectical and historical materialism, and of scientific atheism" (Mortuļevs 1972, 2). According to the Soviet "canon", Latvian culture consisted of the New Current, which was uniquely portrayed as a Marx-Leninist enterprise, and the most famous Latvian poet Rainis as a working-class poet; the prewar period was represented by left-wing writers as critics of the "Fascist-ruled state". The Latvian literary heritage was partially prohibited and the cultural history of Latvia was rewritten in the mode of secularism, in order to demonstrate secularism, atheism and materialism as inherent to Latvian culture. The main idea was still the one borrowed from the German Enlightenment: namely, that the political oppression of Latvians was implemented by Germans, more precisely by German Christian missionaries. This was "clerical ideology

of German colonizers" (Mortuļevs 1972, 5), if one were to use the atheist terminology.

The features of "scientific atheism" were gradually elaborated in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev era. "Scientific atheism" could be described as philosophical skepticism mixed with research on the existence of the divine world as the scientific hypothesis. This meant critics of religion on a philosophical, scientific and historical basis from the materialistic viewpoint (cf. Пищик 1983).

In 1964, the study course the Fundamentals of Scientific Atheism was introduced in all universities in the USSR, and the specialization of "scientific atheism" was made available for students of philosophy, history and pedagogics (*Directive of the Central Committee* 1964). While some of the people connected to atheism and religious affairs remained agents of ideology, others used the acquired knowledge to explain religious matters. A Department of Philosophy was opened (1966) at the Latvia State University to prepare the local, national "ideologically iron-shod personnel" for the fight against Latvian nationalism and the Christian religion.

In the 1970s, the task of "scientific atheism" was, among others, "the Marx-Leninist interpretation of those questions of life, answers to which humans are searching for in religion" (Менник 1969, 7). The Latvian SSR Knowledge Society organized a two-year school for lecturers: 112 persons graduated in 1974, and 100 lecturers were instructed in the academic year of 1975–1976 (*Report of Religious Affair Commissioner* 1976). The society issued handbooks for an atheist upbringing, many of which were saturated with valuable information about the history of religion in the superficially ideological framework. Propagandists were encouraged to discuss arguments that had been spread in church homilies: for instance, the question of theodicy – about the existence of God, about the origin of natural laws and the origin of the evil in human life (Bušmanis 1980, 12). One of the main atheist tactics was obviously appellation at the problem of evil – if God is good, where was He when the innocent suffered? Thus, an unidentified Catholic woman named Monika, with the generalized features of a believer, left the Church because she could not find an answer to why, in spite of her prayers, nothing changed in the Nazis concentration camp where she had been imprisoned (Gerodņiks 1974). The atheist propaganda also had to fight with the impact of Latvian political exile, which was very active in the West in instances of religious persecution in Latvia (cf. Laiks 1962).

The theoretical cognitive arguments against religion as a distorted reflection of reality, in accordance with Lenin's formula (Никишов 1968, 249), seemed to be too sophisticated for ordinary people. According to the propagandists, atheism could have a greater impact by involving the sensual sphere of the human cognition structure as the church had demonstrated it over a thousand years, thus having a huge impact on human minds by means of rites (Романова 1987, 18). Socialist rites involved methods of

boosting the materialistic and atheist worldview, and they had to be erected scientifically. They could produce an emotionally psychological atmosphere, which was relevant for the transmission of knowledge and beliefs from generation to generation: "Soviet rites created in the participants such thoughts, moods and motivations, which could prepare for the perception and development of the principles of the scientific materialistic world-view" (Романова 1987, 26).

This strategy had already been implemented in Latvia at the end of the 1950s (Терентьева 1964, 69). The funeral rites were of special interest as they indicated a belief in eternal life. Statistics show that, in 1965 in the Latvian SSR, 22,772 persons were buried in accordance with religious rites and 9,161 in civic ceremonies (Cakuls 2001, 497). In 1982, statistics show 6,147 funerals with religious rites and 24,920 civic funerals (Cakuls 2001, 502).

Through participation in rituals, Soviet citizens were supposed to identify themselves with larger political Soviet forces that could only be seen in a symbolic form. The inculcation of the new Communist holiday culture was related to the destruction of the traditional chronotype and the construction of the foundation of a new historical mythology, which became one of the decisive factors in the formation of a new worldview (Paukštytė-Šaknienė 2011, 115).

The secular rites were organized around the life cycle of people (Терентьева 1964, 56). Public celebration of childhood instead of baptism, civil marriage in new happiness houses, secular commemoration of the dead in cemeteries, the celebration of the first wage in the workplace and the public celebration of New Year's Eve were all introduced to replace the still-living tradition of Christmas celebrations in families etc. Special attention was drawn in Latvia to the interior design of the premises, being furnished in the same manner as in the entire USSR: heavy velvet curtains and vases with artificial flowers and colorful tablecloths, which Latvians regarded as ugly. Thus, the Soviet rites organizers were instructed to change the interior to a more aesthetically appropriate mode (Кампарс 1969, 20). As generations changed, the new rites were adapted not as the Soviet rites, but as the permitted forms of togetherness and human communication.

Contemporary Latvia: from atheism to individual secularization

What can be observed in modern-day Latvia, more than 25 years after the collapse of the Communist regime, is the still-existing long-lasting legacy of Soviet forced secularization and atheism, its heritage and its strong impact on modern intellectual thought. The meaning of the Soviet rituals has sometimes even shifted to the religious traditions and celebrations, memorial days etc. The most popular traditions, enriched from the Soviet secular, are memorial days or *Kapusvētki*, which occur during the summer months, gathering large numbers of people in cemeteries to remember ancestors,

the community and family members. This celebration originated from the Christian (Lutheran and Catholic) tradition of memorial days, became secularized and was made neutral for the Soviet regime in the 1960s.

Another archaic Soviet Latvian tradition is the childhood festival or *Bērnības svētki* (which was originally meant to replace the First Communion and any other rite of religious initiation). The majority of municipalities, which were in charge of managing many Soviet rituals, gave up this tradition after the collapse of the Soviet regime but have recently started this tradition again, and it has become a Latvia-wide phenomenon. In 2013, the municipal portal www.saldusnovads.lv published a short advertisement to with the new strategy of regional marketing, inviting people to participate in this summer event: "in 2013 after many years . . . we have returned to the tradition of celebrating the Childhood Festival and it has become our tradition" (Bērnības svētki n.d.).

A complete picture of the secularization dynamic of contemporary Latvian society can be obtained by comparing data on religious affiliation, church attendance and belief in religious doctrines. Over the past 25 years, there has not been any longitudinal or generational research implemented in Latvia regarding religiosity and secularization forms. Even the recent census data neglects the questions and shares on belonging to institutionalized or noninstitutionalized forms of religion. Therefore, all the available data can mainly show only a fragmented, structured sociological picture, sometimes out of context or very general, not paying attention to specific communities, beliefs, practices etc. All available data are primarily based on very limited research, lacking deeper and specific dimensions and analysis and giving ground for either more speculations or general assumptions outside statistics.

Miklos Tomka, in his research in the 1990s, operated with remarkably interesting data regarding religious practice in Eastern European communities, estimating that religious participation showed a great variety in this region. Sunday attendance varied from 65% to 70% in Poland to less than 10% in the Czech Republic, in Latvia and in the former East Germany (Tomka 2005, 7).

Unfortunately, after 1989, the question of religious affiliation was no longer included in the national census, and the sole indicator is information in annual reports from religious organizations that are submitted to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice has sketched in the following picture by adding up the numbers of adherents indicated in the reports: people belonging to religious organizations numbered 1,526,352 in 2014; 1,517,781 in 2015; 1,440,471 in 2016 and 1,481,823 in 2017. Taking into account the fact that Latvia's inhabitants now number less than 2,000,000, one may consider that one quarter of the inhabitants have become secularized. However, the fact that the followers counted by religious organizations included those practicing as well as nominally religious persons should be taken into account.

Latvian researchers have not measured individual religiousness in longitudinal research, but certain insight can be obtained from international research. Data from the Eurobarometer 225: Social Values, Science & Technology Survey (European Commission 2005) show that religion/spirituality continues to have a significant place in Latvia: 86% can be considered religious persons. In addition, the fact that 37% of those surveyed believe that "there is a God", and 49% agree that "there is some sort of spirit or life force" is significant (European Commission 2005). Therefore, nearly half of those surveyed have moved away from traditional religious views (if we consider belief in the existence of God to be the criteria). In drawing parallels with the previously mentioned data from the Ministry of Justice, which indicate that nearly three quarters of the inhabitants are members of religious organizations, we can put forward the hypothesis that "belonging without believing" exists in Latvia.

It may seem that there is a diametrically opposite situation in Latvia from that in Western Europe, characterized by "believing without belonging" (Davie 1990, 455). The data from the European Values Study show, however, that the secularization process is moving in the same trajectory in Latvia as in Western Europe: 76% consider themselves to be "a religious person" (Atlas of European Values 2008c), but only 8% attend religious services (apart from weddings, funerals and christenings) at least once a week (Atlas of European Values 2008a).

Taking the atheist propaganda experienced in the years of Soviet occupation into account, one would expect that there would be a large number of nonbelievers or atheists in Latvia. From the European Values Study data, only 20% of those surveyed responded that they "were not a religious person" (Atlas of European Values 2008d), but 4% admitted that "they were a convinced atheist" (Atlas of European Values 2008b). Therefore, the secularization process only reached 24% of those surveyed. This group does not appear in social or intellectual activities as ones who could be identified as atheists, most likely because of the recent Soviet heritage. Not many of them would like to be marked as atheists publicly or deal with the religious issue in general. Neither atheists nor freethinkers have been manifesting themselves visibly in the public or intellectual milieu in Latvia since 1991.

Concluding remarks

In reviewing the trajectories of secularization in Latvia historically, we can conclude that they are not linear as secularization has gained a differing character and intensity in various periods. In the 18th century, it began as philosophical secularization, while in the 19th century, it gained types of cultural secularization and in the 20th century, under the influence of Marxist ideology, it was transformed into political secularization, which influenced the founding principles and the social order of the Republic of Latvia. In the latter part of the 20th century, secularization reached its culmination

in forced atheism, but in the first decades of the new millennium, it was centered on individual secularization, which was determined by processes similar to those elsewhere in the Western world (cf. Wanles 2016).

Today's Latvian political environment is not absolutely secularized as a pluralism of views exists in democratic society. If one part of society is striving for secularization in education, politics and culture, another part may have the opposite view as a single ideological imperative cannot be permitted in a democratic country. A variety of institutions and groups like the church hierarchy, lower clergy, political activists, political movements and parties, interest groups, academic scholars and others can express and explain their positions on any public issue connected to religious views. Some examples of these issues are education in public schools, legal protection of same-sex couples and the prohibition on abortion. A counterreaction has developed in Latvia as religion is being increasingly pushed out of the social sphere as a result of the pressure of secularization – attempts by clergymen to get involved in politics to maintain the influence of the church in society where possible. These attempts have not been successful, and the "Christian" label has also been unable to guarantee success for political parties. Contemporary Latvia cannot be considered a highly secularized country as a radical program of secularization that would remove any kind of autonomy from religion excludes any kind of religious influence in the social sphere, and, in the end, attempts to match religion to an official ideology are not being implemented here. The deciding role here is the recent experience of the Soviet period, which provides immunity against radical secularization.

As shown by sociological surveys, there is a low level of participation in religious services (8%) in Latvia, even though there is a fairly high religious person indicator (76%). In Latvia, like elsewhere in the Western world, religion is becoming confined to the "private sphere" (Hann 2000, 14). This so-called privatization of religion carries with it the transformation of the traditional form of religion as the pushing of religion from the public to the private sphere promotes religious innovation and the creation of new forms of religion. Secularization is currently a much more complex phenomenon than the simplified "decline of religion", which is usually explained as a consequence of social changes determined by modernization (the rationalization of thought, individualization, improved education, democratization, urbanization etc.) (Pollack 2015, 73). If the meta-narrative of Western society was religion up until the Enlightenment, and science filled the meta-narrative function after the Enlightenment, then modern society was characterized by "incredulity toward meta-narratives" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Meanwhile, looking at secularization trajectories in contemporary Latvia, we can put forward the hypothesis that credulity towards individual meta-narratives is currently appearing, trying to replace the "collective nonreligious consciousness of modern society" (Boczek 2005, 6).

Note

1 Rieffer uses the term *secular nationalism* in the context of the relationship between nationalism and religion while critically addressing the absence of a discussion of religion in the literature on nationalism: "some of the most prominent authors, including Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm have all largely neglected the role of religion in their discussions of the rise of nationalism by focusing on economic factors" (2003, 219).

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8 The social history of irreligion in Lithuania (from the 19th century to the present)

Between marginalization, monopoly and disregard?

Milda Ališauskienė

Introduction

At first glance, the religious landscape of Lithuania does not leave much space for discussion about the diversity of religions and beliefs. The majority of the population considers themselves Roman Catholic (77.2%), followed by the Russian Orthodox community (4.1%) and minority religions that have much smaller memberships (Ambrozaitienė et al. 2013, 152). However, the majority of the population declaring an affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church should be also critically approached as their beliefs and practices are far from the ideal way of living Catholicism. The tendency to declare a membership in the dominant religion might be explained through the lenses of the relations between religion and social memory (Hervieu-Leger 1993), relations between religion and ethnic identity (Schröder 2012) and the position that dominant religion has taken during the rule of different political regimes (Grzymala-Busse 2015).

Within the decade between two national censuses in 2001 and 2011, the number of religious communities in Lithuania increased from 28 to 59, but this did not affect the changes in the field of religion in general (Ambrozaitienė et al. 2013, 152). A scholarly interest in slowly increasing religious diversity in the country is constantly growing as well (Ališauskienė and Schröder 2012; Ališauskienė 2014). Although statistics allow for the conclusion that every sixth respondent considers herself/himself nonreligious or a nonbeliever or does not declare her/his religious affiliation, it has to be said that scientific knowledge about this part of the Lithuanian population is still extremely fragmented. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the phenomenon of freethinking and particularly atheism is still very much politicized, parts of the population relate the phenomenon of atheism to the Communist regime. Secondly, the antagonistic public attitudes towards freethinkers and atheists creates an atmosphere of silence about being one, in both the private and public spheres of life. There were fewer than ten public figures in Lithuania who have openly admitted to being freethinkers or atheists at the time of the preparation of this chapter. From a sociological

point of view, such a situation has an explanation in both the historical and current social contexts. This chapter aims to research and explain the meaning of being irreligious – freethinker and atheist – in the 20th century and contemporary Lithuania, the strategies of self-identification and relations with society. Scholarly literature analysis, document analysis and primary and secondary analysis of the qualitative and quantitative social research data of the period from 1990 to 2017 will be used to achieve this aim.

This chapter starts with a theoretical discussion of the study of irreligion in the post-Communist context, followed by three parts, divided according to the historical periods of the country's life. The first part discusses the role of freethinking and atheism in the period of the First Republic of Lithuania from 1918 to 1939. The second part discusses the role of freethinking and atheism during the period of the Soviet occupation. It discloses the politics of the implementation of scientific atheism as the main ideology of the state. The third part focuses on the role of freethinking and atheism in contemporary Lithuania since 1990, when independence was restored.

In this chapter, the common term *irreligion* will be used to define the existence and public emergence of organized forms of nonbelief in contemporary society. While acknowledging the fact that irreligion has different expressions in various social contexts, other emic terms will be applied as well. Particularly when referring to the Lithuanian context, the terms *freethinking* and *atheism* will be used together. In certain periods of Lithuanian history, the term *freethinking* was more frequently used than *atheism* and vice versa during other periods. This highlights the differences between the meanings of *freethinking* and *atheism* and the difficulties in their compatibility. These meanings were created, however, within certain social contexts, and this should be discussed further in each part of this chapter accordingly. Generally speaking, this chapter will focus on the part of the Lithuanian population that does not believe; does not declare their religious affiliation or states openly that they are freethinkers, atheists or agnostics.

The study of irreligion in central and Eastern Europe: The cases of freethinking and atheism

This chapter on freethinking and atheism in Lithuania contributes to a broader theoretical and empirical discussion about the study of irreligion in contemporary society. In his classical work on the sociology of irreligion, Colin Campbell (1972, 7–21) raised questions on how to define irreligion and the problems involved if one wants to study this phenomenon. He came up with the suggestion that a definition of irreligion is related to the particular social context in which the phenomenon is approached. Similarly to the case of the need for defining religion, one should keep in mind the social context and its peculiarities and limitations. According to the social context, the phenomena attributed to irreligion might be agnosticism, nonbelief, atheism, freethinking, indifference to religion, anticlericalism and others.

The term *irreligion* linguistically demonstrates that this phenomenon has a direct link to religion, primarily, as Campbell sees it, the established religion. He thus provides the following definition of irreligion: "those beliefs and actions which are expressive of attitudes of hostility or indifference toward the prevailing religion, together with indications of the rejection of its demands" (Campbell 1972, 21). Following this definition, one might speculate about the actions of irreligion, which, according to Campbell, may vary from desecration of sacred spaces or persecution of clergy to nonattendance of religious services. Irreligion can be organized or nonorganized and may manifest within different levels of public life – macro, meso and micro. When thinking about the manifestation of irreligion in the contemporary world, one might recall countries with declared antireligious politics, humanist and secularist movements, and nonbelievers: individuals who do not declare their affiliation to a religious community or declare themselves humanists, secularists, atheists, agnostics and others.

Campbell's idea about the sociological studies of irreligion have actually been implemented with the start of the new millennium on both sides of the Atlantic. The study of irreligion received new input under the titles of sociology of secularity and nonreligion (Hunsberger and Altemeyer 2006; Zuckerman 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016; Lee 2015; Arweck et al. 2016). Following the rebirth of the study of religion in Central and Eastern Europe, the study of irreligion was also introduced in this part of the region (Tomka 1998; Zrinščak 1999, 2004; Borowik et al. 2013; Remmel 2016, 2017).

The study of religions in Central and Eastern Europe (i.e., post-Communist countries, particularly those that have so-called national churches) has the temptation to become and remain only religious studies, subjectively analyzing the phenomenon of religion or, even worse, becoming a servant or a tool in the hands of the dominating religion, marginalizing minority religions and other religious/nonreligious phenomena. Study of irreligion in such a context would necessarily have limitations. According to Campbell (1972, 9), the study of religion in the Western world has long been dominated by the functionalist approach, positively evaluating the functions of religion in society; thus, the appearance of irreligion would challenge this notion. While the study of religion in the Western world has developed, adding critical approaches and qualitative methodology, the study of religion in post-Communist countries continues to be influenced by the functionalist approaches and mainly dominated by quantitative social research methodology. Within the study of minority religions and such phenomena as irreligion, these studies turn, however, to qualitative social research methodology.

Research on atheism and nonbelief in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), particularly in Poland, has demonstrated that the understanding of concepts varied among the respondents. There were also different reasons for the process of becoming a nonbeliever to begin with, although intellectual reasons prevailed. According to Borowik et al. (2013, 625–626), the research also

indicated that the social consequences of nonbelief varied, but this usually meant refusal to attend mass or participate in other religious rituals such as becoming a godparent, avoidance of the use of religious language and being superstitious. The adherents of atheism in CEE were more likely to be young, well-educated people, living in urban areas – larger cities – and more likely to be men than women. The inquiry into the European Values Study data led Borowik et al. (2013) to the conclusion that there were significant differences between the parts of the population declaring nonbelief in the CEE. This is related to the peculiarities of the field of religion in particular countries. The observed commonalities between the analyzed countries is manifested in the fact that the majority of nonbelievers had no doubts about the nonexistence of supernatural forces, although the patterns for belonging among nonbelievers in CEE were quite high, especially in Orthodox countries. Russia, according to Borowik et al. (2013) had the highest number of "hard" atheists and the longest atheist indoctrination that followed the Revolution. It would be difficult, however, to relate the large number of "hard" atheists to Communism because there were different periods and degrees of violent imposition of atheism followed by different reactions of societies (Tomka 1998; Zrinščak 1999, 2004 as cited in Borowik et al 2013, 634).

Borowik et al. (2013) conclude that confessional homogeneity in CEE supports religious vitality while plurality and competition weaken religion and provide space for atheism. They also add that there is still a question as to what meanings the label of atheism had during the Communist period (Borowik et al. 2013, 635). This could have just been a strategy of survival in a social milieu hostile towards religion. Finally, the authors add that, despite the Communist period, some social processes in CEE countries move in the same direction as other Western societies.

The social processes that occurred in CEE were the same as the ones that affected Western societies moving from industrial to post-industrial society. Albeit manifesting in a different time period, these processes had an effect on individual and public life. Communist societies were industrial societies, touched by urbanization, rationalization and mass education. These processes had an effect on the place and role of religion, apart from the official politics hostile towards religion. One of the effects was the formation of the social movement of irreligion in society. Campbell traces the beginning of irreligion in Western societies to pre-industrial society, however, and its shift towards an industrial society. As he puts it, irreligious manifestations in pre-industrial society were an elitist phenomenon. Irreligious expressions began to be distributed among different social classes in industrial society. The emergence of antireligious movements in the late 19th century marked a religious change in Western societies and completed the "democratization of the irreligion" (Campbell 1972, 4). The latter transformations of the field of religion in Western society opened up ground for diversity of the expression of irreligion. To what extent can these considerations by Campbell be applied to the analysis of irreligion in post-Communist countries, currently

referred to as Central and Eastern Europe? In the following part of this chapter, we will apply socio-historical analysis to the expressions of irreligion during the First Republic of Lithuania (1918–1939). This part will be followed by an analysis of irreligion during the Soviet period (1945–1990) and the Second Republic of Lithuania (since 1990).

Freethinkers and atheists during the period of the First Republic of Lithuania (1918–1939)

The end of the 19th century in Lithuania was marked by the weakening power of Tsarist Russia and a softer politics of religion, especially relating to the position of the Roman Catholic Church in the country. These processes were followed by the emergence of a certain level of religious freedom and the movement involving construction of Roman Catholic Church buildings. As historians show, in the period between 1897 and 1914, there were 114 new church buildings erected in the territory of Lithuania. In 1897, an order for pupils to attend the Orthodox Church during national days was abolished. An order prohibiting the use of Latin letters was abolished in 1904 and opened up the path to the publishing of religious literature and periodicals. The warming of the Tzar regime opened up a path for various social activities, religious and nonreligious included (Streikus 2006a: 391).

The history of Freethought and atheism in Lithuania dates back to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Jonas Šliūpas, a doctor, lawyer and public figure, is commonly referred to as one of the first and the main freethinkers in the beginning of 20th-century Lithuania (Margeris 1958, 75–77). Jonas Šliūpas started his public activities as a freethinker in 1884 when he joined the Lithuanian diaspora, where he engaged in public discussions about Freethought and science. In 1892 and 1893, the periodical *Apszvieta* (*Illumination*) was published in Plymouth. Among its authors were Mykolas Kuprevičius, Jonas Basanavičius, Jonas Šliūpas and others.

The first society of Lithuanian freethinkers was established in Minersville, Pennsylvania, in 1895; it was named *Spindulys* (Ray) but dissolved after a while without much trace of activities left. The foundation of *Lietuvių laisvamanių susivienijimas* (Lithuanian Association of Freethinkers) in Brooklyn in 1900 became more visible. Its indirect leader was Jonas Šliūpas. In 1900 and 1901, the association published the journal *Ateitis* (*Future*); it later also supported the London-based journal *Darbininkų balsas* (*Worker's Voice*) and the Lithuania-based journal *Varpas* (*Bell*). The association had 12 divisions and a few hundred members and organized six general meetings. The association declared that its members did not believe in the infallibility of the Bible, acknowledged the theory of evolution and supported the ideas of socialism. Around 1908, the association was dissolved, and in 1910, another association, *Lietuvių laisvamanių sąjunga* (Society for Lithuanian Freethinkers), was established. It was not successful, and in 1918, *Lietuvių laisvamanių federacija* (The Federation of Lithuanian Freethinkers) was established in

Chicago by Julius Mickevičius, Aleksas Ambrozevičius and others. It had 23 divisions and several hundred members, published the periodical *Kardas* (*Sword*) and organized public lectures and discussions. It was dissolved in 1922 after a wave of criticism of Communism and atheism began in the US.

After his return to Lithuania, Jonas Šliūpas continued his activities to promote Freethought. In 1923, together with other like-minded individuals (Jonas Kairiūkštis, Ignas Protas, Karolis Valašinas and others) he founded *Laisvamanių etinės kultūros draugija* (the Ethical Society of Freethinkers) in Šiauliai city in Lithuania; it was officially registered in 1924. This society aimed at uniting all Lithuanian citizens who had terminated relations with any religious confession and church. The other aims of the society were to introduce a comparative study of the history of religions and ethics and the teaching of evolution at public schools, introduce civil marriage, sterilization and cremation and establish cemeteries for freethinkers. The aim of introducing civil marriage was finally achieved in 1938 after the adoption of a new Constitution. The society had 55 divisions across Lithuania. In 1933, it started the publication of the periodical *Laisvoji mintis* (*Freethought*) and established book shops and cemeteries for freethinkers.

The foundation of the Ethical Society of Freethinkers was immediately met with criticism from the dominant Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic clergy criticized the fact that "The essence of Freethought is Atheism, a life without God which is covered by the modern science aura but actually holds to the aims of the Freethought of the past century to destroy the basics of Christian morality and religion" (Daulius 1936, 17). The critics of the society acknowledged the fact that the interest in Freethought had also emerged and become institutionalized in other European countries. A comparison between Freethought and atheism with the threat of Communism and Bolshevik power was a predominant argument against its ideas and the ways of their implementation. At the same time, it was acknowledging the fact that the society had no direct links to Moscow.

In 1940, during the first Soviet occupation, the society was still active, while other associations' activities were limited, or the societies were closed. When it was apparent that the Soviets were returning in 1944, the society was dissolved, and Šliūpas left Lithuania for Western Europe.

A trace of Freethought was also left in the history of the Lithuanian state as the first person who signed the Independence Declaration Act in 1918, Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, a scholar and doctor and the author of various essays in *Apszvieta* and later *Auszra* (*Dawn*), was a freethinker. The resistance to the Tsarist regime and the national revival movement also gave an impetus for the emergence of the Social Democratic movement, led by Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas, and the birth of the Communist movement, led by Zigmas Angarietis. Both sociopolitical movements were later marginalized by the mainstreaming of the nationalistic, conservative and authoritarian ideology that took over the country after the 1926 coup d'état. Immediately after this event, many left-wing politicians and public activists were arrested

as their activities were viewed as pro-Bolshevik and opposing the independence of the country (Vardys and Sedaitis 1997).

Despite the various activities of freethinkers, atheists and nonbelievers documented during the period of 1918 and 1939, statistical data about freethinkers, atheists and nonbelievers are very fragmented. The 1923 Lithuanian Population Census inquired about the religious baptisms of the residents. The results of this census indicated that 85.72% of the population were baptized as Roman Catholics. The largest minority religion was Judaism – 7.65%. Less than 0.01% of the Lithuanian population in 1923 declared that they had no religion or were freethinkers or atheists. Out of these categories, the most numerous were freethinkers (see Table 8.1). The census results revealed that men were more nonreligious than women, with the majority being Lithuanians by ethnicity. Respondents who indicated that they were nonreligious mainly lived in urban territories – the largest cities of that period – Kaunas (the capital), Šiauliai, Marijampolė and others (*Lietuvos gyventojai* 1923, 40, 100).

The evaluation of freethinking and atheist activities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and their perception by the state and society inevitably led to a discussion about religion and nationalism in Lithuania. The role of the Roman Catholic Church in sustaining national identity during the Tsarist regime was very important, and its importance within the state and societal life was sustained during the First Republic of Lithuania from 1918 to 1939. The institutionalized support for the Roman Catholic Church during this period led to the marginalization of other worldviews and their practices, including freethinking and atheism, and also to the construction of the narrative of national identity linked with religious identity (i.e., being Lithuanian meant being Roman Catholic).

Soviet scientific atheism literature tended to embrace the freethinking movement as an important stage in the history of atheism in Lithuania. At the same time, however, freethinking was criticized for being not enough “materialistic” and having a limitedness before Marxist materialism (Batutytė 1976). Soviet atheist literature also emphasized the diversity of atheist education, social status and political views during the period of the First Republic of Lithuania, with some of them becoming active supporters of Communist authorities. Meanwhile, Soviet atheist literature declared that freethinker Šliūpas had renounced his worldview (Batutytė 1976, 4–5).

Table 8.1 Nonreligious population in Lithuania in 1923 (individuals).

	Men	*Women*
Atheists	7	0
Nonbelievers	11	2
Freethinkers	35	16

Source: *Lietuvos gyventojai* (1923).

In summary, the activities of the Freethought movement before and during the First Republic of Lithuania were aimed at challenging the role of the dominant Roman Catholic faith within Lithuanian identity, the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Republic of Lithuania and the emphasis on the need for scientific knowledge, its application in everyday life and rationalization. On a practical level, the Freethought movement had been challenging social institutions – marriage, education, the state – in which the linked relations between the Church and the state were reflected. During this period, the Freethought social movements became a social milieu supporting left-wing, socialist ideas and separation of church and state. Pre–Second World War Freethought and atheist ideas and manifestations were later used by Soviet authorities for their own purposes.

Freethinkers and atheists during the period of the Soviet occupation

Scientific atheism was the official state ideology of the former Soviet Union, the implementation of which started after the annexation of Lithuania. As Froese puts it "Scientific atheism, the official term for the Communist Party's philosophical worldview, posited the ultimate purpose of human existence, a moral code of conduct, and created a collection of atheistic rituals and ceremonies that mimicked religious ones" (2004, 35), aimed at displacement and control of religion (Bruce 2003). The activities and social achievements of Lithuanian freethinkers before the occupation by the Soviet Union were mainly embraced by the Soviet authorities responsible for the ideological work, yet the activities of freethinkers were considered ones that "did not internalize the methodology of Marx-Leninism" by the Soviet authorities (Mikuckas 1985, 146), and organizations of freethinkers were dissolved.

The historian Arūnas Streikus divides the history of religion in Lithuania during the Soviet period into two parts. The first period from 1940 to 1950 was the time of public and religious organization *protection* of habitual forms of religious life. The second period from 1950 to 1989 was the time of *adaptation* to the Soviet rules (Streikus 2006b). The Sovietization of the occupied territory of Lithuania in 1940 began with atheization. The legalized Communist party demanded the separation of the Church and state. According to Streikus, the Soviet style of separation of these two institutions meant the disappearance of religion from public life (Streikus 2006b). Three years of Nazi occupation in 1941 through 1944 also falls into the first period. Another way to differentiate between the Soviet periods is to emphasize the leadership of the state, thus indicating the periods of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and later Gorbachev. Stalin flirted with the Orthodox church but, at the same time, limited the activities of the Eastern Rite and Roman Catholics. Stalin's policy of religion was expressed in Lithuania by the establishment of religion-controlling institutions, nationalizing religious property and the limitation of clergy activities. At the same time, the

Orthodox church was privileged, and the same number of Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches were functioning in Vilnius in 1949, although the Orthodox were a minority within the population (Streikus 2006b: 463). After Stalin's death in 1953, a certain warming period dawned for religious organizations, and church buildings destroyed during the Second World War were rebuilt. During the Khrushchev period (1955–1964), the years between 1958 and 1964 were marked by radical changes in the policy of religion followed by the persecution of diverse religious organizations (Anderson 1994; Streikus 2006b).

In 1959, the Lithuanian Communist Party established *Žinija* (All-Union Knowledge Society or *Znanie*), an association that was supposed to illuminate society about the materialistic worldview and "fight the remnants of bourgeoisie times – religious beliefs", work in the field of scientific atheism propaganda (Mišutis 1978). *Žinija* also became an important tool for implementation of scientific atheism during the Brezhnev period (1964–1982). At that time, *Žinija* formed a network of affiliated organizations in many cities of Lithuania, which contributed to the propaganda of scientific atheism by providing public lectures, exhibitions, films and published methodological literature for lecturers. In the period between 1966 and 1974, for example, 15 books by different authors were published; their topics included discussions about the origin of religion, medicine and religion and problems of life and death. Local libraries and other cultural buildings were also used for different events of atheism propaganda. The scientific atheist literature stated that, in order to attract more people to atheism, more public places should be open to visitors during the weekends in order to create an alternative to the churches. In Raseiniai, for example, the atheist Lectorium provided public lectures in 1975 on Sundays (Mišutis 1978, 118).

The Lithuanian Soviet Republic Museum of Atheism was established in Vilnius in 1961. It was located in the Catholic Church of Saint Casimir. The museum was renamed the Lithuanian Soviet Republic Museum of Atheism and the History of Religions in 1983. Its name was changed to the Museum of the History of Religions in 1989, and the museum was incorporated into the Museum of History and Ethnography in 1992. The main activities of the Museum of Atheism consisted of exhibitions and publications, but also consultations with propaganda officials.

Another important place for the propaganda of scientific atheism was Vilnius planetarium. It organized around 300 lectures with atheist content in 1974. The audience consisted of school pupils, students and workers from all around the country (Mišutis 1978, 121).

Apart from the public atheization, Soviet authorities turned their attention to the sphere of private religiosity in the 1980s and introduced civil rituals in exchange for religious rituals of naming, weddings, funerals and other occasions, drawing their inspiration from Soviet holidays and life-cycle rituals that had been invented in the 1920s and 1950s. The second wave of promotion of Soviet rituals took place in 1972 and 1973 (Luehrmann 2013, 551).

In 1974, the Vilnius Palace of Weddings was built; up to the present, secular rituals of weddings are carried out there (see Figure 8.1). In 1979, guidelines were published on how to celebrate civil rituals (Streikus 2003). The changes also occurred in other areas. For instance, the usual day of fasting in Catholicism was Friday, when believers refrained from eating meat. During Soviet times, an official fish day was announced on Thursday, which meant that pupils or working religious people were obliged to consume meat on Fridays when they ate in public places.

In 1982, the Centre of Scientific Atheism Research was established in Vilnius and an affiliate of the Social Sciences Academy at the USSR

Figure 8.1 Room of a wedding ritual in the Vilnius Palace of Weddings. 2017. Picture by the author.

Central Committee Scientific Atheism Institute. Its aim was to research the role of religion and provide recommendations as to how to improve the atheist indoctrination of the public in the Catholic and Lutheran regions (i.e., Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Belarus) (Streikus 2003). According to Streikus, the institute conducted research, initiated surveys, organized scientific conferences and published books and leaflets.

The evaluations of atheism propaganda during the Brezhnev era (1964–1982) and later differ. On the one hand, this period is seen as one that brought relief from authorities' focus on religious organizations and also softened the propaganda of scientific atheism (Kowalewski 1980). The historian Streikus (2003) adds that during the Brezhnev era the atheism propaganda network was finally established. The period from 1983 to 1988, according to Streikus, was marked by another wave of atheist propaganda aimed at young people, providing those who were seeking spiritual answers with literature and events about diverse spiritualities, world religions etc. In contrast, important Roman Catholic events – the anniversary of the death of Saint Casimir in 1984 and the anniversary of the Christianization of Lithuania in 1987 also attracted the attention of Soviet propaganda (Streikus 2003).

The adoption of the 1988 Freedom of Conscience law in the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev period (1985–1991) changed the social conditions for the activities of religious organizations and changed the position of scientific atheism in the state and society (Anderson 1989).

Scientific atheist socialization of young people was aimed at producing a new Soviet type of human in whose life there was no place for religion. The first institution in this kind of socialization, according to Darius Liutikas (2003), was school. Soviet statistics showed decreasing numbers being baptized and taking First Communion. Liutikas found out, however, that in 1984, there were more people baptized than in 1967. This fact provides more supportive arguments for further discussion about the role of state-imposed atheist socialization and its effects within the different periods of the Soviet occupation that is already vivid in the sociology of religion (Zrinščak 1999, 2004; Borowik 2002). This fact also echoes the historical and anthropological data indicating that, during the Brezhnev rule, sometimes indicated as the era of stagnation, persecutions of religion were softened, and thus more people were able to practice religion within the territory of the Soviet Union (Luehrmann 2013).

Social research into religious socialization in Soviet and post-Soviet Lithuania has demonstrated that the scientific atheism that began to be taught after the occupation at Vilnius University received ambiguous evaluations. On the one hand, these classes challenged students and their traditional understanding of the role of religion in society and the state. On the other hand, they had atheistic indoctrination and were aimed at the dissemination of an atheist worldview. Together with changes in where people lived – moving more frequently from rural to urban areas – education, labor and state

antagonistic policy towards religion had an influence on everyday religious life as well as the choices of individuals. As this research has shown, there were different strategies that individuals applied if they wanted to continue with religious life. There were also those who stopped being religious for a certain period in their lives. The nonbelief of these individuals under Soviet rule was a choice influenced by political but also social factors such as age, gender and employment (Ališauskienė and Samuilova 2011).

In summary, the implementation of scientific atheism was manifested within different levels of societal life during the Soviet period. On the macro level, scientific atheism was declared the official state ideology and was implemented with the restriction of freedom of religion and the removal of religion from the public. The implementation of scientific atheism on the meso level was manifested through the establishment of scientific atheism propaganda organizations replacing the religious ones. The implementation of scientific atheism on the individual level of societal life took place through the system of education.

The question about the implementation of the Soviet system of atheism remains, however, and its answers depend, as Luehrmann (2013, 546) correctly put it, on the perspective of the scholar and the evaluation of the past and its impact on the empirically based knowledge about the contemporary situation. The implementation of scientific atheism and its evaluations has recently also attracted the attention of some Lithuanian scholars, too (Streikus 2003, 2004; Putinaitė 2015). However, the majority of these scholars are affiliated with the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science; their evaluations are mainly religiously based and shadowed with concern about the impact of Soviet atheization on the Catholic and Christian believers.

Freethinkers and atheists in contemporary Lithuania: social features and relations with society

In 1992, the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania was approved by a referendum. Two articles of the Constitution addressed religion and its place in Lithuanian society. Article 26 declared freedom of conscience, religion and belief. Article 43 of addressed religion-state relations in more concrete terms. It asserted that "there is no state religion" but introduced state recognition of so-called traditional churches and religious organizations. A list of nine "traditional" religious communities was finally provided by the Law on Religious Communities and Associations of the Republic of Lithuania (LRCA) in 1995. It was mostly based on historical criteria: i.e., the religious composition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 16th century (Vaišvilaitė 2001, 127–129). The historian Regina Laukaitytė (2010) found that during the First Republic of Lithuania (1918–1940), the state referred to the list of so-called traditional religious communities established by Tsarist Russia.

LRCA also provided a more concrete legal framework for the recognition of religious communities in 1995. The law distinguishes between

"traditional", "state-recognized" and "other" religious communities and differentiates their legal statuses. "Traditional" and "state-recognized" religious communities are entitled to state subsidies, tax exemption from the sale of religious literature and objects and rent of premises, recognition of religious marriages and prison and hospital chaplaincy and religious (confessional) education in public (state and municipal) schools. In 2002, the status of state recognition was granted to the Association of Evangelical Baptist Churches, in 2008 to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in 2016 to the Union of Evangelical Pentecostals and in 2017 to the New Apostolic Church.

The system of education as well as media in contemporary society become areas of secondary education on religion and irreligion. According to Article 40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 10 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania and Article 14 of LRCA, religious communities and associations have the right to establish comprehensive schools and training institutions for the clergy and teachers of religion. In 2000, the Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania on Co-operation in Education and Culture was signed and then implemented in the national legal system. This agreement established the place of confessional Roman Catholic religious education within school curricula, the role of the teacher of religion and the roles of the Church and the state in the education of teachers of religion. Thus, religious education was granted the status of a mandatory subject within the subject of moral education. Within this subject, however, the discipline of ethics could be chosen as well. Statistics from 2015 indicated that 56.6% of pupils chose classes in religious education while 41.1% chose classes in ethics, in which freethinking and atheism might be presented to the pupils.[1] Religious education is confessional in Lithuania and is not focused on the presentation and analysis of different worldviews as is the case, for instance, in the United Kingdom, where analysis of atheism and nonbelief is included in the curricula of religion education classes (Watson 2008). Existing in a sociopolitical context so religiously dominated (particularly by Christianity and Catholicism) becomes a challenge for the existence of nonbelievers and atheists in contemporary Lithuania, followed by marginalization, nontolerance, social exclusion and discrimination.

Freethinkers, atheists, agnostics and nonbelievers, commonly referred to as *nones*, are on the margins of the field of religion in contemporary Lithuania. The first European Value Study in Lithuania in 1990 revealed that 51% of the population responded "nonbeliever" to the question "Regardless of whether you go to church or pray at home, how would you define yourself?" This segment decreased to 28% in 2008 (Žiliukaitė et al. 2016, 144).

The population of Lithuania was 3.4 million in 2001 and 3 million in 2011 (Ambrozaitienė et al. 2013, 3). In 2001, the first Lithuanian housing and population census asked respondents about their beliefs and belonging to religious communities; the questions were not obligatory. The results

showed that 14.85% of the population did not belong or did not declare that they belonged. The Lithuanian housing and population censuses in 2011 revealed that this segment of the population had increased to 16.46%. Those who did not belong to any religious community decreased from 9.5% to 6.13%, and those who did not declare increased from 5.35% to 10.13%. The number of individuals who indicated being agnostics, freethinkers, atheists etc. also increased from 239 to 382 throughout this period. The nonreligious segment of the population were mainly young and middle-aged urban dwellers (Ambrozaitienė et al. 2013, 166–174). The results of the two censuses make it possible to state that the nonreligious segment of the population is quite stable with little increase, and that it has inner diversity of self-identification.

The segment of the population that considers themselves *nones* or atheists is the subject of research in contemporary Lithuania. The 2012 survey into the peculiarities of the secularization process in contemporary Lithuania demonstrated that the nonbelieving and nonbelonging segment of the population was 22%, indicating that it had been continuously decreasing since the question about belief/nonbelief was asked for the first time in the 1990 European Values Study. In 2012, the nonbelieving and nonbelonging segment of the population included 14% nonbelieving and 1% convinced atheists (Kuznecovienė et al. 2016, 31). According to the gender distribution, this segment of the population was dominated by men. Those who answered "convinced atheist" were only men in this survey. Thus, gender distribution within the nonbelieving segment of the population in Lithuania revealed similar tendencies as in other Western countries, where men are expected to be more represented within the nonbelief and atheism phenomena (Pasquale 2010; Furseth 2010). In terms of age, nonbelievers were distributed into three groups: 15 to 29 years old (34.8%), 30 to 49 years old (22.7%) and 50 to 74 years old (12.9%). In other words, the largest group of nonbelievers was found among 18- to 29-year-old Lithuanians, every fifth respondent of middle age was a nonbeliever and only every eighth respondent older than 50 was a nonbeliever. The younger generation was educated after the country declared its independence from the Soviet Union, and scientific atheism was eliminated from the school curricula. The middle-aged and elderly were socialized in scientific atheism; however, this data raises questions about the level and effectiveness of indoctrination in scientific atheism and the internalization that the older generations of Lithuanians went through. The socialization might not be the only explanation, however, for the level of individual nonreligiosity. Social research into the relationship between religiosity and age demonstrates, in contrast, that older people are more religious than those in other age groups; elderly people are also more conservative in their moral attitudes (Žiliukaitė et al. 2016, 183). The majority of the nonbelieving segment of the Lithuanian population lived in the urban territories. This short description of the available data shows that nonbelievers and atheists in Lithuania tend to be men of young and middle

age living in urban territories. This data also reveals that nonbelieving and nonbelonging are marginalized social phenomena within Lithuanian society, dominated on the whole by believing and belonging Christians.

In 2013, qualitative research among Lithuanians who considered themselves atheists showed that they were not religiously socialized (Kraulėdaitė 2013). The major reason for becoming an atheist was the need to apply scientific method for understanding and interpretation of the world. As the narratives disclosed, this need usually arose during their teen years. The informants emphasized the importance of humanist values for decent life and that morality should be grounded in reason.

Research participants were active members of the civil society, participating in nongovernmental organizations and questioning different power relations in society – religious, gender and other. Lithuanian atheists, together with other social groups of anarchists and feminists, participated in different social events: for instance, the unsuccessful 2010 public attempt to apostate from the Roman Catholic faith (Kraulėdaitė 2013, 195–200). The public activities of atheists as well as other nondominant religious and nonreligious groups usually receive negative public attention in Lithuania.

Nevertheless, the typical position of the research participants was that there was no need for an atheist organization to be established. The informants did not see the need for an organization that would possibly become another religious community. Although there are a number of officially registered organizations – in 2011, *Lietuvos skeptikų draugija* (Lithuanian Society of Sceptics) and *Asociacija Lietuvos humanistai* (Association of Lithuanian Humanists) – there was no evidence of their public activities except the ones carried out on the internet, particularly on social media.

Therefore, the main place for discussion amongst atheists, skeptics and nonbelievers is considered to be the Facebook group *Lietuvos ateistai* (Lithuanian Atheists), which has more than 3,500 members. Another important place for virtual meetings is the Facebook group *Lietuvos skeptikų draugija* (Lithuanian Society of Sceptics), which has about 2,500 members. Both groups usually post religious critique material, commenting on the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the state in Lithuania and other countries. Minor differences can be seen in the material posted in these groups. The Lithuanian Atheists Facebook group is more focused on the critique of religion, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, while the Facebook group of the Lithuanian Society of Sceptics tends to promote a scientific worldview and focuses on material criticizing nonscientific behavior: for instance, the antivaccination movement and its ideas. There is also the smaller Facebook group *Asociacija Lietuvos humanistai* (Association of Lithuanian Humanists) with about 250 members.

The dominant Roman Catholic majority in Lithuania has supported antagonistic attitudes towards nonbelievers. The 2007 and 2014 survey results revealed that the existence and public visibility of freethinkers and atheists were threatening the common national identity, of which Roman

Catholicism was considered the core element (Ališauskienė and Bučaitė-Vilkė 2014). Tolerance for this group as well as other minority religions decreased during the analyzed period. In the 2014 survey, Lithuanians questioned the civil rights of atheists to be elected as Parliament members (37% did not agree) or to work as teachers (40% did not agree). The 2014 survey showed that 67% of the population agreed that atheists can work nonqualified jobs. Lithuanian society therefore tends to tolerate atheists more in nonqualified jobs than in jobs that require more qualifications. The most tolerant attitudes towards atheists were expressed by the respondents with a high level of education, those with higher incomes, students and specialists. The most negative attitudes were expressed towards the rights of atheists to hold public marches (23%) and to profess their attitudes in the mass media (30%). In this fashion, atheism joined other religious worldviews in being removed from the public sphere in Lithuania. Thus, the research allows for the conclusion that the attitudes toward atheists in the public sphere in Lithuania reflect the tendencies in many Western societies, where atheism is also marginalized, especially in the USA (Zuckerman 2009; Eller 2010). This marginalization of atheism might also be related to the public memory of the Soviet state-imposed scientific atheism ideology, which was supposed to displace and control religion (Bruce 2003; Froese 2004). This hypothesis, however, should be investigated further.

The linked relationship between national and religious identities might be another explanation of the marginalization of atheism within contemporary society in Lithuania, where Roman Catholicism is seen as part of the national identity. This narrative was constructed throughout the newest history of the country since the 19th century (Vardys 1997, 216). The hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary Lithuania has roots in the history of the country and is also grounded in this narrative and constructs the field of religion/nonreligion accordingly (Schröder 2012; Streikus 2012; Ališauskienė 2017). The field of religion in the country is seen as mainly dominated by Christianity with almost invisible inclusions of Judaism and Islam without any room left for nonbelievers. Atheists are to be found on the margins of the field of religion, if not behind its boundaries, as they do not fall into the dominant narrative of meaning, wherein being Lithuanian means being Roman Catholic.

In 2013, qualitative research showed that atheists were aware of the negative attitudes towards them in the media and the public sphere (Kraulėdaitė 2013). Atheists, in contrast, expressed tolerant attitudes towards religious believers and their faiths, showed openness to religious diversity and emphasized the importance of the principle of the freedom of religion. The mass media was indicated as the main source of nontolerance and stigmatization of atheists in contemporary Lithuania.

The 2008–2014 Lithuanian media analysis, conducted by Kraulėdaitė (2015), indicated that half the publications about atheism were critical toward this phenomenon; every fifth publication equated atheism with

Communism and referred to atheism as a remnant of the Communist past. An increase in publications about atheism was observed in 2008 due to the discussions about the adoption of the controversial Family Conception (declared unconstitutional in 2012). The discussions about atheism, its links to morality and its relationship with religions and particularly the Roman Catholic Church showed the way the media in Lithuania, according to Hjarvard (2008), had become the social and cultural milieu that took over some functions of religion, such as providing moral teaching and a sense of solidarity (Kraulėdaitė 2015).

When attempting a summary of the situation of nonbelievers and atheists within the period of contemporary Lithuania since 1990, it should be stated that atheism and nonbelief are marginalized phenomena within the field of religion and in society. Religion and state relations in Lithuania favor the religious and exclude irreligious phenomena. Different worldviews and irreligious phenomena such as nonbelief, agnosticism and atheism are discussed during classes on ethics but are excluded from the religious education that is attended by the majority of pupils. Public attitudes towards atheists are quite negative, especially towards their appearance in public. As of 1990, the nonbelieving and nonbelonging segment of the population had decreased to and stabilized at between 15% and 22% of the total population, with its demographic features being quite similar to the ones found in other Western societies. Nevertheless, on the individual level, atheism and nonbelief have become quite usual phenomena in contemporary Lithuania, being still unrecognized or largely ignored in the public life of the country.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed at an exploration and explanation of the meaning of being irreligious in 20th-century and contemporary Lithuania, strategies of self-identification and relations with society. We focused on the case of freethinking and atheism, their individual and collective expressions – social movements, official state policy and its implementation within three periods of the history of Lithuania: the First Republic, the Soviet occupation and the Second Republic.

The democratization of irreligion from the elite to all social classes and its politicization within the former Soviet Union and other countries were the main marks within the area of irreligion, shifting from preindustrial to industrial society and further to post-industrial society.

The period at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was marked by the Freethought social movement going public in Lithuania as in other countries of Europe. During this period, the Freethought movement in Lithuania was institutionalized, took its place in the public life of the country and contributed to its diversity. The aims of the Freethought movement were to unite nonreligious citizens, provide nonreligious education at schools and establish nonreligious cemeteries and civil marriage. The

Freethought movement received a great deal of criticism from the dominant Roman Catholic Church and religious intellectuals, being publicly suspected of being pro-Communist and pro-Russian.

During the Soviet period, scientific atheism was an official ideology and was state imposed within all levels of societal life. The period can be differentiated according to the leaders of the Soviet Union and their policies of religion; however, even such periodization is difficult because the policies sometimes shifted even during the rule of one person. Antireligious propaganda, withdrawal of religion from public life, limitation of clerical activities, nationalization of religious property and replacement of religious symbols and festivals with atheistic rituals were the main features of the implementation of scientific atheism. The state-imposed atheism did not find its way, however, into the lives of ordinary people in Lithuania. It might also be added that the Soviet period discredited the Freethought and atheist worldview as these phenomena were connected to Communism and the Soviet Union.

Freethought and atheism are marginalized phenomena in the public life of contemporary Lithuania and the field of religion in the country. People who consider themselves atheists have formed a virtual Facebook community but do not see the need for institutionalization. Contemporary atheism in Lithuania involves criticism of the dominant position of the Roman Catholic Church, anticlericalism and patriarchy. Atheism, like other religions and worldviews, is instead viewed as a private and not a public matter in Lithuania. Atheism is stereotypically linked with Communism and Soviet times in the media.

Future research into atheism and freethinking in Lithuania should focus on an investigation of the history of these phenomena, particularly during the period of the Soviet and Nazi occupation, and its relations with the power structures. More empirical research should be carried out to investigate the place of Freethought and atheism in the curricula of public schools. Another important area of studies might be an analysis of the beliefs and practices of the nonbelieving segment of the population in Lithuania.

Note

1 This data was obtained during an interview with the official responsible for religious education at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on 3 November 2017.

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9 Secularist social movements in Poland

History, institutionalization, repertoire of actions

Henryk Hoffmann and Radosław Tyrała

The traditions of secularist movements in Poland reach far into the past. In the Polish national tradition, there are disputes about religious tolerance and the progressive character of culture, education and upbringing, as well as the independence of secular authority from religious influences. It is through tradition that various trends in Polish secularism refer to the great humanists of the Renaissance and the 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century rationalists, as well as to the traditions of revolutionary workers'/labor and anticlerical peasant movements.

The study of these phenomena causes a number of difficulties, as one definition often describes ideas that differ significantly from one another, and in this text, we will face the issue of the fluid boundaries between atheism, godlessness, freethinking, rationalism and anticlericalism. Although each of these terms means something different, in practice (usually in polemics) they are often mixed up, especially when they function as epithets. In this study, we use a common phrase for the aforementioned phenomena – *secularist movements* – nonetheless attempting to particularize in specific cases what type of attitude toward religion (from the doctrinal, cult and organizational perspective) is concerned (Horoszewicz 2007a, 36).

The beginnings of atheism and freethinking in the Polish lands

Kazimierz Łyszczyński (1634–1689), a 17th-century nobleman and philosopher (with a Jesuit educational background) and the author of the treatise *De non existentia Dei* (*On the Nonexistence of God*) was the most renowned Polish atheist of the 17th century. In his treatise, he argued that the idea of god is a "chimera", a fictitious being and a product of the human mind. It was not God who created people, but people who were the creators of a god that they created from nothing, in their image and likeness. He was tried for his views by the general Sejm (the bicameral parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) in Warsaw and beheaded on 30 March 1689; his corpse (and the manuscript of his work) were burned (Nowicki 1989, 2007).

Much earlier, Aleksander Skultet (Sculteti) from Tczew (cca.1485–1564), a colleague and friend of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), was accused of atheism. As a canon, Skultet was the chancellor of the Warmian chapter. He was the antagonist of Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius (1504–1579), the leading representative of the (not only Polish) counterreformation. Skultet was imprisoned and tried by the Holy Inquisition in Rome, and although (thanks to the intercession of Queen Bona)[1] he was freed from charges of heresy twice (by the papal courts of Pope Paul IV and Pius IV), he still remained under scrutiny. As a consequence, he was deprived of all ecclesiastical dignity and property. A curse was cast on Skultet, and he was sentenced to banishment. He consequently converted to Protestantism and, as an evangelical pastor, moved to Prussia.

Szymon Simonius of Lucca (1532–1602) was also accused of atheism. He was the physician of Stephen Báthory (1533–1586), who became king of Poland in 1576.

The Italian physician and astronomer Marcello Squarcialupi (1538–1599) wrote (anonymously) a pamphlet, entitled *Simonis Simonii Lucensis, Primum Romani, Tum Calviniani, Deinde Lutherani, denuo Romani, semper by Athei summa Religio*, against Szymon Simonius's multiple conversions justified with atheist convictions. In it, he accused Szymon of Lucca of having claimed in front of his trusted friends that "among great philosophers there is no worship of God" (*nullum dicis inter magnos philosophos Dei cultum existere*). Furthermore, he was also said to have pronounced that "God is a figment" (*iam Deus figmentum est*). As the Polish researcher of atheism Andrzej Nowicki (1919–2011) emphasizes:

> [T]he pamphlet played a significant role in the history of atheism, because it passed on to a number of readers a concise stimulus for thought: *Deus figmentum est*. It was in print in Krakow and took place a hundred years before the Łyszczyński trial.
>
> (Nowicki 1965, 46–48)

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist theologians often accused the Polish Brethren (also called Arians, Antitrinitarians or Socinians)[2] of atheism. They were known as Arians because they did not recognize the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Their religious doctrine (above all, its theological, Christological and cosmogonic parts) evolved from Trinitarianism through Tritheism and Ditheism to Unitarianism. They advocated reconciliation of the truths of the faith with reason and contrasted the idea of freedom of conscience with the fanaticism and religious intolerance of counterreformation supporters (Nowicki 1965, 48–50).

During the Enlightenment, various freethinking and anticlerical views were spread (also among part of the clergy). They were inspired by the ideas of the French Enlightenment with traits that were clearly libertine (inspired by Voltaire's ideas). Atheist views were tracked in numerous works by

such men of letters and poets as Tomasz Kajetan Węgierski (1756–1787); Stanisław Trembecki (cca. 1739–1812), who in fact was a deist; Franciszek Dmochowski (1762–1808) and Jakub Jasiński (1761–1794) (Nowicki 1965, 71–72).

The libertine, mason, and Voltaire supporter T.K. Węgierski stands out due to his radicalism. He openly proclaimed his atheism, which is particularly evident in his poem "*Na ścianie La Grande-Chartreuse*" ("On the Wall of La Grande-Chartreuse" 2007, 137):

> *Ani Nieba nadzieja, ani Piekłu trwoga*
> *zmienić myślenia mego nie zdoła sposobu,*
> *z ochotą bym tu jednak żył i wszedł do grobu,*
> *gdyby mnię kto nauczył wierzyć w Pana Boga.*
> (Neither hope of Heaven, nor fear of Hell can convince me of my idea to leave, I would gladly though live here and enter the grave, if someone would teach me to believe in God.)

During the Romantic period, Edward Dembowski (1822–1846), an independence activist, an organizer of the Krakow Uprising of 1846, a philosopher and a publicist, proclaimed atheist views under the explicit influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) and his followers, Bruno Bauer (1809–1882) and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) in particular. His atheism was also expressed in a critical assessment of the reactionary social function of religion and the Church (Śladkowska 1955).

In the Polish lands, a characteristic feature of the second half of the 19th century (amid developing positivism and evolutionism) was the fact that Poland was not an independent country (not until 1918), and its territory was divided among the three empires: Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary. The empires, especially Russia and Prussia, pursued a policy toward the Polish nation, of various degrees of intensity at various times, intended to denationalize Poles. Furthermore, the historical tradition resulted in a stereotype of the Catholic Pole within the Polish nation. The stereotype was further perpetuated by the fact that two of the three invaders (Prussia and Russia) did not support Catholicism. This also contributed to the situation in which, on the one hand, any attempt to analyze or criticize Catholicism – or, more broadly, religion – was perceived as an attack on national identity; on the other hand, especially in the circles of the progressive intelligentsia, critical assessment of the Church and its role in the history of the nation increased, often converting into freethinking, anticlerical behavior and downright atheist attitudes (Grzymala-Moszczynska and Hoffmann 1998; Poniatowski 1979, 14–15).

The organized Polish freethinking movement was born at the turn of the 20th century, stemming from the tradition of anticlericalism and folk radicalism (particularly pronounced in the Polish freethinking movements), as well as the lay themes so evident in the Polish culture of the

era, especially in the form of such trends as positivism, neo-Romanticism and Marxism.

In the period of positivism, an explicit declaration of attitudes indifferent towards religious faith, or in fact identical or close to atheism, would have been a common phenomenon. It is especially noticeable in the journalism and works of Adolf Dygasinski (1839–1902), a man of letters and a pedagogue; the philosopher Adam Mahrburg (1855–1913) and the ethnographer, religious scholar and musicologist Jan Aleksander Karłowicz (1836–1903). This was a consequence of disputes conducted widely at the time and pertaining to a philosophy and outlook on life about "the relationship of science to religion" or "faith to reason". The reception of the then-celebrated work by John William Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874, Polish translation by Karłowicz 1882), played an important role in the Polish lands. The author presented the negative role of religion, Christianity in particular, in inhibiting the development of science, caused by recognizing the priority of truths of faith over scientific knowledge.

In the period known as Young Poland, the celebrated writers Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927) and Tadeusz Miciński (1875–1919) (Pełka 2014, 35) represented the neo-Romantic type of freethinking. They knew each other and shared interests in esoterism, occultism, magic, gnosis and Satanism. Przybyszewski became famous (not just locally, but also in Germany, Norway and the Czech Republic) as a decadent scandalist and moral provocateur. A year before his death, however, Przybyszewski declared in writing his reconversion to Catholicism and apologized for all his hostile speeches against the principles of the Church.[3]

Miciński is one of the most interesting, although controversial, representatives of the literature of the time. He was one of the leading Polish expressionists and a forerunner of surrealism. His views on religion were by assumption anticonfessional, nondenominational, antifideistic and antitheistic (Gutowski 2002, 158).

As of the end of the 19th century, Poland saw the development of atheism inspired by Marxism. Its most well-known representatives were the sociologists Ludwik Krzywicki (1859–1941) and Stanisław Krusiński (1857–1886), the publicists Bronisław Białobłocki (1861–1888) and Julian Marchlewski (1866–1925) and the most consistent supporter of Marxist atheistic freethinking, Jan Hempel (1877–1937) (Szmyd 1975), who was a self-taught philosopher, publicist and translator. Hempel translated into Polish William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experiences: A Study in Human Nature*. The atheism of all the aforementioned supporters of Marxism was declared openly and consistently. They regarded religion as an obstacle on the path of humanity's progress, and, according to them, it deserved to be overcome as such.

The first Polish organization – *Polska Liga Wolnej Myśli* (the Polish League of Freethought) – was established in France and operated from July 1906 to December 1908. Its scientific-literary-social monthly magazine

Panteon (Szulkin 1980; cf. 1976) was published in Paris between 1907 and 1908 in Polish. Józef Wasercug (J. Wasowski) (1885–1947) was its editor in chief. The magazine was addressed to the Polish émigré intelligentsia and, apart from national issues, enjoyed a clearly freethinking and anticlerical profile (Nałęcz 1992).

In the first decade of the 20th century, atheist views were often voiced by members of various freethinking organizations. Freethought clubs arose in many cities on Polish soil and in emigration.[4] In the post-partition reality of the time, three main centers (sections) of Polish freethinking formed: emigration (with Paris as its hub), Warsaw and Galicia (Pełka 2014, 36). Idea-wise, they were related and gathered various environments: from committed atheists to various freethinkers, rationalists, nonbelievers and even believers, but of anticlerical attitudes. The leading Polish advocates of atheism at the time were "the father of Polish religious studies" Ignacy Radliński (1843–1920) (Żurawicka 1975), the archaeologist and painter (women tortured in various ways during witch trials are a recurrent theme in many of his paintings), Marian Wawrzeniecki (1863–1943) and Andrzej Niemojewski (1864–1921), who, on 1 September 1906, began publishing a freethinking and anticlerical magazine *Myśl Niepodległa*. This magazine, issued every ten days, had a religious scholarliness to its character, especially between 1906 and 1914. It was the Polish organ for *astral mythologische* Schule (Hoffmann 1985).

Niemojewski's severe anticlerical and antireligious statements entangled him in numerous trials for insulting religious feelings and led to confiscation of his works. Niemojewski had to spend a year in prison at the Warsaw Citadel between 1911 and 1912 for "insulting morality" in the work *Objaśnienie Katechizmu* (*The Explanation of the Catechism*).

Disappointed with the results of the revolutionary events of 1905, Niemojewski drastically altered his political views, moving from left wing to right wing (National Democracy, a Polish political movement). He also changed over to anti-Semitic attitudes, which caused his social authority (which he undoubtedly had until 1905) to gradually dissipate (Basara-Lipiec 1988). It was mainly on Niemojewski's initiative that, on 8 December 1907, the First National Congress of Polish Freethinking took place at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture in Warsaw. In its sessions deliberated six hundred and thirty-one delegates, mainly from scientific, creative and educational circles. Although the Tsarist authorities did not recognize the decisions of the Congress and forbade any further activity of the association, it can be referred to as the first freethinking organization in the Polish lands.

Period of the Second Republic of Poland

A new situation for the freethinking movement developed after the First World War and with Poland gaining independence. The Second Polish Republic was a period of intensive activities of the then-developing

Polish freethinking movement, although rather devoid of wider social consequences. This movement was antisystemic at the time because its activists and supporters constituted a minority in the sense of both numbers and culture. As Michał Pietrzak writes, the religious policy of that period was influenced by:

> [A]lso historical traditions, which yielded a viewpoint about the permanent bonds of the Polish nation with the Catholic Church. Poland was a country in which 75% of the population was Catholic (including 11.2% of the Greek Catholic rite); 10.5% were Orthodox; 10.5% were Jewish; and 3.7% were Evangelicals. The Catholic Church had traditionally held a dominant position in the life of Polish society. In independent Poland, the social strata and political groups associated with the Catholic Church gained and maintained power through the period under discussion. They saw tight bonds with Catholicism as the foundation for the existence and the development of Polish statehood.
>
> (2010, 112)

The Constitution of 17 March 1921 mirrored this. The set of binding fundamental principles was the result of a compromise reached by the two main parties arguing about its shape: the pro-secular Polish Socialist Party and National Democracy, wishing to bestow a religious character on the state.

The final settlement of religious issues was much more along the mind-set of the latter. Although articles 111 and 112 of the Constitution provided freedom of conscience and denomination in the religious realm, many detailed solutions clearly placed Catholicism in a privileged position, at the expense of both followers of other religions and unbelievers. This is evident right from the religious invocation located in the very introduction – "In the Name of God Almighty" – but, above all, in specific provisions regulating the realm of everyday life. To name a few in particular: introducing the obligation to study religion in schools for students under the age of 18 (one could not enter university without a grade in religion), administrative practices requiring nondenominational citizens to self-determine religiously in public documents (including personal ID cards) and in civil status records (births, marriages and deaths) and precluding a sworn statement instead of a religious oath upon taking positions in the civil service and in the army. The 1925 concordat also guaranteed the Roman Catholic Church a more favorable legal situation than other religious organizations.

As Poland regained independence, the development of the atheist and freethinkers' social movement took on a new dynamic, not only intellectual, but above all institutional and organizational. Therefore, from here on, we will discuss these aspects of its activity separately.

The social movement – history and institutionalization

The first meeting of freethinkers (including rationalists, anticlericals and atheists) in free Poland took place on 5 October 1920 in Warsaw, upon the initiative of the eminent professor of linguistics Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929). A resolution was adopted on the establishment of *Stowarzyszenie Wolnomyślicieli Polskich* (the Association of Polish Freethinkers). The association eventually became legal in 1922. Jan Baudouin de Courtenay became the president of the association, and its goals were articulated in one of the resolutions of the First National Congress: "The SWP undertakes a resolute fight against any types of religious coercion, and it demands: a) legal recognition of nondenominationality; b) complete removal of religion from state schools; c) separation of the Church and the State" (Pietrzak 2010, 112).

Other than the already-mentioned president, the main association activists included Jan Hempel (mentioned earlier), the biologist and writer Romuald Minkiewicz (1878–1944), the philosopher and publicist Józef Landau (1875–1933) and the doctor Zdzisław Mierzyński (1861–1937), who authored *Jak człowiek stworzył boga* (*How Man Created God*, 1955) which was confiscated by the censors. His study was not original, but on the ground in Poland it popularized the findings of classical evolutionism, ascribing the origin of religious beliefs to the mentality of primitive man and his helplessness toward natural forces.

The first issue of *Myśl Wolna* was published in 1922. The monthly was the printed voice of the association, edited by Romuald Minkiewicz and issued up until 1928. It published journalistic articles regarding the current social and political situation in Poland (with an emphasis on Church and state issues) and theoretical studies on the essence of freethinking in its various forms as well as works of a religious studies nature.

As early as 1924, however, growing discrepancies regarding the program and profile of the freethinking movement became apparent. They ultimately turned out to be insuperable. Two opposing trends emerged: the liberal-freethinking (the so-called Baudoinists) and the left-winged atheists (the so-called Hempelists). During the Third National Congress, the latter took over the *Stowarzyszenie Wolnomyślicieli Polskich*. Mierzyński became the chairman, while Baudouin de Courtenay and a group of supporters left the association.

Some of the activists who had previously left the *Stowarzyszenie Wolnomyślicieli Polskich* ranks founded a new organization called *Polski Związek Myśli Wolnej* (the Polish Association of Freethought) in 1927. Its press body became the *Wolnomyśliciel Polski* magazine.

Among the leading figures active in the new organization were Teofil Jaśkiewicz (1883–1952), a philosopher and official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which resulted in his writing many works under various pen names, most often as Henryk Wroński; the already-mentioned Zdzisław Mierzyński; the linguist and slavist Henryk Ułaszyn (1874–1956) and others.

In 1930, the Circle of Intellectuals at *Polski Związek Myśli Wolnej* established themselves in Warsaw, with the eminent philosopher, logician and ethicist Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886–1981) taking over the leadership.

He created a philosophical concept called reism or physicalism. He was a pioneer and co-inventor of praxeology: a general theory of efficient operation. He authored the ethical concept of a "trustworthy guardian". Kotarbiński described his own path to atheism in *Przykład indywidualny kształtowania się postawy wolnomyślicielskiej* (*An Individual Example of Shaping a Freethinking Attitude*, 1981). In the text, referring to his own adolescent experience of leaving religion, he distinguishes between atheism and godlessness, writing:

> An apostate has become an atheist, not an ungodly. And there is a great difference between these two words, according to my understanding. Atheism is an intellectual attitude, or a conviction of an existential judgment kind. An atheist as such simply believes that there is no God (in the catechismal sense of the term, full of contradictions and fantasy). He then rejects, as a consequence, the interpretation of the Bible as God's revelation, and has no use for all proof in which this or that is justified by adducing the existence of God or the authority of the alleged God's word. "Ungodly" in my understanding is arrogant in consideration of the venerable elements of religion. His attitude to religious ideals is mocking. There is no reason for an atheist to be godless.
>
> (1981, 14)

The primary goal of association activities was to "deepen the theoretical principles of Freethought and create a hub around which intellectuals-freethinkers from all over the country would gather" (Pełka 2014, 36). It was supposed to be a kind of freethinking think tank of the time. The circle began to publish *Racjonalista* magazine, which was in print until 1935 with the editor in chief Józef Landau.

The prominent sociologist, cultural historian and religious scholar Stefan Czarnowski (1879–1937) was also close to atheism. His views, especially on social issues, evolved from Durkheim's sociologism toward Marxism. Although Czarnowski did not overtly demonstrate his atheism, he appeared in numerous works as a supporter, and also a theoretician, of secular culture (Darczewska and Nowaczyk 1977).

The remarkable psychologist and philosopher Władysław Witwicki (1878–1948) wrote openly about the loss of his faith, as well as the inherent contradictions of religious faith. His work published in French, *La foi des éclairés*, was significant among his scientific studies. In it, Witwicki followed the concepts of the well-known psychologist Alexius Meinong (1853–1920), and his concept of supposition (*Annahmen*) in particular. Witwicki viewed the religiosity of "enlightened" people in how their suppositions (supported by acts of will and emotionally stained, unlikely notions) were transformed

into convictions. According to Witwicki, that protected them from cognitive dissonance by abolishing the conflict between "faith and reason". It also made it easier to abolish the psychological principle of contradiction in which man, being fully conscious, usually avoided sharing conflicting judgments (see Nowicki 1982).

To conclude the discussion of the evolution of the secularist movements in Poland in this period, it is worth recalling that the anticlerical publications and journalism of the writer, poet, translator and satirist Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (1874–1941) was also widely noticed.

Repertoire of actions

Due to its antisystematic and minority character, the atheist and freethinker's movement in this period did not have too much room to maneuver. It had very limited opportunities and homogeneous forms of expression. They were also a derivative of the remarkably intellectual social profile of its members. The efforts were mainly of a publishing character. The activities focused on writing journalistic articles, various literary forms and scholarly books, as well as on filing petitions to the authorities and writing open letters.

Attempts to act in the sphere of influence on legal regulations should not be overlooked, and, as already mentioned, there were protests against introducing religious elements into the Constitution. Another interesting attempt to legally regulate the situation of nondenominational people was the idea of Baudouin de Courtenay to establish a nondenominational commune, a kind of "religious association of nonbelievers". The success of this undertaking would authorize such a nondenominational commune to maintain its own vital records beyond the control of religious institutions. The attempt to register the commune, however, failed.

Attempts were also made to actively engage in politics in order to implement secular postulates, but without much success.

Period of the Polish People's Republic

The social movement of atheists and freethinkers in Poland ceased to be antisystematic and bottom up and became predominantly systematic and top down. After the Second World War and the Yalta agreements, the Polish state passed into the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, which also radically affected its denominational situation. Following the Soviet Union's lead, the new socialist authorities followed suit and began to treat religion as an inhibitor of social development. As early as 1956, the Polish authorities canceled the Concordat of 1925 with the Holy See, which caused the Polish Catholic Church to lose its dominant position among religious associations and all the rights resulting from it. In turn, on 22 July 1952, a new Constitution was adopted. It introduced freedom of conscience and

denomination and additionally a complete separation of church and state as the basic principle of religious law. State offices were separated from church authorities, religious oaths for state officials were abolished, all references to religion were removed from public documents and a new secular marriage law was instituted by introducing civil weddings; the 1961 Act on the Development of the Educational System introduced completely secular state education and moved religion lessons to catechetical points (with school inspectorates exercising supervision over them).

The aim of all these changes, however, was not so much to equalize the chances of different religious associations, but to promote the specific worldview of the state based on materialistic Marx-Leninism, in which atheism was an inseparable component. In this sense, it was not so much apostasy/laicism, understood as a spontaneous process, but atheism imposed and controlled from above. In essence, it was about carrying out a cultural revolution, the aim of which was to transform public awareness into a nonreligious form.[5]

Social movement – history and institutionalization

After the Second World War, in the new social reality of growing repressions and Stalinist dogmatism, a group of prewar *Polski Związek Myśli Wolnej* activists attempted to reactivate the movement. The association and its press bodies were shut down, however, by a decision of the state administrative authorities in 1951.

In 1957, on the wave of the Khrushchev Thaw, a group of young Marxist scholars together with some prewar freethinkers and rationalists set up *Stowarzyszenie Ateistów i Wolnomyślicieli* (the Association of Atheists and Freethinkers),[6] with Andrzej Nowicki as president. The SAiW began publishing the first Polish scientific periodical *Euhemer: Przegląd Religioznawczy*. Nowicki became the first editor in chief.[7]

In 1958, the periodical became the organ of *Polskie Towarzystwo Religioznawcze* (the Polish Society for the Study of Religions) established on the basis of the association. The society established a research center in the field of religious studies (Hoffmann 2003).

Towarzystwo Szkoły Świeckiej (the Society for Secular School) was founded the same year, tasked with spreading the concept of secular schools and the secular upbringing of youth. Its press body was the monthly *Wychowanie* (Towarzystwo Szkoły Świeckiej 1968), which gave priority to, apart from general pedagogical issues, issues of shaping the scientific worldview – both in students and teachers – secular upbringing of youth, secular rites at school etc.

The first president of *Stowarzyszenie Ateistów i Wolnomyśliceli* was Andrzej Nowicki (1957–1962). Nowicki was also the president of *Polskie Towarzystwo Religioznawcze* (1973–1988). Nowicki played a special role in the history of Polish atheism and secular movements in the period of the

Polish People's Republic. From intensely anticlerical and antipapal works, he moved to philosophically profound studies of the Italian Renaissance critique of religion – taking into account the views of Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) and Giulio Cezare Vanini (1585–1619) in particular – studying the theory of "secular culture" and researching the history of Polish atheism (including Kazimierz Łyszczyński). He also proposed creating a science investigating the phenomena of atheism called "atheology" and "atheography" (Hoffmann 2001, 383).

Although Nowicki's philosophical interests date back to school and university years, he began creating his own philosophical system in the second half of the 1960s with the following articles: "*Ateistyczna perspektywa nieśmiertelności*" ("The Atheist Perspective of Immortality," 1967), "*O formach obecności człowieka w kulturze*" ("On the Forms of the Human Presence in Culture," 1968b) and "*Ateistyczna filozofia kultury*" ("The Atheist Philosophy of Culture," 1968a). Two monographs summarize the considerations contained in those articles: *Człowiek w świecie dzieł* (*The Human Being in the World of Works*, 1974) and *Spotkania w rzeczach* (*Encounters in Things*, 1991).

These works form the foundation of his original philosophical system, which Nowicki continued to develop over the following years. He initially called it "incontrology" (by which he understood the philosophy of encounters), "erganthropy" (the ontological unity of man and human works) and "spaciocentrism" (searching for space for personal thought). He later began to refer to his philosophical system as the "philosophy of encounters in things" and, toward the end of his life, as *filozofia dziełowstąpień* (the philosophy of entartment; Nowicki's idea to attribute the creator's subjectiveness and activity, which stem from his actual presence in the work, to his work) (Siedlaczek 2003).

According to Iwona Agnieszka Siedlaczek (2003), a researcher on Nowicki's life and work, the last term replaces two others used in the 1970s – interiorization and exteriorization – by distinguishing between:

- the creator entering into the created work
- the researcher entering into the work of another artist
- the creator entering into the internal world of the recipients of the works

This is a clear attempt at polemics with religious eschatology. Nowicki contrasts the religious take on immortality with immortality in a secular sense. Man is immortal because he lives in his works. We achieve this true immortality not only by our own works, but also by the works of our pupils and even their pupils (Siedlaczek 2003).

To continue with the history of Polish secular movements, a new institution emerged to promote secular culture in 1963. *Wolne Studium Pedagogiczne* (Free Pedagogical Study, the main training institution of *Towarzystwo Szkoły Świeckiej*) merged with the *Stowarzyszenie Ateistów*

I Wolnomyślicieli Information Centre into a new facility: *Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Kadr Laickich* (Laic Personnel Centre for Excellence). It ran extramural studies, short-term courses, central seminars etc. All the forms of training and improvement combined reached more than 500,000 people. Unlike the *Stowarzyszenie Ateistów i Wolnomyślicieli*, which was an elite cadre organization, *Towarzystwo Szkoły Świeckiej* was a mass organization (Załoga 1977).

In 1969, after the merger of SAiW and TSŚ, *Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Świeckiej* (Society for the Promotion of Secular Culture) was established. It was the leading secular association in Poland up to the year 1989.

Repertoire of actions

Due to the support of state authorities for atheist ideology, the range of activities implementing its foundations expanded significantly. Those were not only publications, manifestos and petitions, but also an entire range of specific measures that realistically affected the daily lives of the citizens of a socialist state.

Attempts to weaken the authority of religion and religious institutions became the new course of action. The position of religious associations, especially the Catholic Church, deteriorated radically. From an institution supported by the authorities – as was the case during the Second Polish Republic – it became an institution ousted from the public sphere, discriminated against and – with varying intensity, depending on the period – openly attacked by the socialist authorities. Antichurch propaganda, the confiscation of goods and the surveillance and repression of priests and laymen associated with the Church were only the most drastic examples of sanctions imposed on the Church.

Rites were an important measure through which they tried to instill a new socialist and nonreligious vision of the human into the nation. Great consideration was given to official celebrations of public holidays and those recommended by the state (1 May, 22 July, Women's Day, Polish Army Day, Teacher's Day). School was the key institution introducing such secular rites, according to the socialist animators of the new culture. It was there that new festivals and rituals appeared with particular intensity. A celebration for becoming a first-grade student, celebrative assemblies, school anthems, celebrating children's name days or such new holidays as Saint Andrew's or Saint Nicolaus's – their aim was to have children internalize from very early on that holidays and rites could be of a nonreligious nature. Attempts were also made to desacralize such important holidays for believers as Christmas and Easter by treating them not so much as religious holidays, but as a time to balance the passing of life or simply an opportunity for family gatherings. Attempts were also made to capture those festivals whose original religious character had faded away. They consequently did not emphasize the fact that the patron saint of miners was Saint Barbara, but *Barbórka* (the festival

of miners on 4 December) would be vigorously celebrated. People would baptize children without publicity or in secret, but they would christen ships with enthusiasm, which television would also broadcast in the 1970s.

Nonreligious education across all levels was particularly emphasized. In order to perpetuate the Marxist worldview in all fields of higher education, obligatory Marxist philosophy was taught (under different names). Also, starting in 1952, intensive campaigns of ideological training for the ruling *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR) (Polish United Workers' Party) were conducted, e.g., as part of *Wieczorowy Uniwersytet Marksizmu-Leninizmu* (WUM-L, Evening Studies of Marx-Leninism). According to the official doctrine, the state was to be secular. The law removed the teaching of religion from schools (1961). A program of secular upbringing of society was also implemented, related to the dissemination of secular rituals (Hoffmann 2001, 384).[8] *Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Świeckiej* organized Young Rationalist Clubs in secondary schools. In the era of the Polish People's Republic, atheism was part of the official Marxist ideology of the ruling *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, albeit less emphasized than in other countries of the Eastern Block and in the USSR, where universities had departments of "scientific atheism". Obviously, most of the contemporary Polish Marxist philosophers shared the atheist views, although they did not always openly proclaim them. A significant number of PZPR members were, in contrast, believers, but the "party apparatus" and (higher) state administration officers, army and militia were forced to declare and demonstrate atheistic attitudes. An officer or members of their immediate family would suffer repressions (removal from the party, loss of position, lack of promotion etc.) for having participated in religious events such as baptisms, church weddings, pilgrimages, processions, catecheses etc.).

The period of the Third Republic of Poland

During the political transformation in Poland (1989–1990), the secular movement (secularists, atheists etc.) experienced difficult circumstances. It had been widely regarded as an annex of the Polish United Workers' Party, and on 29 January 1990, the party dissolved.

Sociological studies of Polish religiosity conducted after 1989 distinctly indicate that nonbelievers and atheists constituted a decisive minority of just under 10% of society (Boguszewski 2015). The percentage of declared nonbelievers, however, increased significantly between 2005 and 2014, from 4 to 8%. The rest of Polish society self-declared as believers or deeply religious – predominantly Roman Catholic. Other studies show that only 9.7% of the nonbelieving population actively participated (or had participated in the past) in collective activity for improving the situation of their own communities (Tyrała 2014, 380). It can therefore be stated that the history of the secularist movement after 1989 was written by a minority within a minority.

Social movement – history and institutionalization

During the collapse of real socialism, Poland experienced rapid socio-political changes that strongly affected the atheist and secular environments but remained beyond their influence. As an outcome of the Polish Round Table Arrangements (6 February–5 April 1989), the socialist authorities allowed for partially free elections to the Contract Sejm in June 1989, which resulted in their loss of power in Poland in favor of the democratic opposition. This meant the beginning of another reconfiguration in Church-state relations. A particular "thaw" between the two institutions had already existed since 1980, when *Podkomisja Prawnicza Komisji Wspólnej Przedstawicieli Rządu i Episkopatu* (Legal Subcommittee of the Joint Commission of Government and Episcopate) was launched, tasked with preparing a new package of laws regulating the Polish religious law. Three other legal acts constituted a significant factor in the context of shaping Church-state relations and thus also the development of the Polish secularist movement:

- Minister of National Education Henryk Samsonowicz's Instruction of 30 August 1990, under which religion was introduced into public schools
- Act on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Fetus and Conditions for Permissibility of Pregnancy Termination of 7 January 1993
- Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland, signed on 28 July 1993 and ratified on 8 January 1998

These documents, limiting the right to perform abortions and introducing religion classes to public schools and kindergartens, were released at the beginning of the Third Republic of Poland. They involved social layers of anxiety associated with the growing position of the Roman Catholic Church, sometimes referred to as the "cold religious war" (Gowin 1999, 40–44). Those events directly caused the emergence of new secularist organizations, which – akin to what happened during the Second Republic of Poland – again became antisystemic.[9]

Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Państwa Neutralnego Światopoglądowo "Neutrum" (Neutrum Association for an Ideologically Neutral State), founded in 1990, was one of the first organizations of its kind. Its website (which, in fact, never existed as a properly owned site; instead www.racjonalista.pl loaned them some digital space at www.neutrum.racjonalista.pl) reads "[T]he immediate impulse for its establishment was the way the Minister of National Education introduced religion classes into schools and the fear of its consequences". Czesław Janik became the president of the association. In 1991, *Towarzystwo Humanistyczne* (The Polish Humanist Association, www.humanizm.net.pl) was founded, with Andrzej Dominiczak, a social activist, publicist and translator, serving as its president to date.

The case of *Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Praw i Wolności "Bez Dogmatu"* (No Dogma Association for Rights and Freedom) deserves special attention (Machalica 2008). It was founded in the early 1990s following a wave of protests against the abortion law coming into effect at the time. The notion of conducting a referendum on the punishability of abortion collected as many as 1.5 million signatures. Although the referendum did not take place, various associations and organizations formed on the foundation of people were activated thereby; such are the origins of the parliamentary Labor Union Party, to name one. The No Dogma Association was also rooted in it. It included a group of leftist and liberal intelligentsia (famous politicians, writers and artists). In 1993, the *Bez Dogmatu* monthly was founded. Although the association itself ceased its activity after a fairly short time, the magazine – as a quarterly – continues to be issued to date. *Instytut Wydawniczy "Książka i Prasa"* has been publishing it since 1996. Initially, it was mainly edited by philosophy professors from the University of Warsaw – Barbara Stanosz (1935–2014) and Bohdan Chwedeńczuk – and Jagiellonian University – Jan Woleński. The magazine held a significant position among Polish secular journals and refused to become affiliated with any association or political party.

Communist Poland's *Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Świeckiej* (Society for the Promotion of Secular Culture) also found its continuance in the Third Republic of Poland. Following the political transformation of 1989, the number of members of the society significantly decreased, and the society lost state support. It was restructured, however, into *Towarzystwo Kultury Świeckiej im. Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego* (Tadeusz Kotrabiński Secular Culture Society) in 1992. The sociologist, political scientist, academic teacher and later, between 1966 and 1997, minister of national education Jerzy Wiatr became the president.

All these organizations were associated in *Federacja Polskich Stowarzyszeń Humanistycznych* (Polish Federation of Humanist Associations), whose main goal was to integrate and represent the Polish humanist movement in the national and international forums. Most of them ceased to function in the 1990s. The Polish Humanist Association and the Secular Culture Society are both certainly active to date.

Generally, the entire second half of the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century saw the secularist movement activists turn dormant. Following the unsuccessful mobilization of the early 1990s, the movement withered. Apart from individual initiatives that were not even reflected in the mainstream press, Polish atheists and freethinkers became invisible in the public realm. The increasing position and significance of the Roman Catholic Church and the negative associations with the period of the People's Republic of Poland brought about by atheism in the first years of political transformation were the likely reasons.

This situation changed when the site racjonalista.pl appeared online. It inspired a community which formally established *Polskie Stowarzyszenie*

Racjonalistów (Polish Rationalists Association, www.psr.org.pl) in 2005.[10] The journalist and social activist Mariusz Gawlik (known under the pen name Agnosiewicz) combined the roles of the site's founder and editor in chief, as well as the founder and first president of the association. After several years of activity, the association had local structures in a number of cities: Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Wrocław, Łódź, Katowice and Szczecin.[11] The activities undertaken by the association had a distinctive character in focusing not only on "real" world engagements, but also on involvements in the virtual world: having an interactive website and a Facebook fan page. Since then, it has become a kind of standard and prerequisite for the efficient operation of every newly established secular organization.

For several years, the *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Racjonalistów* was undoubtedly the most active secular organization of the Third Republic of Poland. Good indicators of the organization's activity level were its visibility in the public realm (the number of mass media publications on it and its members appearing as experts on information programs – more examples follow) and both the number and diversity of initiatives undertaken by its members. An organization's recognizability within the environment whose interests it represents can also attest to its activity. In each of the three dimensions, the PSR definitely took the lead. Over time, however, the association's activity lost its momentum.

There was a local split in the *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Racjonalistów* in 2013 (Konarski 2013). The Krakow branch of the organization was transformed into an autonomous organization, registered in 2014 under the name *Stowarzyszenie Wszechnicy Oświeceniowo-Racjonalistycznej* (University of Reason and Enlightenment Association, www.swor.pl). The subsequent presidents of the new association were the social activists Andrzej Jesion and Adam Jaśkow. The association focused its activity on organizing annual secular days in Krakow and monthly meetings promoting scientific knowledge held under the *Wszechnica Oświeceniowo-Rationalistist* (University of Reason and Enlightenment) brand. The Krakow branch of the PSR reactivated, however, with a completely new staff configuration (with professor of philosophy, Joanna Hańderek, as the chair).

Long-lasting and more stable organizations appeared on the map of the Polish secular movement only after 2010. In 2011, *Fundacja Wolność od Religii* (the Freedom from Religion Foundation, http://wolnoscodreligii.pl) was established in Lublin. Dorota Wójcik became the president. The foundation became more prominent when it organized the first Polish nationwide billboard campaign in 2012. *Koalicja Ateistyczna* (the Atheist Coalition, http://koalicjaateistyczna.org) and *Fundacja imienia Kazimierza Łyszczyńskiego* (the Kazimierz Łyszczyński Foundation, http://lyszczynski.com.pl) were launched in Warsaw in 2013, with Dariusz Kędziora as president of the former and Marek Łukaszewicz as president and social activist Nina Sankari as vice president of the latter. Both organizations have been primarily known for organizing the annual days of atheism in Warsaw since 2014. Also in 2013, the *Świecka Polska* (Secular Poland, http://swieckapolska.pl)

initiative commenced, with Zofia Achinger, Zbigniew Kaczmarek and Rafał Maszkowski at its core. Their most recognizable contributions to the struggle for a secular Poland were endeavors for a formal apostasy and a critical analysis of statistical data on the religiosity of Poles.

Accelerator of changes

The history outlined earlier clearly implies that, at least until the early years of the first decade of the 21st century, secular movements were a niche phenomenon in the Third Republic of Poland. Then, however, things changed. But what caused – to use Randall Collins's (2001) words – the Polish secularist movement to finally find a niche in the emotional space of the general public's attention? Tanya Smith, President of the Atheist Alliance International writes that "[T]o sum up atheism in the 21st century in one word – atheism is 'active'. We are active because we need to be. We are active because the modern world has given us the tools we need" ("Atheism in the 21st Century" 2011).

Those tools are the internet. Its appearance turned out to be a breakthrough for the secular movement for at least two reasons. Firstly, it made it possible to crystallize, on a massive scale, the collective identity among nonbelievers in an unprecedented way. Secondly, it has incredibly improved mobilization in the field of collective action.

Polish nonbelievers, atheists, rationalists and freethinkers most definitely are not a digitally excluded society. The internet is not unknown or inaccessible to them, but, on the contrary, they make use of this tool extremely efficiently, also utilizing it to articulate their views and mobilize resources. It was the internet that enabled them to come into existence in the public realm.[12] This does not only apply to the Polish secularist movement; the internet has also become a development impulse for many foreign organizations of this type (e.g., for the International Humanist and Ethical Union, which, at the end of the 20th century, upon transferring its headquarters to London, improved its activities in an unprecedented way thanks to the use of new communication technologies, chiefly the internet). Increasing the efficiency of decision-making processes, responding faster to changes taking place in the world and extending the scope of the reach and audience – these are the main benefits of using new technologies (Deukeren 2007, 433).

Such effective and skillful use of the internet is not surprising if you examine the socio-demographic profile of this community. A statistical nonbeliever falls into the following categories:

- male
- young
- lives in a big city
- higher education
- high social status
- high income

A study by one of the authors of this chapter confirms this (Tyrała 2014, 145–159). It has a distinct overrepresentation of men, young people (teens and young adults), residents of large cities and people with a higher level of education. This set of features almost perfectly matches the socio-demographic profile of internet users and those who employ it most effectively (Batorski 2005).

The emergence of the internet may have been the prerequisite for the integration of Polish nonbelievers around common goals. And this is, for at least a few reasons, listed by Leszek Porębski (2010, 42–44), when analyzing the benefits resulting from the network mobilization of minority groups. According to him:

- the smaller the resources of a given community, and
- the more territorially dispersed the population, and
- the greater the barriers encountered by a given community to join public life, the greater the benefits of this type of mobilization

All these points refer to Polish nonbelievers. Above all, they are a specific minority in the sense of geographical distribution. Communities in the traditional sense developed on the basis of spatial proximity. In the case of unbelievers, such proximity obviously does occur, but it is accidental and relatively rare (the probability of encountering a nonbeliever in Poland is much smaller than that of encountering a believer). In addition, nonbelievers in Poland can potentially be found in every social stratum, every type of place of residence and every age group, range of income or level of education. Such conditions are not conducive to effective bonding or associating.[13] This state was still clearly visible in the 1980s. Janusz Mucha assessed the chances of possible group consolidation of unbelievers at that time as meager:

> Another issue is the problem of the non-believers' set as a field for interaction and communication. And again, it seems to me, due to the very small number of them, and also due to several reasons mentioned above, they interact and communicate mainly with believers. This does not affect their individual identity as non-believers but reduces the chances of a new social group emerging.
>
> (1988, 190)

The emergence of the internet completely changed and revolutionized how nonbelievers had functioned so far, solving both these problems.

- First of all, this medium eradicated all geographical boundaries, thus eliminating the effect of no spatial proximity.
- The internet also became a tool for creating and spreading on a mass scale a specific vision of the collective identity of nonbelievers. These activities aimed to create the widest possible common ground for

representatives of this community, under the principle that "atheism is not enough" (Agnosiewicz 2002). The purpose of this slogan was to show that atheism is only a starting point, a kind of foreground, to the shaping of other identities, such as humanism or rationalism.

Repertoire of actions

The activity of all social movements is primarily a protest, defined as "non-routinized ways of affecting political, social and cultural processes" (Della Porta and Diani 2006). Forms of protest can be extremely diverse. The repertoire constantly expands with the development of nation-states, the development of capitalism and the spreading of modern means of communication (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 187). The selection of the repertoire of protest actions depends on many different factors, such as the resources available to mobilize, the goal a movement strives to achieve, the current stage of the protest cycle, the movement's traditions and the profile of media/supporters the movement wants to attract/obtain.

The aspect that distinguishes these initiatives is their general virtual character. It is connected to the role of the internet, described earlier, as a means of mobilization for the secularist movement from 2005 on. Although many of these events are initiated in the realm of virtual reality, their consequences nevertheless reach into the real one. It is also noteworthy that mediating activities in virtual reality definitely expanded the opportunities for the movement. Thus, actions taken after 1989 are much richer and more diverse than those undertaken in the previously described periods of its development.

It should be mentioned that all the following examples of collective action organized by representatives of the Polish secularist movement served to a lesser or greater extent the achievement of one of the main goals the movement seeks. These goals are:

- fighting for the separation of the Church (above all Roman Catholic) and the state
- promoting a pro-scientific outlook
- institutionalizing elements of nonreligious lifestyle as an alternative to dominant Catholicism in the cultural and symbolic sense (e.g., humanist ceremonies and ethics lessons in public schools)

The Internet List of Atheists and Agnostics (http://lista.racjonalista.pl)

This opened in July 2007 (number of entries as of 19 October 2011: 19,305, including 13,668 atheists, 4,078 agnostics and 1,559 nonbelievers). A few

years later, it was "suspended for reasons of organizational difficulty" (per the official announcement given on the website). It was the central idea of the "Ateocoming out" campaign – coming out as atheists or public disclosures of nonbelievers. The people behind it wrote of the reasons for creating the list on the website:

> This particular act of coming out as non-believers naturally complements an apostasy that many Poles have done either formally or not. We have decided that it is not enough to leave and fall silent. We believe it necessary to speak and act, so that those who do not want the patronage of the Church over the State, are respected in our country. We want to give voice to: soldiers, officials, policemen, firemen and other people who due to their professions, are forced under the pressure of their superiors to participate in religious services and ceremonies. We would like those terrified by the words of government consultants, that if God wanted a Cesarean section, he would equip the woman with a zipper, to be able to express their opinion.
>
> (Racjonalista n.d.)[14]

Humanist ceremonies

One of the most important fields of activity of secular organizations in Poland – especially the Polish Association of Rationalists – has been the consistent implementation of humanist ceremonies, or secular versions of rites of passage, such as weddings, funerals and welcoming ceremonies. These attempts to institutionalize the elements of secular culture in Poland in the sphere of rituals are important mainly due to the "colonization" of this sphere by Catholicism. On the one hand, they can be derived from the rich tradition of secular rituals, which, during the Polish People's Republic, were intensely promoted by the authorities (weddings, funerals and primary school inauguration ceremonies) (Adamski 1993). On the other hand, the initiators of these ceremonies derive inspiration from the similar activity of secular organizations in Western Europe.[15]

The first humanistic marriage took place in Poland in 2007. More than 100 have been organized since, including same-sex marriages (Tyrała 2009). Preparations for organizing humanist funerals and child dedication ceremonies (a secular alternative to baptism – the first took place on 30 April 2010 in Polkowice) are also underway. The first "blossom celebration" in Poland, which is the humanist equivalent of the Catholic First Communion, occurred in May 2010. In October 2009, Mariusz Agnosiewicz launched a unique website: Humanist Ceremonies (http://ceremonie.racjonalista.pl), where those willing to have a ceremony of this sort can learn everything about it and fill out an application form. Over the first few

years, only people gathered around the *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Racjonalistów* community would conduct humanist ceremonies, but, with time, the sector began to grow.

Campaigns for a secular school

Religious education (as in teaching the Catholic religion) in public schools is a tinderbox in relations between nonbelievers and Catholics (Balsamska et al. 2016). According to the former, religion classes in public schools and kindergartens should not take place in a country where the Constitution guarantees the separation of church and state. Therefore, after 1989, several campaigns appeared for removing religion courses from schools. Nonbelievers, as they claim, do not want to fight catechesis at school, but want to provide a worthy and available alternative in the form of courses in ethics. (Currently only 3% of schools offer the subject.) (Podgórska 2008). One of the campaign's main points was to create a multifunctional internet website. Early 2010 saw the launch of www.etykawszkole.pl, a noncommercial website for teachers, parents and students. It featured legal acts regulating teaching ethics at school, useful teaching materials, a list of recommended textbooks and posters promoting ethics at school downloadable from the site. Another project worth mentioning is the *Świecka Szkoła* (Secular School). It served to collect signatures under a civic legislative initiative to stop the state financing of religion in public schools. Started in 2015 by Leszek Jażdżewski of *Liberté!*, both the magazine and website managed to collect over 150,000 signatures (100,000 being the required minimum) and made it to the Sejm, where it was rejected.

Atheist and agnostic marches, Secularity Days and Days of Atheism

An important event for the Polish secularist movement was the Atheist and Agnostic March, which set off from Collegium Novum, the main building of Jagiellonian University in Kraków, at 2 p.m. on 10 October 2009. The march was organized by the newly established Krakow-based Young Freethinkers Association. The information about the march spread electronically, mainly via Facebook. The second march took place a year later and the third in 2011. In 2012, the event was renamed the Secularity March. Under that name, it has been held in Krakow every year since.

In 2013, the formula of the entire event changed again. Currently, the march is an item on the agenda of a broader three-day event held in September under the name of Secularity Days. Apart from the march, the festival consists of scientific meetings, discussion panels and art exhibitions. *Stowarzyszenie Wszechnica Oświeceniowo-Rationalistyczna* is the organizer. Two Warsaw secularist organizations followed a similar path: Atheist Coalition

and the Kazimierz Łyszczyński Foundation. They organized the Days of Atheism in Warsaw in March 2014. The three-day festival, dominated by meetings and discussion panels with Polish and foreign guests, culminated in a historical reenactment of the beheading of Kazimierz Łyszczyński at Nowy Świat Street. During the first edition of the Days of Atheism, the philosophy professor, publicist and well-known secular activist Jan Hartman reenacted Łyszczyński. The Days of Atheism, just like Secularity Days, have become an annual event in the calendar of secularist movements.

Billboard campaigns

November 2012 saw an unprecedented event in Poland. A dozen or so cities (including the largest ones) displayed billboards presenting atheist content.[16] The campaign was initiated by the Lublin Freedom from Religion Foundation. The foundation spread information on the need for voluntary financial contributions broadly via social media (mostly Facebook), and the donations financed the campaign entirely. The first edition of the campaign used two designs for the billboards. One read “You don’t believe in God? You are not alone” and the other “I do not kill. I do not steal. I do not believe”. Here are examples of how they have fit into the city landscapes.[17]

Figures 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 Billboard campaign in Poland.

STRÖER
ATEIŚCI
SĄ BOSCY
lista.racjonalista.pl
psr.org.pl
racjonalista.pl
wolnoscodreligii.pl

ams
5218_1
NIE ZABIJAM
NIE KRADNĘ
NIE WIERZĘ
wolnoscodreligii.pl
ateistyczni.pl
psr.org.pl
racjonalista.pl
lista.racjonalista.pl

Figures 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 (Continued)

The billboards were there for less than two months, but they caused a great number of reactions. First of all, the entire campaign was well covered in the media. People wondered whether it was meant to promote atheism or to manifest in a public space the fact that atheists existed at all. The events that would take place by the billboards seemed to speak for the latter. Polish nonbelievers, mainly via Facebook, would meet to take group photographs in front of the billboards. Those photos were later posted on Facebook as a collective manifestation of atheist identity. Since then, the campaign has been repeated annually. As we are writing these words, the next – fifth – installation of the campaign has just begun.

Conclusion

The Polish movement of atheists, secularists and freethinkers has come a long and complicated way. Over the course of its activity, things have changed: the political situation, the religious map of the country and the balance of power between the state and the churches. Generally, the arrangement has been disadvantageous to the movement. Even during the period of the Polish People's Republic, operating under the official auspices of the authorities, it faced strong resistance from the masses of society supported by the Roman Catholic Church. In that sense, it has always been a minority movement

and – to quote the title of a Barbara Stanosz book – *In the Shadow of the Church* (2004). Despite its elitist character, the vast majority of people discussed in the text are representatives of the intelligentsia.

The final stage of development welcomed a global change in the application of communication technologies. All these changes have had an impact on the movement itself and the strategies of action undertaken by its representatives. In the last period of its activity, after 1989, those actions intensified, and reconfigurations within the movement occurred. The dominance of religious culture on many levels of social, cultural and political life in Poland – constituting the origins of conflict between believers and nonbelievers – means that in the years to come, a number of things will most certainly happen in this realm.

Finally, let us focus on terminology issues one more time. Stories of the people and organizations we describe here focus around various ideas. The most frequently mentioned are atheism, freethinking, humanism, rationalism and secularism. This raises questions about semantic differences, self-declarations of the members of the movements based on those differences and the profile of activities undertaken by them. Although there are some culturally preserved meanings assigned to these terms, in the social life and the activities of the movement, they generally blur. Sociological research on the subject implies this clearly (Bullivant 2013; Tyrała 2015).

Notes

1 Bona Sforza (1494–1557) – from 1518, the queen of Poland, wife of the king of Poland (from 1507), Sigismund I the Old (1467–1548) from the Jagiellon dynasty.

2 Between 1562 and 1565, a religious community separated from the Polish Evangelical-Reformed Church (Calvinism), which was a radical branch of the Reformation in Poland. Its leading representatives were the writer and educator Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1503–1672); the Italian theologian Faust Socyn (1539–1604) (hence, the Polish brothers were often called Socinians); the preacher and author of numerous theological treatises Andrzej Wiszowaty (1608–1678) and the writer, philosopher and Hebraist Szymon Budny (1530–1593), who authored a translation of the Bible into Polish. In 1658, by resolution of the Sejm, they were accused of supporting the Swedes during the so-called Deluge (the Swedish invasion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1655 during the Second Northern War of 1655–1660) and then obliged (under threat of the death penalty) to convert to Catholicism or leave Poland. Once banished, they continued their activity mainly in Transylvania and the Netherlands. The last communities abroad vanished in 1803. See Gołaszewski 2004.

3 "I hereby state that I was born into the Catholic faith and I want to live and die in it. I wholeheartedly regret all my misdemeanors against the rules of the faith and I wish to rectify all. Most sincerely and deeply devoted to the Catholic Church – Stanisław Przybyszewski. Warszawa, 10 October 1926" (Przybyszewski 1927).

4 According to Horoszewicz (2007a, 41): "Polish freethinking also took shape over the Atlantic. In the Brazilian state of Parana, the Polish emigration/

immigration organized freethinking clubs and even a magazine (published briefly under an unidentified title). In 1912 the Polish Association of Freethinkers in the USA established in Chicago founded by K. Żurawski and J. Szymański, the fathers of the Polish People's University. The statutory formulations were identical to those of the PLWM (Polish League of Freethought – added by H.H. and R.T). The press body was monthly *Wolna Myśl* (ed. by R. Mazurkiewicz). The activity collapsed after a few years". The bibliographical description of *Freethought* in the electronic online catalogue of the National Library in Warsaw informs that starting with volume 2, number 7 (1913), Michał Dziedzic was the editor.

5 However, the intensity of repression against organizations and religious people in the times of the Polish People's Republic never reached as critical a level as in the Soviet Union, where in the 1920s and 1930s, the Union of Militant Atheists (established in 1925 as the League of Atheists and functioning as the Union of Militant Atheists as of 1929) operated. In addition to typical activities in the field of ideology (dissemination of atheist propaganda), which was also dealt with in Poland, it was also responsible for the use of violence to combat various religious groups, denouncing believers, destroying sacred objects and profaning burial sites and religious objects (see Smoleń 2000).

6 Horoszewicz (2007b) describes the events in detail.

7 Pełka (2014, 37) describes the events more extensively.

8 For the secular rites of the Polish People's Republic, see Pełka (1973, 1989).

9 The outline of the institutionalization of the secular movement in the Third Republic of Poland presented here is derived mainly from internet sources (websites of associations and Wikipedia entries) and conversations with secularist activists. There are still no printed articles or monographs on the subject (see Tyrała 2014, 362–367).

10 Registering the PSR was not easy at all. Mariusz Agnosiewicz described the administrative problems encountered during the association's registration in "*Kulisy rejestracji Polskiego Stowarzyszenia Racjonalistów*" ("Behind the Cuts of the Polish Association of Rationalists' Registration", 2005).

11 Retrieved 21 March 2017 from www.psr.org.pl.

12 However, it was not the only factor. Reception of the "New Atheists" movement also played a significant part in this process, mostly as a background factor. It is no accident that *Bóg urojony* (2007), the Polish translation of *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, the best-known representative of this trend, became a bestseller, coinciding with the media boom of interest in Polish nonbelievers. After Dawkins's book, others followed, including Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and Christopher Hitchens.

13 By the 1950s, Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) pointed to territorial dispersion as one of the important factors hindering the organization of quasi-groups into permanent conflict groups becoming aware of their common affairs.

14 The list's website was deactivated a few years ago.

15 The organizers of the humanist ceremonies in Poland in the 21st century repudiated the secular ceremonies of the Communist era. Additionally, they distinguished between humanist weddings and ordinary civil weddings, which can be conducted in Poland. In their view, it is the degree to which a ritual's scenario is individualized that distinguishes humanist ceremonies from the two types of secular rituals. Humanist ceremonies are almost completely tailor made. The couple creates the entire scenario in agreement and with the help of a celebrant. The place, the setting, the surroundings, the sequence of events and even the words of the marriage vows – all these elements are unique to each ceremony. The ceremony is adaptable to the needs of its main actors; the actors are not subordinated to the ceremony. See Tyrała (2009).

16 Neither here can be praised as number one. Such billboards are a relatively common sight in the United States. One of the better-known examples is the huge banner reading "Keep the Merry, Dump the Myth", which appeared in December 2012 in New York's Times Square, one of the most expensive and recognizable advertising spaces in the world, on the initiative of American atheists.

17 The photos feature billboards in Lublin. All pictures are the property of *Fundacja Wolność od Religii*. Published with the consent of Foundation Chair Dorota Wójcik.

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10 Romania

Between freethought, atheism and religion

Lucian Turcescu

Freethought, anticlericalism and faithlessness have been present in the Romanian lands since the mid-19th century, when the sons of many local boyars returned home after studying in Paris, Berlin, Vienna and other Western European capitals and brought with them new ideas, attitudes and opinions. While freethinkers established a voluntary association and published a magazine with some regularity, their outlook on life and critical position towards religion were embraced by very few Romanians until after World War II. Religiosity and organized religion increased in popularity during the first half of the 20th century, so much so that many parties made extensive use of religious symbols during elections, priests served as important luminaries in the life of the villages and religion remained key to national identity, which was defined primarily along ethnic lines although the country was home to large minority groups. Anticlericalism and faithlessness took center stage once Romania turned Communist. The Communist Party adopted a virulently antireligious discourse, and religion, churches as organizations, clergy and faithful and religious symbols and principles came under sustained attack from the Communist officials and their propaganda machine, as well as the secret political police. Under the weight of terror, censorship and conformism, Freethought itself was almost extinguished under the Communist regime. Post-Communist democratization allowed Freethought to reestablish itself and gain new supporters, but many Romanians saw anticlericalism and faithlessness as sad legacies of the Communist dictatorship the country sought to move away from.

This chapter identifies a number of individual and institutional actors important in the history of Freethought, anticlericalism and faithlessness in Romania. The pioneers of Freethought in that country (Constantin Thiron and Panait Zosin), the pro-church intellectuals who opposed them (Nae Ionescu), Communist officials such as Pintilie Gheorghe and post-Communist activists such as Remus Cernea are among the individuals who contributed to the public debate on religion and atheism. The Romanian National Association of Freethought, the Institute for Historical and Socio-Political Studies, the Communist Party, its post-Communist leftist successors, and the Communist secret political police, as well as the Solidarity for the Freedom

of Conscience Association, are among the organizations, institutions, parties and state agencies promoting atheism and anticlericalism, with various degrees of conviction and success. The chapter presents periodicals such as *Raţiunea* (*Reason*) and *Flacăra Sacră* (*Sacred Flame*), which also promoted Freethought and draws on a number of Securitate (the Communist secret police) and Communist Party documents to show the way in which Communist officials regarded religion.

Historical overview

Christianity was established in the Romanian territories during the 4th through the 6th centuries. As different lands fell under Ottoman, Polish, Habsburg and Russian rule between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches helped preserve a national Romanian identity in Transylvania, Moldova and Wallachia, the three main regions of Romania. In 1859, the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia united under the name Romania, which gained independence in 1877 and became a kingdom in 1881. After incorporating the provinces of Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bukovina and southern Dobrudja in 1918, the resulting Greater Romania recognized the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches as "dominant" churches. The massive influx of Jewish people – welcomed into the principalities during the 19th century and reaching 4% of Romania's population in 1930 (*Holocaust Encyclopedia* n.d.)[1] – played a major role in the country's modernization. Their numbers declined drastically, however, during World War II (1939–1945), when many Romanian Jews were deported or exterminated, and during the Communist period (1945–1989), when others emigrated to Israel.

The Communist government gradually diminished the social and political role of the churches, enacting repressive policies that targeted the Orthodox Church, banished the Greek Catholic Church and greatly restricted the presence of other religious groups in society. After the Communist regime collapsed, religious freedom was reestablished, the Greek Catholic Church was again recognized, religious instruction was introduced in public schools and religious denominations were again allowed to carry out charitable and social work. The Orthodox Church emerged as a powerful political and social actor, whose alliance many politicians sought in order to strengthen their electoral support. In 2011, 85% of Romania's total population of 19 million self-identified as Orthodox. The other significant religious groups included Roman Catholics (4.6%), Reformed Christians (3.2%), Pentecostals (1.9%) and Greek Catholics (0.8%) (Romanian National Institute of Statistics n.d.).

The pre-Communist period (1900–1944)

During the 19th century, Romania underwent modernization and nation-building, two processes that transformed it from a country where church-state

relations were dominated by the Byzantine model of *symphonia* between the Orthodox Christian political ruler and the Orthodox Church to a country where the dominant church became increasingly separate from the state, but also dependent on state funding for its survival. During the late 1800s, many Romanian intellectuals embraced Western Enlightenment ideas in an effort to modernize what was, at the time, an overwhelmingly agricultural, religiously conservative and superstition-prone Balkan country. Among such imported ideas were Freethought, anticlericalism and an emphasis on reason as opposed to religious worldviews. As historians noted, there was no significant Marxist influence in Romanian thought during the 19th and the early 20th centuries, since the Communist Party was not established until in 1921 and was outlawed three years later (Zavatti 2016, 15).

A number of Romanian intellectuals flirted with atheism, as we will see later, but Freethought was not formally introduced in the country until 1909, at the initiative of a professor of medicine at the University of Iaşi, Dr. Constantin Thiron (1853–1924). Having done his medical training in Paris, Thiron taught at Iaşi from 1889 to 1923, where he also became known as a tireless journalist advocating for Freethought. His outspokenness displayed courage since his values clashed with those of the dominant Orthodox Church and the majority of the local population. At his request, his funeral service in 1924 was the first nonreligious service ever conducted in Moldova. More importantly, in 1909 Thiron and his supporters founded the Romanian National Association of Freethought and launched the *Raţiunea* (*Reason*) magazine. The first of their kind in the Romanian territories, the association and the magazine served to bring freethinkers together as an interest group that aimed to educate the larger public and lobby the government and give Freethought and atheism a public voice through the regular publication of the magazine. Some like-minded individuals admired by Thiron included the materialist philosopher, atheist and anti-Semite Vasile Conta (1845–1882) and the renowned bacteriologist, physician and materialist philosopher Victor Babeş (1854–1926), both of whom requested the removal of religious education from public schools during the late 1800s.

Thiron was a proponent of anticlericalism, positivism and faithlessness, values that he championed in the name of an imaginary better society that freethinkers like him believed to be possible once religion was pushed out of the social sphere. He admired Ernest Haeckel, one of the important but rather controversial German scientists and freethinkers of the 19th and 20th centuries, whose scientific insights later formed the basis of Nazi racial theories.[2] Thiron and a group of colleagues from the University of Iaşi protested against the opening of the academic year with a Christian Orthodox religious service on 28 September 1909. As the state guaranteed freedom of conscience to all citizens and officially recognized no state religion, the protesters wondered why a religious service in the Orthodox tradition was necessary as part of a ceremony conducted in a publicly funded higher education establishment.

In his pamphlet *The Conflict between Science and Religion*, published shortly after the incident, Thiron marshaled a number of arguments against the presence of the Orthodox Church (and religion more generally) in public universities and the country's social life. He mentioned the religious diversity of the faculty and students, including freethinkers, as opposed to a view that favored Orthodoxy; hygienic arguments according to which the sharing of communion and the kissing of icons and other religious objects led to the spread of (deadly) diseases; a request by secular teachers (in the name of an imaginary neutral and scientific education) to clear the educational territory previously occupied by the clergy; the importance of promoting secular nationalism as opposed to religious nationalism and the value of cremation and lay funerals as opposed to the burial (inhumation) and religious services favored by the church, as well as the need to abolish religious education in public schools, separate church from state, suppress the budget allocations for religious denominations and change the calendar from Julian to Gregorian (Thiron 1909a). These arguments were taken up later by other freethinkers.

In another writing, Thiron prophesized the imminent disappearance of Christianity in general and the Romanian Orthodox Church in particular, employing emotional more than rational arguments. Here is a sample from a virulent pamphlet:

> Because the church and Christian religion is [sic] of absolutely human origin (not of divine [origin]), and being obsolete, false and rotten, as a state institution in Romania in 1910, [the church] is without a moral authority and useless for the Romanian nation. . . . The disappearance of the Christian Church is imminent. The so-called religious feeling is only a normal feeling of the human mind reacting to natural explanations, that is, of the universe, and it is created only by science, whereas the Bible-Gospel [sic] is only a childish and ridiculous phantasmagoria. Science alone gives us the critical spirit that drives away the Christian medieval illusions and hallucinations; the cult of the heroes, of scientists and inventors, as well the cult of the dead are cults of reason, science, fatherland and lay school; they do not belong to religion and the Christian Church.
>
> (Thiron 1909b, 9)

Thiron's propensity to make use of foul language in his pamphlets did a great disservice to his arguments, which did not gain many followers outside a small circle of friends. While claiming "national" coverage in its title from its very inception, the Romanian National Association of Freethought had almost no presence in most of the country's villages and small towns, where the vast majority of the population resided at the time.

The close relationship between the Romanian nation and Orthodoxy was emphasized by the Orthodox writers who took a stand against the

freethinkers, whom they accused of undermining the nation each time they attacked the church and its practices (Zosin n.d., 7). Orthodoxist and Fascist thinker Nae Ionescu (1890–1940) famously made this argument when writing:

> We are Orthodox because we are Romanians, and we are Romanians because we are Orthodox. Can we become Catholic? By becoming Catholic we would have to transform ourselves spiritually in order to be able to realize this Catholicism. This transformation would mean renouncing our history and our spiritual structure. In other words, it means renouncing Romanianness. There are not three solutions: either we remain Romanian and our Catholicism is not a reality; or we become Catholic and then we are no longer Romanians.
>
> (Ionescu 1997 as cited in Gillet 1997, 91–92)

Another representative of Freethought, positivism and atheism was Panait Zosin (1873–1942), a younger colleague of Thiron in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Iaşi. In addition to his academic career, Zosin also served as mayor of the city of Iaşi in 1920. Zosin was influenced by Auguste Comte and Vasile Conta and was more reasonable than Thiron in his publications. In a 1912 pamphlet entitled *Freethought*, for example, Zosin rebuked the charge brought against freethinkers of betraying the Romanian nation when they attacked the Orthodox Church by making the case that religion should not be identified with nationhood. According to Zosin:

> religion was born when all the gazes, spread after various deities, converged toward the unique god. As such, religion [is universal] and cannot become an individual, familial, or tribal object, but a universal one. . . . Therefore, when the social context allowed for the birth of nations – because nations are a rather late social-organic creation – it was not religion that entered the nations, but the nations entered into religion. Thus, one can explain how different nations have one and the same religion.
>
> (n.d., 8, 10)[3]

When comparing the positions of Zosin and Ionescu, one can easily notice the different premises underlying their arguments. Ionescu bound Orthodox Christianity so strongly to ethnic nationalism that he ignored the fact that other ethnic groups were Orthodox (for example, the Slavs and the Greeks) and that some Romanian nationals embraced other faiths (Catholicism and Judaism, among others). Ionescu thus defined the nation strictly as an ethnic nation characterized by religion, language and traditions. His views became reality during the 1930s, when many Romanians embraced Fascism, and during World War II, when the country became one of Hitler's important allies and engaged in the Holocaust that led to the murder

of several hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews. In contrast, Zosin envisioned a nation whose members did not embrace the same religion and could renounce religion altogether in favor of atheism. For him, religion was not a defining feature of the nation since different nations could share the same religion. He envisioned nations as ethnic groups.

The freethinkers' attack on religion was not limited to Orthodox Christianity, but also extended to Judaism. Before World War II, the Jewish people and their relationship with Judaism and the then–newly established Romanian nation were on the minds of Romanians of many ideological persuasions, and Zosin was no exception. The so-called "Jewish question" on whether or not to allow for the political emancipation of the Jews – to grant them citizenship in the countries where they resided and thus recognize them as equals and give them rights – was an Enlightenment issue going back to the debate between Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx. On the one hand, Bauer argued that Jewish emancipation meant emancipation from Judaism: that is, the abandonment of their religion in the process of modernization. On the other hand, Marx responded that "political emancipation is perfectly compatible with the continued existence of religion" (Wolff 2017).

The Bauer-Marx debate was echoed in Romania, and it is relevant to how freethinkers reacted to it. The 1923 Romanian Constitution granted citizenship to the Jews residing in the country, but some of them had it revoked in 1938 by the dictatorship of King Carol II.[4] The solution proposed by the Romanian right-wing politicians to the "Jewish question" was to eliminate Jews physically, as the Iron Guard and Marshall Ion Antonescu did during World War II. In contrast, the solution of the political left was to assimilate the Jews by forcing them to abandon their religion. Zosin's solution – which consisted of the removal of their religion and their assimilation – was the Enlightenment liberal solution that promoted integration by abandonment of one's religion and encouraging secularization. For him, Judaism was:

> not so much a religion but a system that made the aspirations of a nation to converge: we can say that Judaism is the only national religion, the religion of the "chosen people". . . . As a strictly national product, Judaism has remained particular to a nation and it is easy to see that, had they not been stuck to Judaism, Jews could be easily assimilated. . . . By contact with modern culture, the majority of Jewish people will lose their religion, will be healed from the Zionist dreams, and will enter the great mass of other nations . . . in order to form the humanity of the future, which will be free of hatred and strife.
>
> (Zosin n.d., 13)

Another important development in the history of Freethought in Romania was represented by the opening in 1928 in Bucharest of the *Cenuşa* (Ash) crematorium, the first one in the country. The cremationists used as a platform for their ideas the *Flacăra Sacră* (*Sacred Flame*) magazine, published

in Bucharest. One of the most vocal proponents of cremation was Orthodox monk and priest Calinic I. Popp Şerboianu (1883–1941), who joined forces with the freethinkers on this issue. Other Orthodox priests looked rather favorably on the practice despite the official Orthodox position against cremation (Rotar 2014a, 2014b).

On a practical level, cremation pitted the Romanian freethinkers against the dominant Orthodox Church, which favored inhumation. The church intensified its campaign against cremation and cremationists during the months preceding the opening of the crematorium. As that campaign was unsuccessful, since it failed to prevent the opening of the crematorium, the church took more drastic steps. In 1928 and again in 1933, the collective leadership body of the church (the Synod) passed two decisions that denounced cremation and prohibited any religious service for those who chose to be cremated. These decisions are still valid today. According to Rotar,

> Şerboianu systematically dismantled the arguments of the Orthodox against cremation. He argued, for example, that the Bible passage "for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return" (Genesis 3:19) could not be solely considered as the grounds to reject cremation. In his opinion, the aforementioned text referred to the fact that Adam was banished to Earth to make a living through the sweat of his brow, and not to be buried. To support his claims, he said that the Old Testament specified the death of Adam, but that there was no information regarding his burial or the lack of it.[5] He argued and proved that the texts of the Scriptures and of the Bible did not reject cremation. Thus, the accusation that cremating the deceased was a pagan practice had no real base.
>
> (2014a, 521)

Due to his relentless pro-cremation campaign, Şerboianu was defrocked by the Orthodox Church. That did not prevent him from performing religious funeral services refused by the Orthodox Church for the faithful who chose cremation in 1930s Romania. Şerboianu did not extend his support for Freethought beyond the practice of cremation.

Freethinkers were not numerous in interwar Romania, but their voices were not completely ignored by politicians. In fact, some of their ideals were translated into reality. Cremation was allowed as a practice in 1928 and was legalized in 1936 but remained condemned by the Orthodox Church, which discouraged its followers from embracing it. In 1924, as a result of the freethinking idea of a correction of the calendar, the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar, a move also leading to the emergence of the splinter Old Calendarist Orthodox Church. The separation of the state from the dominant Orthodox Church was enshrined in the 1923 Constitution and later upheld by the 1938 Constitution. Although declaring the Orthodox Church as the country's "dominant" church and the Greek Catholic

Church as having primacy over the other religious denominations, the 1923 Constitution stopped short of recognizing either of them as the state church.

Yet the other ideals of the freethinkers were not realized before the onset of Communism at the end of World War II in 1945. Some of the articles in *Raţiunea* magazine, for example, proposed for Romania the adoption of lay nationalism inspired by the French, who, in 1905, proclaimed the strict separation of church from state, with socialist influences. This form of nationalism became difficult to advocate after the Communist repression against religion began in Russia in 1917, several years after Thiron and Zosin wrote their pamphlets. In fact, in reaction to the Bolshevik revolution, many Romanian Orthodox believers and clergy became closely associated with Fascism by joining the Iron Guard, the Legion of the Archangel Michael or other far-right political formations such as Alexandru C. Cuza's Christian Nationalist Defense League. Thiron's other ideas were realized under Communism, when religion was pushed out of the public schools, priests were no longer allowed to teach in public schools and universities and numerous restrictions were imposed on all churches, with the most severe of them being the disbanding of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948.

Atheist intellectuals in interwar Romania were very few and outnumbered by Communist party militants with little education. The atheist intellectuals became involved with the Communist Party, which was officially founded in 1921 and made illegal three years later. As a result of the constant persecution of the Communists, many of the Communist Party leaders were imprisoned. Soon after World War II broke out, however, many of the atheist intellectuals fled to the Soviet Union. One such case was Leonte Răutu, whom we will present later in the following section.

The Communist period (1945–1989)

Under Communism, religion came under serious attack from an atheistic regime that went far beyond the mere secularization observed in Western countries to viciously attack religion in an effort to eliminate it, as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels prescribed. In their 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels declared that religion, a "bourgeois privilege" in the opinion of the proletarian, was to disappear once Communism became established as a necessary historical stage of the development of humanity. In Romania, the Communist regime initially wanted to ensure that religion disappeared but very soon afterwards acknowledged that it would take time to eliminate religion. Thus, it adopted a two-pronged policy of sticks and carrots: on the one hand, it used repression against the most stubborn of its religious opponents, and, on the other hand, it used propaganda to convince the rest of the population that religion belonged to the past.

With the help of ruthless Soviet secret agents, the Romanian Communist Party established a secret police force, known as the Securitate, to help achieve the party's goals. The Securitate used brutal repression against all

political and religious opponents of the Communist regime and collaborated with the party to suppress dissidence within party ranks. Numerous faithful and clergy who opposed Communism ended up in the dreaded prison and labor camp system, from which many of them did not come out alive (The Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania 2006).[6]

Left with no option to express their disagreement with Communism, some Romanians chose to become monks and nuns in the 1950s in order to avoid living and working in a world with which they did not agree. By the end of the 1950s, the number of monks and nuns had grown at a rate so alarming that the Communist authorities decided to curb people's enthusiasm for becoming religious by introducing new rules. According to the Decree 410 of 28 October 1959, only men aged 55 and over and women aged 50 and over were to be admitted into monasticism, a measure that was to be applied retroactively to 1948. As a result, 4,750 of the 6,014 monks and nuns estimated to live in monasteries as of 1 January 1959 were to be removed by virtue of the decree. Of the 192 monasteries that the Securitate estimated to be in existence at the beginning of that year, 92 were to be closed due to lack of monastic personnel following the removal of the monks and nuns (Enache 2009). Many monasteries thus became empty and were closed down, while former monks and nuns were forced out "into the world" and encouraged to get married and have children.

By the early 1960s, the regime realized that it could not ignore the popular Orthodox Church and its hold over nationalism and decided to seek its collaboration instead. After 1965, the new dictator, Nicolae Ceauşescu rallied the support of the Orthodox Church in his drive to establish national Communism in the country. At times he favored the church, while at other times he punished it, including some of its clergy and faithful who began showing signs of dissatisfaction with the regime by the late 1970s and into the 1980s. According to estimates, 17 Orthodox Church leaders were deprived of their seats and 15 priests were exiled while 1,888 Orthodox, 235 Greek Catholic and 172 Roman Catholic priests, 67 Protestant and 25 Neo-Protestant pastors, 23 Muslim imams and 13 Jewish rabbis were arrested under the Communist regime in Romania (Caravia et al. 1999, 15).

There was no possibility to write about atheism in a disengaged, scholarly way under Communism. The party had to line up even genuine believers in Marx-Leninism in order to support its extensive atheist propaganda, which tried to reach into the remotest corners of society. The Communist propaganda sought to convince, not force, the population to adopt the new Communist ways and embrace socialism.[7] According to Vasile Luca, a member of the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party, the party had to fight against religion "with science and not with administrative measures, because it is a long process" (Silveşan 2012, 55). Luca's statement reiterated what he had learned in the Soviet Union from 1940 through 1944 and the position of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,

expressed in 1930, according to which local party organizations should use propaganda to convince the peasants and thus avoid closing down village churches by force (Silveşan 2012, 55–56).

Another case of an atheist intellectual was Leonte Răutu. Vladimir Tismaneanu described Răutu as "the high priest of a cultural revolution *à la roumaine*" and "the architect of the anticultural politics of Stalinism in Romania", who survived in Politburo leadership positions from the 1930s until 1981 (2012, 81). As a student of mathematics, he joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1929 and shortly thereafter became the head of its propaganda and agitation department. In 1940, he fled to Moscow and became the director of the Romanian section of Radio Moscow. Later, he returned to Romania with Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Valter Roman and initiated a Romanian version of Zhdanovism (Tismaneanu 2012, 81). In one of his discourses, he wrote:

> The channels by which cosmopolitan views become pervasive, especially among intellectuals, are well known: servility to and kowtowing to bourgeois culture, the empty talk of the so-called community of progressive scientists and the representatives of reactionary, bourgeois science, national nihilism, meaning the negation of all that is valuable and progressive for each people in his culture and history, contempt for the people's language, hatred of the building of socialism, the defamation of all that is new and developing, replacing the *partiinost* with bourgeois objectivism, which ignores the fundamental difference between socialist, progressivist culture and bourgeois, reactionary culture.
>
> (Tismaneanu 2012, 81; cf. Tismaneanu and Vasile 2008, 224)

He later turned against Ana Pauker and other Muscovites, but he also denounced the Soviet Union in some of his speeches against the Romanian academia, whom he accused of pro-Soviet sympathies at a time when it was no longer fashionable to display such admiration.

While Răutu represented a minor intellectual who played a major role by becoming part of the establishment, Romania, like its greater sister France, had a tradition of emphasizing the role of intellectuals, especially writers, as public figures. The Communists did not abandon that tradition but used it to their advantage. Already established in the interwar period as major intellectuals, people such as Mihai Ralea, George Călinescu and Mihail Sadoveanu became major names in the new philosophy, literature, psychology and sociology promoted by the Communist authorities in Romania after 1945. Some of them were also active politically in the Communist-controlled Parliament, and all of them became major supporters of atheism and Communist policies. As one analyst wrote, "Only Mihail Sadoveanu intermingled with the high-ranking party leadership. No other intellectual, after the elimination of [lawyer, economist and sociologist] Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu [in 1954], would ever enter the rarefied zones of the political

power" (Mitchievici 2005, 56). But many of them undertook trips to the Soviet Union to see for themselves how life there was unfolding. The impressions they came back with were extremely positive, describing the delicacy with which they were received by the Soviets, and were widely publicized through the printed press, the radio and then collected in volumes that some of these authors signed.

Describing the trip he undertook to the Soviet Union in 1946, George Călinescu wanted to disprove to himself and the Romanian people the negative image proclaimed in the Romanian press about that great country, and he wanted to demonstrate that light did come from the East. He had simply discovered another great civilization that the West was dismissing and that the Romanian, individualistic as he was, could not comprehend (Mitchievici 2005, 72–73). This was the time of changing friendships, something that Călinescu, perhaps one of the greatest literary critics of Romania, was eager to promote. Under the influence of the grandiose Soviet architecture he saw during his trips to the Soviet Union, Călinescu began writing about a "cathedral of the people". Such a cathedral came to be realized just several years later, in 1951, when the *Casa Scînteii* (the House of the Spark) was built as the editorial headquarters of the largest Communist Romanian newspaper, *Scînteia*, which was the equivalent of the Soviet *Pravda* (Mitchievici 2005, 80–81).

Returning to the interaction between atheism and religion in Romania, we should note that antireligious propaganda was to be conducted with the help of the press, the radio and the Society for the Promulgation of Science and Culture (SPSC), an organization that was present under similar names in the Soviet Union and other Soviet-bloc countries after 1947. Such propaganda had to take the form of "activity for scientific education and combating mysticism and obscurantism from the consciousness of the masses" (Silveşan 2012, 57). The SPSC, founded in 1949, included among its members "science and technology specialists, leaders of public and military life, teachers, writers and artists, as well as physical and juridical persons" (Silveşan 2012, 58), all of whom were to engage the public in various presentations meant to promote a scientific, atheistic and antireligious worldview. Thus, numerous public presentations were organized in cities, towns and villages and in factories, agricultural cooperatives and cultural centers where workers and peasants could meet the specialists and be informed about what the party wanted to promote. According to a 1951 report Silveşan discovered, during the previous two years of activity by the SPCS, "90,000 conferences were held, of which 6,000 in the languages of the country's minorities. . . . The Society had published 23 brochures in 1.16 million copies [in Romanian], 9 brochures in Hungarian, 5 in German and 2 in Serbian" (Silveşan 2012, 59).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the topics presented by the SPSC included Darwinism and the theory of evolution, as well as science and religion, while in the 1970s and 1980s, the SPSC historians were allowed to touch upon

nationalist topics, emphasizing the imaginary continuity of the Romanian people for over 2,000 years on the same territory (against Hungarian irredentist claims of continuity in Transylvania) and the little-known religion of the Dacians and the Thracians. These groups were presented as the precursors of the people living in present-day Romania, and the contribution of the Roman conquerors was praised. Presentations on subjects related to scientific materialism and atheism were followed by the screening of relevant movies and the distribution of atheist propaganda materials. These activities targeted the entire population, particularly the youth, and were tailored to the levels of education and language of various audiences for maximum impact.

The efforts and money the party invested in these propaganda activities never seemed to actually pay off, however, and the party had doubts about the real feelings of the population towards Communism since dissent and opposition continued to be present throughout the years (Silveşan 2012, 63). This is the reason why, during the 1960s, the Securitate intensified its antireligious campaign by co-opting the priests and asking them to serve a number of purposes, such as spreading disinformation about freedom of religion, spying on their parishioners, spreading Communist propaganda in the Romanian diaspora communities and then providing information on Romanians living abroad upon their return home (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 78–79). According to former Securitate officer Roland Vasilievici (who was directly responsible for recruiting priests in the city of Timişoara from 1976 to 1986), recruitment of clergy targeted all denominations but especially the dominant Orthodox Church and began in the 1960s at the order of an unnamed Securitate leader, who reportedly declared that he wanted to see:

> no Orthodox priest un-coopted as an informer. We spent so much money educating them, they even know dialectic materialism and history, but contribute nothing. They should at least collaborate with us for [building] socialism to serve their country and cease wasting time, chasing women, and getting drunk. Comrade officers, make these lazy priests work, they have enough spare time to collect information. They should be our survey polling organ.
>
> (Vasilievici quoted in Stan and Turcescu 2007, 78)

Based on the written collaboration pledges that the Securitate obliged all new secret informers to sign in confidence, Vasilievici further alleged: “almost all Orthodox clergy became informers recruited for their nationalist sentiment” (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 79). The former Securitate officer estimated that informers accounted for 80% to 90% of the Orthodox clergy (Flueraş 1999; Stan and Turcescu 2007, 79).

Atheist propaganda was also spread through the education system at pre-university and university levels, as well as in research institutes specializing

in producing Communist literature in various fields (history, philosophy, economics and, of course, Marx-Leninism). As mentioned earlier, it was impossible for even a genuine Marxist thinker (whether historian, philosopher or social scientist) to remain un-co-opted in the propaganda machine of the Communist Party. Worth mentioning here is the propaganda produced by the Institute for Historical and Socio-Political Studies (ISISP, to use its Romanian acronym), which was directly subordinate to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Created in 1951 and closed in 1990, the institute was known as the Party History Institute until 1966.[8] Its members, who produced thousands of books and journals, were in charge of (re)writing Romania's history and the history of the Romanian Communist Party in such a way as to emphasize the national character of Romanian Communism and the widespread support the party had allegedly enjoyed since its creation in 1921.

The history textbooks produced at the time not only minimized the role played by the churches in the history of the Romanian provinces, but in many instances excluded completely any reference to religion from their accounts. Historiography adopted a Marx-Leninist perspective that emphasized relations, means of production and class struggles and excluded other social actors such as the churches. As Zavatti wrote about the books produced by the institute,

> The national heroes of 1848, whose alliance with tsarist Russia was considered a positive factor, were remembered accordingly: Nicolae Bălcescu was described as a positive, progressive example since he allied with Russia, while Avram Iancu, who allied with the Hapsburgs, was considered a counterrevolutionary. The role of the churches in national history was minimized. The Transylvanian School (Şcoala Ardeleană), a late eighteenth century cultural movement composed of historians and philologists, considered linked to the Greek Catholic Church banned in 1948, was accused by Roller of having obscured the beneficial Russian influence on Romanian culture, and therefore was renamed by Roller Şcoala Latinistă (Latinist School).
>
> (2016, 123–124)[9]

In addition to the antireligious propaganda disseminated through various means, the party employed repression against the clergy. This persecution was conducted by the secret police, the Securitate. The following example shows how the Securitate, taking its cues and orders from the party, planned to recruit priests and use them to reach out to the population while ultimately attempting to turn Romanians into areligious citizens. It contains the minutes of a meeting the Interior Ministry officials held with the Securitate regional and county leaders from 28 February to 1 March 1950.[10] During that meeting, Deputy Interior Minister Pintilie Gheorghe, an architect of Communist repression who was responsible for

the arrest, internment and deportation of some 400,000 people, instructed the Securitate leaders on how to deal with religion in general and the priests in particular.

Gheorghe was responding to the events that some Securitate leaders reported on the day before the meeting, according to which priests who opposed the collectivization of agriculture protested when being removed from the state payroll, continued to perform catechetical work, tried to reach out to youth and engaged in a rebellion. Organized against the Securitate by the villagers of Răcăciuni, in the Bacău county, the rebellion was allegedly instigated by a Roman Catholic priest. The Securitate further reported that the Jehovah's Witnesses, an illegal religious denomination at the time, and the Orthodox radical movement *Oastea Domnului* (Lord's Army) had recruited new members. According to the minutes, Gheorghe reportedly said:

> Yesterday, the comrades raised the issue of religion and the hostile work of the priests in cities and villages. . . . Recently the Central Committee ordered that priests should be recruited . . . because priests are influential with the masses, and we should not ignore their influence. We should use them smartly, because if we don't attract the honest priests, our enemy will; they should work for the people. . . . We use the word "honest" because the priests use it. But for us, [the priests] are the greatest bandits. . . . Our duty is ultimately to terminate the influence of religion on our citizens. . . . This is the most difficult problem, that was not solved even in the Soviet Union. . . . We should not trust even the priests [who are] on our side. All of them are sneaky, perverse, and they will not support us 100%. That's why we need to know who is with us 100%, who is 99%, who 80%, who 50%, and who is less or even our open enemy. We must study each of them individually . . . and hit the enemy with all our might. . . . This is how we should deal with the Orthodox priests.
>
> The Catholic priests are more Jesuit [that is, "hypocrite"].[11] Even the Orthodox are Jesuit. All are Jesuits, all are bandits. . . . We must uncover the relationships of the Catholics with foreign countries, different embassies, and so on. Our Party is currently attracting the priests who are determined to come to us; so, let's not hit those priests. . . . In one week, please send the Ministry the lists with priests with a hostile attitude, but the [lists] should be documented with facts [not mere allegations]. . . . The Party has decided to strike with all its might [against religion] and we [the Securitate] have to do so.
>
> (Oprea 2002, 156–160)

During the late 1940s and the early 1950s, the party and the Securitate had to convince the priests to support Communist policies, such as the

collectivization of agriculture, and participate in the propaganda for peace that the Soviet Union promoted at the beginning of the Cold War. By the 1980s, however, they faced a host of different issues related to religion. By then, the country had experienced a change of leadership in the person of Nicolae Ceauşescu, an opening towards the West and a string of Western loans that made possible Ceauşescu's megalomaniac industrialization plans. In addition, Ceauşescu was perceived as somewhat more independent from the Kremlin than Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, his predecessor, both because he refused to participate in the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and because he challenged Moscow on the issue of Bessarabia, a territory that had once belonged to Romania.

This wind of change, however, was soon restrained. After the Czechoslovak Charter 77 was launched in 1977, a number of Romanians dared to sign it and thus to ask Ceauşescu to respect the international human rights agreements the country had signed. While Central and Eastern Europe saw the rise of dissident movements, religious persecution was on the rise again in Romania. The secret police wanted to implement measures regarding religion that were different from those introduced at the beginning of the Communist period. The Securitate feared more external influences now, such as those coming from the foreign radio stations Radio Free Europe and Voice of America (both funded by the US Congress), visits to Romania by foreign missionaries, religious propaganda sent from abroad, newer means of travel and newer technology that facilitated communication. The Communist regime did not see this openness to the outside world as something positive, as an interior ministry document from 1981 demonstrates:

> Given their hostile activities against the Socialist Republic of Romania, the intelligence services, the reactionary organizations, circles and groups, as well as the backrooms of anticommunist propaganda from abroad are more intensely engaging some members of the [officially recognized] religious groups and [unrecognized] religious sects. Attempts to use religion to interfere in our country's internal affairs are evident. . . . Under the pretext of a lack of religious freedom in our country, opposition is encouraged among the religious groups in view of politically undermining our country. Various media outlets and foreign radio stations are used for this purpose, especially Radio Free Europe. . . . Increasingly, foreign reactionary cults – known to us as covers for various espionage activities – come to our country with the mission to create dissidence within the legally recognized cults, especially the Neo-protestants, in order to oppose them to the state, to instigate anarchic activities, and to collect data for hostile propaganda activities against us. . . . [The Ministry seeks to improve collection of information on] persons who introduce in the country materials with a mystical and hostile character, instigate religious group members to immigrate,

> and distribute abroad letters, memoirs, appeals, and publications that denigrate religious freedom in our country.
>
> (Ministry of the Interior 1981, 457–467)

The ministry officials called for a more effective informational control to be implemented in order to monitor various categories of people, especially those with ties to foreigners. The targets included:

> leaders of illegal sects . . . those working for the Roman Catholic Church, the [recognized and unrecognized] Neo-protestant groups, former Greek Catholic clergy, Jewish rabbis, those working in the Orthodox institutes and theological seminaries. . . . Measures should [be implemented in order to] continue to attract as collaborators those who serve in religious groups . . . those who can identify hostile activities, who can solve problems between the counties and abroad, and those who enjoy authority and influence inside the denominations. Special attention should be paid to recruit as collaborators pupils and students in theological institutes. . . . We should bar from theological education the descendants of former legionaries or other enemies [of the Communists] who, under the cover of religion, would engage in activities that are hostile to our state. . . . Through the Department of Religious Affairs, the religious leaders should engage in systematic propaganda activities abroad, by using more intensely the religious publications from Romania and those of the church communities abroad. In our efforts to misinform, confuse and discourage our domestic and foreign enemies, we will continue, with increasing intensity, to create tensions among these leaders by unmasking them as business-minded, immoral, disloyal to the principles of the denominations to which they belong.
>
> (Ministry of the Interior 1981, 457–467)

The efforts of the party and the Securitate to spread atheism were met by the religious groups with both resistance and collaboration. While resistance to atheism and other Communist policies was more widespread in the early decades of Communism, as evidenced by the terror used to curb such resistance, over time, many clergy and lay people displayed less and less overt resistance as perhaps they became more accustomed to living under a Communist regime whose end they could not foresee. Some, including church leaders, showed signs of collaboration with the party and support for its policies.

One such notorious case was Patriarch Justinian Marina, the head of the Orthodox Church (1948–1977). He was also a convinced socialist (not a Communist), who believed in the promises of socialism. Marina was a great supporter of and collaborator with the Communist regime, but he also attempted to shield his church from annihilation by rescuing monasticism and grooming some Fascist priests and monks to be his assistants (Vasile

2006; Stan and Turcescu 2007; Leustean 2009; Turcescu and Stan 2015). Marina supported the Communist policies of collectivization of agriculture and nationalization of private property by sending letters to his priests telling them not to oppose Communism. He also openly supported the disbanding of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948 and afterwards allowed Orthodox monasteries to serve as prisons for the Greek Catholic bishops who refused to convert to either Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy. As a reward, the Orthodox Church received the Greek Catholic places of worship confiscated by the Communist state.

Nevertheless, this support for the Communist leadership of Gheorghiu-Dej did not spare Justinian's Church two massive waves of arrests of clergy who were considered retrograde. Even some close assistants of Justinian – such as Valeriu Bartolomeu Anania and Benedict Ghiuş, both former members of the interwar Fascist Iron Guard – were arrested, despite Justinian's attempts to protect them from the Securitate. At the same time, monastic life was placed under serious limitations, although Justinian developed the concept of "useful trades" (which included the production of clerical and monastic garb, carpets, painting, embroidery, sculpting and also carpentry), a skill that each monk and nun should acquire in order to avoid being accused of parasitism in the new socialist society. Moreover, Communist Decree 410 of 1959 drastically reduced the number of monasteries and their inhabitants (Enache 2009). In retrospect, Justinian was both a collaborator and a resister because he was close to the Communist Party leaders to whom he talked over and above the head of the Securitate officers, who suspected him of independence and separate opinion. He also wanted to imitate what the Iron Lady of Romanian Communism, Ana Pauker, did in the early stages of the establishment of the new regime, when she invited former legionaries (Iron Guard members) to join the Communist Party; both Justinian and the party benefited from supporting one another (for example, the Orthodox Church benefited from the dismantling of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948, when many Greek Catholic properties were transferred to the Orthodox Church; the same Church was also allowed to canonize a large number of Romanian saints in 1955 and to keep some theological institutes open) (Turcescu and Stan 2015).

The post-Communist period (1989 – Present)

After the collapse of the Communist regime on 22 December 1989, second-echelon former Communists took control of the country from dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu and promptly executed him and his wife on December 25 of the same year, following a show trial. Among them was Ion Iliescu, who served as the country's post-Communist president for 11 years, and in the 1990s, embraced the view that "socialism with a human face" was worth pursuing. Unlike him, the anti-Communist opposition advocated for a radical political change in Romania (Abraham 2017, 112–113).

Having difficulty explaining its complex interaction of both resistance and collaboration with the Communist regime, the Orthodox Church blamed atheism and the terror instituted by the Communist Party for its past behavior and presented itself as a victim of the regime. Thus, atheism became marginalized in Romania, with as few as 0.1% of the population declaring themselves atheist in the censuses of 1992, 2002 and 2011 (Romanian National Institute of Statistics n.d.a, n.d.b). The 2011 census recorded two categories worth mentioning: “atheists” (a total of 20,743 – 15,012 men and 5,731 women) and “nonreligious” (a total of 18,917 – 11,140 men and 7,777 women). The distinction between the two categories is unclear as the only instructions the pollsters received were “for persons who declare no particular religion or belief, you should enter the code for ‘non-religious’; while you should enter ‘atheist’ only for people who declare themselves as such”. The pollster was to make no interpretation of a person’s religion or lack thereof (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 2011). Taken together, these two groups amounted to some 40,000 people: that is, only 0.2% of Romania’s population of 19 million. Note that men are more likely to declare themselves as atheists or as having no religion. Identifying oneself as an atheist in post-Communist Romania could affect one’s public life, as the incumbent Ion Iliescu discovered during the 1996 presidential campaign. When asked during a televised debate by counter-candidate Christian Democrat Emil Constantinescu whether or not he believed in God, Iliescu tried to affirm his Freethought convictions while emphasizing his membership in the Orthodox Church through his baptism as an infant (YouTube 2017). As a well-known Communist official who had served a regime that had engaged in religious persecution, Iliescu was unable to pose as a pious candidate who embraced the religiosity of most of the Romanian electorate. In the end, Constantinescu won the presidency and, as a token of gratitude, became the first post-Communist Romanian president to take his presidential oath, hand on the Bible, in the presence of the Orthodox patriarch. Other candidates for the presidency, parliament and local government also discovered that an electoral win was difficult, if not impossible, if they did not appeal for the support of the country’s powerful Orthodox Church. As a result, many of them have tried, at least during electoral campaigns, to include visits to Orthodox churches in their itineraries; to show up for religious services on major Orthodox feast days; to be photographed and filmed surrounded by Orthodox icons, calendars and other religious symbols; to make donations for church building and to godfather orphans and witness weddings in public ceremonies (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 135; Stan and Turcescu 2011b, 203–204).

The Communist Party dissolved quietly on 22 December 1989; shortly thereafter, the party was outlawed, and its properties were nationalized. Two attempts to resurrect the Communist Party were unsuccessful. In 2010, the Committee for the Reorganization of the Romanian Communist Party was formed and elected Petre Ignătencu, a taxi driver, as its president. In

2017, the courts refused to recognize the New Romanian Communist Party as the successor of the Communist Party and rejected its request for the restitution of the assets nationalized in 1989. The party has no real electoral platform and has yet to clarify its position towards religion.[12] Other leftist political formations embrace atheist, Communist and socialist traditions, according to their websites. The Party of Social Democracy (PSD) inherited the local Communist Party structures but did not embrace all its positions. Many PSD members are not atheists, but openly religious. The Socialist Labor Party, created by former Communist Prime Minister Ilie Verdeţ shortly after the 1989 regime change, was briefly represented in Parliament in the early 1990s but never made atheism a policy priority and avoided openly criticizing the Orthodox Church (Abraham 2017, 121). The Romanian Socialist Party was formed by Constantin Rotaru in 2003, when he rejected the merger between his former Socialist Labor Party and the PSD.[13] These two smaller political parties were never able to gain parliamentary representation.

In 2003, Remus Cernea founded the secularist and humanist association Solidarity for the Freedom of Conscience, which brought together well-known civic actors such as Gabriel Andreescu, Smaranda Enache, Daniel Vighi, Emil Moise, William Totok and Liviu Andreescu. The association defended freedom of conscience and was active in promoting a strict separation between the church and the state, similar to the French model, which other Romanian politicians and religious groups never seriously considered. The association gained public notoriety mainly due to its opposition to the Orthodox Church receiving a plot of land from the Bucharest mayor's office for building the Cathedral of National Salvation in the Carol Park. Known as "Save the Carol Park, save the rule of law!", the public campaign mounted by the solidarity association prevented the government from donating part of the historic park to the Orthodox Church.[14] In 2012, Cernea won a seat in Parliament on the electoral lists of the Green Party, but afterwards, he joined the PSD, only to become an independent legislator from 2013 to 2016.

As a legislator, Cernea was very active, but only seven of his legislative proposals were adopted by the Chamber of Deputies.[15] For example, Cernea successfully called for amending Law 35 of 2017 on preventing and combating family violence and for modifying an existing law in order to promote equality between women and men.[16] While some of his legislative initiatives were laudable, the secularist agenda he promoted in Parliament did not have the support of his colleagues. He unsuccessfully sought to change article 18 on religion in public schools (see later discussion) of Law 1 of 2011 on education, to change civil (read nonreligious) partnerships to cover homosexual partnerships, to amend article 13 (2) of Law 489 of 2006 on religion and to overturn Emergency Ordinance 19 of 17 March 2005, which granted to the Orthodox Church land in Bucharest to build the National Salvation Cathedral.

Despite his freethinking convictions, Cernea lacked the courage to run an electoral campaign devoid of Orthodox symbols that could have gained him electoral support. He followed many other Romanian politicians and designed an electoral flyer that included a church in the background.[17] He considered himself a freethinker, writing that

> A freethinker has a skeptical attitude towards the claims of encountering or being familiar with the supernatural. He opposes to the mystical inclination a critical examination of the metaphysical problems. He is not an absolute skeptic, but states, at the most, modest provisional truths which science and knowledge in general present to us without the pretense of a final answer. . . . For a freethinker, religion is not the authentic nor the only road to survival, resistance and healing. He suffers and tries to heal his wounds without an appeal to prayer.
>
> (Cernea 2009)

The Humanist Association of Romania (AUR), another organization founded by Cernea in 2008, promotes secular humanism and the separation of church from state. This rather small association has acted as a civil society actor. According to its website, AUR subscribes to the 2002 Amsterdam Declaration of International Humanism, which describes humanism as an ethical and rational affirmation of "the dignity and autonomy of the human individual", argues that science and technology are to be valued, but "human values have to determine the final goal". It recognizes democracy and human rights and sees humanism as "an answer to the widespread wish for an alternative to dogmatic religion".[18] The AUR promotes a secular state in Romania, in which "reason, compassion and tolerance represent the fundamentals of rule of law".[19]

After 1989, the dominant Orthodox Church and religious minorities demanded reparations for the suffering they endured for almost 45 years of atheist, Marx-Leninist and Stalinist Communist rule. At the same time, large segments of the population experienced a religious awakening and condemned atheism. One of the most successful reparations demanded by the religious groups was the reintroduction of religious education in the public school system, with the state agreeing to finance the salaries of the teachers of the recognized denominations that wanted to offer religious instruction to children in grades 1 through 11. As stated earlier, the elimination of religion from public schools was requested by the Romanian freethinkers of the early 20th century. This elimination occurred under Communism, but the reintroduction of religious instruction was part and parcel of the request for reparations that religious groups made after 1989. The reintroduction of religious education into the public school system has led to new clashes between the post-Communist freethinkers (sometimes also referred to as "humanists") and the Orthodox Church (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 145–170).

As early as 1990, religious education was a tolerated subject in some, but not all, schools in Romania. In 1991, a protocol signed by the Ministry of Education and the State Secretariat of Religious Denominations provided for the introduction of "moral-religious training" in public schools in order to "highlight elements of ethics and cultural history" (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 152). The protocol was superseded by the Law on Education 84 of 1995. The law included an article on religious education that was highly confusing because it suggested that students were expected to attend the obligatory subject of religion. Some MPs and freethinkers challenged the article in court to ensure that its interpretation did not go against the Universal Declaration on Human Rights or other international conventions Romania had signed guaranteeing freedom of conscience, freedom of belief and freedom to change one's religion or belief. The Romanian legislation was harmonized with these treatises and the European Union legislation by 2006, but even before that, the Romanian courts argued that the law made clear that the parents have the right to choose the religious belief or atheism for their children, and they can even opt out of the religion class completely. Article 18 of the revised Law on Education 1 of 2011 eliminated the ambiguities of its 1995 predecessor and stipulated that:

> (1) The curricula of the primary, secondary, high school and professional education include religion as a school discipline, belonging to the common body of education. Students belonging to the state-recognized religious denominations, regardless of their number, are guaranteed the constitutional right to participate in the religion class, according to their confession. (2) By written request of an adult student, or his parents or legal guardian in case of a minor student, the student may choose not to participate in the religion class.
>
> (Romanian Parliament n.d.)[20]

The 1995 and 2011 laws on education committed the state to support the teachers of religion financially by covering their salaries and by ensuring that religion classes can take place on the premises of any school where children want to study that subject. The 2011 law also allows students to opt out of the religion class altogether if the student or the parents are atheists.

Some members of the Solidarity for the Freedom of Conscience Association challenged the churches over their teaching of religion in public schools. According to Gabriel Andreescu, the religion teachers use threats and punitive methods with children, and therefore their attitude towards education goes against "modern education principles that envision the student as a responsible person endowed with reason and democratic values" (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 163). When secondary school philosophy teacher Emil Moise reported abuses perpetrated by religion teachers (some of them priests) in the Buzău county schools, the Ministry of Education representative responded with laughter and dismissed his allegations as mere

exaggerations (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 163). In addition, Romania registered a case similar to that of Soile Tuulikki Lautsi, who objected to the presence of crucifixes in the Italian public schools as providing no neutrality for her sons' education (European Court of Human Rights 2009). The Romanian case, which occurred several years before Lautsi, involved Moise once again. In its Decision 323 of 2006, the National Council for Combating Discrimination ruled in favor of Moise, who objected to the display of Orthodox icons in public schools on the grounds that their presence constituted an infringement of Romania's separation of church and state and discriminated against the atheist, agnostic and nonreligious. On 11 June 2008, the council's decision was overruled by Romania's Supreme Court, which decided that the presence of icons in schools did not go against that legislation (Mediafax 2008; Stan and Turcescu 2011a, 194).

Conclusion

The chapter on Romania has considered Freethought, atheism and secularization over the past century. While noting the official introduction of Freethought in pre-Communist times, the chapter demonstrates that, as expected, the most vicious attack on religion took place during the Communist period, when Marxist-Leninist propaganda combined with Leninist and Stalinist terror to bring religion to its knees in an attempt to cause its eventual demise. Since 1989, Freethought and atheism have been present in the country, but they have not been popular; only about 0.1% of the country's inhabitants declare themselves atheists. No socialist or Communist party with an atheist agenda managed to win seats in Parliament.

Notes

1 The *Encyclopedia* estimates that at least 270,000 Romanian Jews were killed or died from mistreatment during the Holocaust.
2 Haeckel's influence on German social and political thought is presented by Daniel Gasman (2004). In the introduction to the 2004 edition, Gasman presents Haeckel as an ideological progenitor of Fascist ideology.
3 The volume is part of the so-called propaganda library of *Raţiunea*, a collection of texts that, the magazine believed, explained Freethought in clear language that could reach the masses.
4 The decree revoking some Jewish rights can be found in Scurtu et al. 2001.
5 Şerboianu (1935, 1, 3–4).
6 This is known as the Tismaneanu Report, from the name of its president, Vladimir Tismaneanu.
7 A terrifying enterprise bordering on propaganda and repression was the Piteşti Experiment that ran from December 1949 to September 1951 in the political prison of Piteşti (located some 100 kilometers northwest of Bucharest). Endorsed by the party and the Securitate, it consisted of torture, denunciation and humiliation meant to change the personality of prisoners (mainly Orthodox students). These abuses were performed by other prisoners with the assistance of the Securitate-controlled prison guards. The experiment was a controversial

brainwashing attempt that had to be stopped. Dozens of people died as a result, although its goal was not to kill but to reeducate prisoners and transform them from real or imagined enemies into adherents of the Communist ideology (see Ierunca 1981; Stănescu 2010–2012). The secret police files (in Romanian) on the Pitești reeducation experiment are now available publicly on the website of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), *Dosarele reeducării* at www.cnsas.ro/reeducarea.html (accessed on 3 June 2017). In English, see Hall (2014).

8 I am following the latest scholarship on the Institute by Zavatti (2016).

9 Mihai Roller (1908–1958) was a Romanian-Jewish propagandist and historian trained in the Soviet Union, who emphasized Russian influences over Romanian history.

10 The minutes are printed in Oprea (2002, 132–208).

11 See LauraGellner (n.d.).

12 The official website of the New Romanian Communist Party is http://npcr.ro (accessed on 18 March 2019).

13 The official website of the Romanian Socialist Party is available at www.psr.org.ro (accessed June 12, 2017).

14 For the "Save the Carol Park" campaign, see Stan and Turcescu (2007, 59–62).

15 The official Chamber of Deputy page of Remus Cernea is available at www.cdep.ro/pls/parlam/structura2015.mp?idm=58&cam=2&leg=2012 (accessed June 12, 2017).

16 The legislative proposals Remus Cernea introduced in 2012 to 2016 are available at www.cdep.ro/pls/parlam/structura2015.mp?idm=58&cam=2&leg=2012&pag=2&idl=1&prn=0&par= (accessed June 12, 2017).

17 Cernea distributed the flyer at the Romanian Consulate in Montreal during his visit in 2014, where the author of this chapter met him.

18 The declaration is available on the official website of the Humanist Association of Romania, http://humanismromania.org (accessed June 12, 2017).

19 http://humanismromania.org (accessed June 12, 2017).

20 Article 18 of the law deals with the teaching of religion in public schools.

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11 Atheism's peaks and valleys in Russia

Elena Stepanova

The history of atheism and Freethought in Russia can be divided into four periods. The first (as of the second half of the 18th century) is the *aristocratic* period when the Russian nobility was keen on the ideas of the French Enlightenment as well as the mysticism and practice of Freemasonry. The second is the period of the search by the *intelligentsia* for ultimate truth apart from official Orthodox Christianity, which was greatly influenced by classical German philosophy, French utopian socialism and Marxism (the second part of the 19th century). In the third period, after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, *Soviet* atheism transformed the philosophical critique of religion into practical politics aimed at expunging not only religious institutions but also the daily expressions of religious beliefs. "Scientific" atheism as an integral part of the Marx-Leninist worldview did not recognize religion as either a public or a private matter and only agreed to tolerate religion for the period of the construction of Communism.

Finally, in *post-Soviet* Russia, the place of atheism as one of the basic principles of Soviet ideology seems to be occupied by religion as a repository of "genuine" spirituality and morality, while atheism has been pushed aside into the intellectual margins. The attitude towards religion in Russia has changed radically since 1988.[1] The state now officially acknowledges the importance of the cultural-historical and ethical role of religion, particularly Orthodox Christianity and so-called traditional religions, which are mentioned in the preamble to the current Federal Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations", adopted in 1997, and highly values their contribution to Russian nationhood.

In observing the historical transformation of atheism in Russia, it is important to take into account the following: it is widely recognized that atheism, as the denial of the existence of God, appeared in the European intellectual domain in the 17th and 18th centuries (Febvre 1982). Atheism is therefore inseparably connected to modernity. The starting point of modernity in Russia is associated with Peter the Great, particularly, with the implementation of the Westphalian model of "*cuius regio eius religio*" in 1721. Peter dismissed the institution of the Moscow Patriarchate and gave the right to govern the Orthodox Church to the Holy Synod, which was

actually a government department. Peter consequently did a great deal to secularize the Russian state, subordinating the church to the monarchy. The byproducts of the newborn secular culture were close and manifold contacts with Western Europe, as well as aspiration for scientific knowledge and a rational way of thinking.

Atheism in Europe arose not as an independent intellectual movement, but rather as a result of certain trends within Catholic and Protestant theology and subsequent changes in the prevailing conceptions of theism (Hyman 2010). In Russia, Orthodox theology was built on the legacy of the Byzantine church fathers. Unlike in Europe, theological propositions were not supplemented by philosophical reflection, and the domestic theological tradition remained weak until the second half of the 19th century (Florovsky 1979, 7). In the 18th century, the spread of freethinking and atheism among the Russian educated class was not based on a reflection on Orthodox theology, but rather on exporting and adopting European philosophical ideas. Atheism in the 19th century, in contrast, although still highly influenced by European philosophy, was much more linked to the controversial attitude of the intelligentsia towards official Russian Orthodoxy. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, atheism became a tool for implementing the idea of the gradual liberation of society from religion. Atheism exists at present in at least two main versions: a) as the remains of Soviet materialistic philosophy and b) as a reaction to the religious "revival".

An adequate interpretation of the place of religion and atheism in Russia at the present day is hardly possible without observing their place and role in the imperial, pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods. It is also important to avoid labeling the particular period as either "revival" or "decay", and instead to analyze the complex interweaving of religion and atheism in a particular socio-cultural context. The historical shifts of the dominant paradigm will be explored in this chapter in light of the overlapping of various factors – historical, cultural, societal and individual – which, in their turn, shape the particular combinations of religion and atheism in the history of Russia.

The prologue of atheism: the Russian aristocracy's passion for philosophy and mysticism

As of the mid-18th century, Freethought began to spread among the nobility, especially among those who were educated in Western Europe. During the reign of Catherine the Great, the ideas of the French Enlightenment, inspired by Voltaire and superficially adapted to Russian culture, were a major force among the upper cultural levels of Russia. The "Voltaireans", whether convicted followers or followers of a fashion craze, did not constitute a particular intellectual movement, but instead reflected a certain social mood, which presupposed the gradual spread of secular rational knowledge, skepticism and consequent liberation from religious superstitions.

Voltaire was the most popular author, although the works of Montesquieu, d'Holbach, Helvétius and Jean-Jacques Rousseau – whether in French or Russian – were available as well (Вороницын 1930; Коган 1962). Denis Diderot, who is considered both the first of the Western atheists in chronological order and its premier advocate (Buckley 1987, 249), was the only French philosopher who visited Russia personally in 1773 and 1774, on the invitation of the empress. His works were of great influence over the advanced educated aristocrats in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the same time, as Victoria Frede notes, "the relative weakness of theological and philosophical training among the nobility helps explain why the many deist and atheist tracts produced in Western Europe during the eighteenth century found little resonance in Russia" (Frede 2011, 10).

Many of the educated nobility, dissatisfied with the rationalism of the French Enlightenment as well as the Orthodox Church theology, were influenced by the spiritual ideas of Freemasonry (de Madariaga 2014). Although not violating outward piety, they accepted the Orthodox ceremony in symbolic terms only, which, for Masons, indicated a step on the way from visible to invisible "inner" religion, from "historical" Christianity to spiritual, or "true", Christianity. Freemasonry rekindled the ancient dream about an esoteric circle of selected and dedicated people who knew the truth because of their "illumination" (Florovsky 1979, 4). Philosophically speaking, Freemasonry was a restoration of Neoplatonic Gnosticism and an inner reaction against the rationalistic spirit of the Enlightenment (Smith 1998). Although Voltaireans and Freemasons represented opposite types of thought, in a broader sense, they both belonged to "philosophy", i.e., to irreligion.

As Gavin Hyman indicates, atheism emerged and developed in modern thought as an intellectual phenomenon among elites. One may also trace a parallel development of atheism as a possible option for society as a whole or for groups or individuals within societies (Hyman 2010, 1). Russia in the 18th century was characterized by a gap between the educated elite, which used French as an everyday language, and ordinary people – petite bourgeoisie, merchants, clergy, peasantry, minor officials, impoverished noblemen (*raznochintsy*, literally, "men of mixed ranks") – with their traditional religiosity. These two parts of society seemed to live in different historical times: the first in modernity, the second in the Middle Ages. Even among the latter, however, there were some signs of Freethought, primarily in the form of blasphemy and/or critique of traditional religious rituals (Смилянская 2003).

Eighteenth-century freethinking, in both rational and mystical modes, did not reach the level of atheism understood as disbelief in the existence of God; it was merely a prologue for future debates. Nevertheless, the influence of the European Enlightenment as the Age of Reason should not be underestimated. The Russian Enlightenment, initiated by Peter the Great and strengthened by Catherine the Great, opened up a new intellectual perspective, which was aimed at the secular ideal of social activism (Billington

2010). The "irrationality" of the Russian Orthodox faith and the consequent decline of its social and intellectual authority (Raeff 1966, 153) began to become apparent to the educated elite, this being the first step on the way to the critical social thought of the Russian intelligentsia. The interweaving of political radicalism and atheism (Вороницын 1930) became a hallmark of the upcoming 19th century.

"Cursed questions" of the Russian intelligentsia and the choice of atheism

Russia's intellectual life in the 18th century was inspired by French Enlightenment philosophy. The authority was consequently transferred to German classical philosophy in the first part of the 19th century, which stimulated Russian thought for a long period of time. From the 1820s to the 1980s, the mastermind of the newborn Russian intelligentsia[2] was Schelling with his philosophy of revelation and then Hegel with the idea of the Absolute Spirit as the driving force of personal transformation and world history. According to Schelling, the natural world and human beings share the same substance; thus, the world is intelligible, and absolute knowledge is now possible for humans, not just for God (Berlin 1994; Chamberlain 2008). In the 1820s, the possibility of access to absolute knowledge inspired the circle of Wisdom Lovers (*lyubomudry* – a group of poets-aristocrats) and led them to believe that they were chosen by God to penetrate the mystery of nature and society and guide humanity towards a better future. The Wisdom Lovers, like most noblemen of their generation, were not irreligious, although they did not know many of the Orthodox Church doctrines but "awaited the inauguration of a new phase in world history, the reconciliation between man, nature, and the Absolute, or God, and they hoped to participate in that process" (Frede 2011, 36).

In the 1840s, Hegel's philosophy – the next intellectual paradigm for the new generation of intelligentsia – Vissarion Belinsky, Alexander Herzen, Nikolai Ogarev, Mikhail Bakunin and others – was interpreted in a way that individual self-development opened the doors to participating in the Absolute Spirit's work, aimed at the triumph of rationally organized society. Russia was very far from ideal. After the defeat of the Decembrist Revolt in 1825,[3] reactionary ideology and imperial politics were strengthened based on the officially proclaimed principle of "Orthodoxy, monarchism and populism" (*pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost*). In essence, this principle declared that Russia was an exclusively special state and nation, without any resemblance to the nations of Western Europe. From the official point of view, Europe had its own historical distinctions: Catholicism and Protestantism in religion, constitutionalism or republicanism in government, civil freedom and secularity in society. Russian ideology claimed this progress was a delusion that had led Europe toward revolution. Russia, it claimed, had remained free from those harmful influences and had preserved untouched

the traditions accumulated through the centuries. In terms of religious preferences, Russia was in a unique situation. Its Orthodox confession was borrowed from Byzantine sources, and therefore, the most hallowed traditions of the early church were preserved. Russia was considered free of the religious disturbances of Western Christendom.

The awakening of Russian social thought in the intelligentsia was a form of protest against the ideology of Imperial Russia, where political activity was strongly prohibited. Politics was transferred to the area of philosophy and literature, and the primary goal of intellectuals as understood by the intelligentsia was to elaborate a theory that would move reality nearer the ideal. Under the influence of German idealism, the questions of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God were inserted into the very heart of debates, and the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel seemed to be the prototype of "a new religion" (Berlin 1994).[4] As Victoria Frede argues, "The question of the existence of God, though a problem central to modern Western philosophy, took on a peculiarly intensive, existential quality in Russia. . . . It deepened into a struggle for the salvation of both the individual and the country as a whole" (Frede 2011, 3).[5]

The passion for philosophy had contradictory outcomes at times. For some philosophy was seen as the road toward religious recovery. For others, philosophy permitted unbelief and even direct theomachism. Two conflicting camps in the second half of the 19th century – the Westernizers (Alexander Herzen, Timofei Granovsky, Nikolai Ogaryov, Vasily Botkin et al.) and the Slavophiles (Alexei Khomyakov, Ivan Kireyevsky, Konstantin Aksakov, Yury Samarin et al.) – represented two opposing political and cultural-historical concepts. Westernizers accepted completely the reforms of Peter the Great and saw the future of Russia in progress on the Western path to modernity and secularism (Herzen 1956). Slavophiles believed in a unique Russian culture that arose on the spiritual basis of idealized Orthodoxy faithful to the original patterns of Christianity (Jakim and Bird 1998). In spite of controversies, both camps were based on German philosophy: Westernizers on Hegelian rationalism (viewing history as a result of humankind's intelligent creativity) and Slavophiles on Schellingian Romanticism (interpreting history as something that grows unconsciously through the people on the national soil), thus being an expression of the striving for moving beyond a national ideological agenda towards a universalist type of philosophy. In other words, "Westerners expressed the 'critical' and the Slavophiles the 'organic' moments of cultural-historical self-definition" (Florovsky 1979, 16).

The second half of the 19th century was characterized by a split between the nobility and the *raznochintzy*, who began to play a significant role in social-cultural life from the 1840s. The spiritual atmosphere in the 1860s, the time of Tsar Alexander II, was paradoxical. On the one side, there was the government implementing a number of liberal reforms (above all, the abolition of serfdom) and, on the other side, there was social thought, this

being a time when all previous cultural, moral and religious values were rejected. The epoch of *raznochintzy*'s nihilism had begun. While Westernizers and Slavophiles were immersed in philosophical debates concerning the past and present of Russia,[6] nihilists denied God, the soul, the spirit, ideas, standards and the highest values (Berdyaev 1969, 45). Nihilists believed that every effort should be made to emancipate human beings from prejudice and superstition, which included the common Orthodox faith (Leatherbarrow and Offord 2010).

In addition, the last decades of the 19th century were characterized by the opposite attitudes of educated classes (both nobility and *raznochintsy*) and ordinary people towards Orthodox Christianity. The politics of the Russian state over church affairs was based on the conservative ideology of the idealization of people's "faith", which needed to be preserved in its historical form and protected from the "demoralizing" influence of Western secular rationalism. Atheism (unbelief) was considered the incarnation of all possible sins. Thus, religious faith was moved into the spheres of instinctive emotions and pious feelings and turned into edifying folklore (Florovsky 1979).

Paradoxically, the "torchbearers" of nihilist social thought were the sons of the clergy. They typically received extensive training in Orthodox theology and then entered secular universities (Manchester 2008). Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Nikolai Dobrolubov (Chernyshevsky 2002; Dobrolyubov 2002), the two most influential thinkers in the 1860s, were both sons of provincial priests. They were also the first ones "to claim in print that God does not exist" (Frede 2011, 120), although allusively for censorial reasons. They were under the great influence of Ludwig Feuerbach's "The Essence of Christianity" (1841), in which he argued that the Christian God was merely a "projection" of human subjectivity. According to Feuerbach, dissatisfied with their inability to gratify their physical and emotional needs, humans projected them onto a higher being. The result was a human self-conception that was negative, worthless and sinful, in contrast to God, who was the opposite of these things and before whom human beings must abase themselves (Hyman 2010, 42). God was an "illusion", and to overcome religion meant to appropriate back the human essence, which had been alienated and hypostatized as "God".

Another source of Chernyshevsky's and Dobrolubov's atheism was the mid-19th-century German materialism of Carl Vogt, Ludwig Büchner and Jacob Moleschott. Making reference to the natural sciences and viewing intellectual activity as a purely biological process, they argued that there was no supernatural being; religion was nothing more than a symptom of physical and mental aberration. The adoption of these philosophical ideas resulted in the call for educated Russians to rid themselves of religious superstitions, to reject faith in a higher being and to take an active role in the transformation of Russia. Thus, atheism became an essential component of the movement towards social change. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolubov insisted that soon the new generation of *raznochintsy* (and the nobility as

well) – the "new people" decisively chosen to finish up with the past – would become the dominant force in Russia. In the 1870s, these "new people" – the populists (*narodniki*) – voluntarily traveled to Russian provinces to raise the "dark masses" to higher levels of consciousness and educate the people in order to give them a tool to overcome religious superstitions.

Nonetheless, nihilism could be recognized as a quasi-religious phenomenon. As Nikolai Berdyaev argued, it grew up on the "spiritual soil of Orthodoxy". (Berdyaev 1969, 45).[7] At the foundation of Russian nihilism lay the

> Orthodox . . . sense of the truth that 'the whole world lieth in wickedness,' the acknowledgment of the sinfulness of all riches and luxury, of all creative profusion in art and in thought. . . . Nihilism considers as a sinful luxury not only art, metaphysics and spiritual values, but religion also.
>
> (Berdyaev 1969, ibid.)

Nihilism, as a protest against official Orthodoxy, was an attempt to find a new social truth, which appeared to be based on Christianity but took a form that was far different from Christianity. The populist movement failed because its adherents not only met with persecution from the authorities but also were not even welcomed by the people themselves, who had a different outlook on life and different beliefs. The intelligentsia's embrace of materialism and rationalism had little effect on people's faith. The outcome was that the intelligentsia went over to terrorism. The result of the epoch of nihilism and the populism of the intelligentsia was the murder of Tsar Alexander II on 1 March 1881. This was the tragic climax of the one-on-one combat between Russian authority and the Russian intelligentsia.

Over the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Russia was characterized by intense debates on religious matters among writers, artists, church and secular academicians, educated aristocracy, clergy etc. The spectrum of attitudes towards religion varied dramatically: from the severe critique of official Orthodoxy by Leo Tolstoy and the quasi-religious movement of "non-resistance to evil by force" named after him (*tolstovstvo*) to Vladimir Soloviev's universal Christianity and the philosophy of unitotality (*vseedinstvo*) and from newborn Russian Marxists convinced that atheism was a predicate of revolution to discussions about a renewed Christianity, which took place under the auspice of the "Religious-Philosophical Society" in St. Petersburg in 1907 through 1917 (Kline 1968). The main concerns of the debates were the future of Russia and the role of the intelligentsia in the upcoming transformation of society.

The new wave of atheism was associated with Marxism, which was exported to Russia in the mid-1880s.[8] Georgi Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism, in his writings on religion and atheism, shared the idea of Marx and Engels that "*Religious* questions of the day have at the present time a social significance. It is no longer a question of *religious* interests as

such" (Marx and Engels 1845). In the 1909 collection of works entitled *On the So-Called Religious Quest in Russia* (*O tak nazyvaemykh religioznykh iskaniyakh v Rossii*), Plekhanov developed a critical concept of religion based on up-to-date research, particularly on the theory of the English anthropologist Edward Tylor.[9] Plekhanov was the first Russian author who produced a purely atheistic, "functional" definition of religion:

> *Religion is a more or less orderly system of concepts, sentiments and actions*. The concepts form the *mythological element* of religion, the sentiments belong to the domain of *religious feelings*, the actions to the sphere of *religious worship*, or, as it is otherwise called, of *cult*.
>
> (1909)

Plekhanov was particularly critical about two trends in Russian thought of the time: the "God-builders" (Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vladimir Bazarov, Alexander Bogdanov, Maxim Gorky), and the "God-seekers" (Dmitry Merezkovsky, Zinaida Gippius, Nikolay Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov). In his 1908 work *Religion and Socialism* (*Religia i sotsializm*), Lunacharsky argued that Marxism was a sort of "new religion", which elaborated Feuerbach's idea of loving human beings instead of worshipping God. God-seekers in their numerous publications proclaimed the idea of the reconciliation between religion and reason and the enhancement of life based on renewed Christianity. Plekhanov argued that, on the one hand, it was impossible to combine socialism and religion because socialism was hostile to any kind of religion, and, on the other hand, religion could not be reconciled with reason because there was no religion apart from a belief in a supernatural being (Миндлин 1984)

In their turn, God-seekers criticized the intelligentsia for a lack of seriousness towards religion and atheism. Sergei Bulgakov wrote in *Vekhi*:[10]

> The most striking feature of Russian atheism is its dogmatism, the religious frivolity, one might say, with which it is accepted. Until recently, Russian "educated" society simply ignored the problem of religion and did not understand its vital and exceptional importance. For the most part, it was interested in religion only insofar as the religious problem involved politics or the propagation of atheism. In matters of religion, our intelligentsia is conspicuously ignorant.
>
> (Bulgakov 1994, 31)

Thus, Russia approached the revolution in 1917 with a very controversial attitude towards religion. The pre-revolutionary social thought was characterized by the clash between two positions developed by the intelligentsia through the 19th century. The first was a philosophical interpretation of Christianity as a model for genuine self-fulfillment and transformation of Russia; the second was a total denial of religion in general and official

Orthodox Christianity in particular and the conviction that the eradication of religious faith was the ultimate condition of social and political change in the country.

Combating religion was therefore included in the actual agenda of the revolution. Vladimir Lenin wrote in the article "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion": "All modern religions and churches, all and of every kind of religious organizations are always considered by Marxism as the organs of bourgeois reaction, used for the protection of the exploitation and the stupefaction of the working class" (1909). Pre-revolutionary atheism was more emotional than rational. It had much more to do with the intelligentsia's discontent with the autocratic Russian state and its self-reflection than with challenging the truth of a theological doctrine. The Bolshevik Revolution gave new answers to the "cursed" questions of the Russian intelligentsia – the fate of Russia, the role of the intelligentsia and the existence of God – through implementing atheism in socio-political practice.

Soviet atheism in practice and theory

Prior to the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik Party regarded religion as a sign of people's "backwardness" (*nerazvitost*). It was consequently assumed that education and enlightenment would prove the illusiveness of religious superstitions. One of the first decrees of Soviet power was the Decree on the Separation of Church and State and School from Church, which came into force in January 1918. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federated Socialist Republic of 1918, "For the purpose of securing to the workers' real freedom of conscience, the church is to be separated from the state and the school from the church, and the right of religious and antireligious propaganda is accorded to every citizen" (Constitution of the Russian Federated Socialist Republic 1918, Article 2, Chapter 5). Thus, Russia was confirmed as a fully secular state. The legislation was initially targeted against the church's involvement in public ceremonies but did not mandate the persecution of believers or prohibit public worship. The policy of the state was aimed at the marginalization of religion rather that imposing atheism by force (Husband 2002).[11]

In the new Soviet reality, the Western understanding of the dichotomy of the private and public as the distinctive feature of secularization was radically reinterpreted. Religious convictions were not attributed to the private domain, but the battle against religious anachronisms was considered a highly public mission. Even in 1905, Vladimir Lenin wrote:

> We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned. . . . So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation

> of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to the lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs.
>
> (1905)

According to the Bolshevik Party Program adopted in 1919, the strategy of the Bolsheviks was to liberate "the working masses from religious superstitions and organize broad scientific-enlightening and anti-religious propaganda. There is consequently a need to avoid carefully any kind of assault on believers' feelings, which could lead toward the strengthening of religious fanaticism" (Программа 1919).[12] In the first years after the revolution, as William Husband underlines, "the Bolshevik Party directed the main thrust of its coercive and ideological anti-religious assault not against individual believers but against church hierarchs and the institutional and property base of religion in the country" (Husband 1998, 79). It was assumed that religion would gradually collapse by the natural order of things over the course of the successful construction of socialism.

As early as the beginning of the 1920s, however, the persistence of popular beliefs became evident. Atheism was thereby recognized as an important part of the Soviet ideology and political practice. Sonja Luehrmann marks out two coexisting models in the original design of Soviet atheism: "One was an idea of functional replacement, where secular forms superseded their earlier, religious equivalents. The other was that of constructing a qualitatively new society that relied on and celebrated human action" (2011, 8). Both models presupposed the minimizing of the private space on behalf of the public space. The idea of "functional replacement" was implemented in the Soviet practice of replacement of religious ceremonies by secular ones, public use of worship places for various nonreligious purposes, transformation of cemeteries into parks etc. (Жидкова 2012). A new type of human being – the new Soviet man – had to be liberated from everything that tended to prevent the progression towards Communism, including religion, which should be replaced by a secular, materialist worldview.[13]

A visible manifestation of the shift in the official political course over religion was the establishment of the League of the Militant Godless (1925–1947) – a voluntary public organization supported by the state and aimed at combating religion in all its manifestations, as well as strengthening its alternative, the scientific worldview. The main focuses of the league's activities were propagating atheism; disseminating scientific knowledge; producing antireligious literature, newspapers, and magazines;[14] organizing antireligious museums and exhibitions;[15] training specialists of propaganda elaborating secular rituals instead of religious ones etc. The league was very active, particularly before the Great Patriotic War (1941), although its activities were not always successful everywhere (Peris 1998).

As was mentioned earlier, according to Lenin's legacy, atheism was not supposed to be a private opinion or a result of existential doubt, but instead

a matter of collective responsibility, in the form of organized and institutionalized unbelief. As Daniel Peris writes, "in Bolshevik political culture, a change in worldview was not left primarily to the believer (or non-believer) but had to be expressed and administered in bureaucratic forms. . . . Unorganized sentiments were not acknowledged to exist" (1998, 8). The chief Soviet God-fighter, Emelian Yaroslavsky, president of the League of the Militant Godless from 1925 to 1943, saw the general task of antireligious struggle as being very practical:

> To put a coherent scientific communist system, embracing and explaining questions, the answers to which the peasant working mass still sought in religion, in place of the religious outlook. It is especially important to tie such statements together with the transformation of daily life and technology, economic conditions, electrification, introducing a better system of crop rotation, soil improvement and other activities, which improve the hard work of workers and peasants.
>
> (1924)

Obviously, such radical transformation of the societal fabric, as well as of human nature, could not be a matter of private concern; on the contrary, it assumed a high level of public organization and institutionalization.

To strengthen argumentation in propagating atheism among the citizens of the Soviet Union, the league initiated academic studies of religion. Academic research was developing in two main fields: first, critical studies on the origins, varieties and history of religions and second, tracing the history of atheism in Europe and Russia in order to assert the steady atheist and materialist tradition in Russia and elsewhere. In a 1922–1923 discussion between the journalist Ivan Skvortsov-Stepanov and the historian Mikhail Pokrovsky, the former argued that religion originated from the relations of production in primitive society, whereas the latter considered the fair of finitude the main source of religion. The discussion predetermined the consequent domination of the societal approach in Soviet religious studies (i.e., the emphasis on searching for the social preconditions of religion) over the psychological one (Антонов 2013). The psychology of faith, religious feelings, characteristics of religious personality etc. became subjects of special academic interest in the 1950 and 1960s.

As concerns the second field, Soviet historians undertook serious efforts to project the Bolshevik type of atheism backwards into history. They interpreted atheism as a natural product of Western scientific materialism, which was adopted by progressive Russian thinkers, as well as the attendant feature of class struggle between slaveholders and slaves, feudalists and serfs, capitalists and the proletariat. The historian Ivan Voronitzyn, in the preface to his *History of Atheism* (*Istoriia ateizma*),[16] described his objectives as the full depiction of the battle against religion in the past, the explanation of this battle over social conditions and the interest of social groups and tracing

the appraisal of Freethought along with the development of materialist philosophy (Вороницын 1930, 4). Alexander Lukachevsky,[17] the deputy to the president of the League of the Militant Godless, stressed the importance of the socio-historical context in studying religion (1929). Following Lenin's advice to use the best writings of the atheists and freethinkers of the past, an impressive number of Russian translations of European thinkers were published in the second part of the 1920s, including the French philosophers of the Enlightenment, Lucretius, Giordano Bruno, Erasmus, Benedict Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, John Toland, Descartes, Ludwig Feuerbach, Ernst Haeckel etc.,[18] along with Marx, Engels, Lenin and Plekhanov's works on religion. Pre-revolutionary Russian atheism became a subject of academic interest in the 1960s (Коган 1962).

The official ideology proclaimed that, by 1929, the year of the "Great Turn" (*Velikii perelom*) in the building of socialism, the social roots of religion seemed to have exploded and heralded the liberation of the working masses from the influence of religion.[19] Inasmuch as the Cultural Revolution of the 1930s promoted the growth of mass atheism, the need to lift up the level of scientific research of religion and strengthen atheistic argumentation was proclaimed (Шахнович and Чумакова 2016). The Great Patriotic War, when the patriotic potential of religion (Orthodoxy) was required, and the postwar reconstruction period focused attention away from atheism.

The new "scientific" stage in the history of Soviet atheism, which followed the "militant" one, was kick-started in 1954 with the Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on massive shortcomings of scientific-atheistic propaganda and measures of its improvement (*O krupnykh nedostatkakh v nauchno-ateisticheskoi propaganda i merakh ee uluchshenia*) and on oversights in carrying out scientific-atheistic propaganda among the population (*Ob oshibkakh v provedenii nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagandy sredi naselenia*). The resolutions pointed out the importance of searching for new ways to overcome religious superstitions. It became clear that, in spite of practical measures (closing down churches and repressions of clergy and believers) and the atheistic enlightenment, religion was far from disappearing, even under the pressure of scientific progress and socialist modernization.

"Scientific atheism" differed from the "militant" one primarily due to its sophisticated nature. The Department of History and Theory of Atheism and Religion was established in Moscow and Kiev State Universities in 1959 and then in other universities in the USSR. As James Thrower indicates, " 'scientific atheism' was proclaimed a formal component of the Marx-Leninist *Weltanschauung* and developed accordingly". This meant a "shift from an ideological to a philosophical presentation of atheism" (1983, 135, 141). Courses in "scientific atheism" became compulsory in the curriculum of higher education all over the country in 1964. The purpose was not only to criticize religion but also to emphasize the positive aspects of atheism as part of a materialist worldview, as well as the source of the elaboration of

everyday values. As Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock notes, in the 1960s, "Soviet atheism . . . reoriented itself from the battle against religion towards the battle for Soviet spiritual life" (2014).[20]

Scientific atheism was proclaimed "the highest form of atheism" compared that of the French materialists of the 18th century and the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century. As William van den Bercken concludes, "The categorical character of Soviet ideological atheism is also accentuated by its view of itself as the one true atheism, the true unbelief. For in fact, it dismisses other forms of atheism as inconsistent and unscientific" (1985). It was assumed that a "scientific" understanding of religion was only possible if it was based on Marx-Leninism; for "scientific atheism", religion was nothing but an ideological reflection of physical and sociological life (Thrower 1983, 311). Thus, the "scientificity" of "scientific atheism" was guaranteed by the very fact of, first, belonging to Marx-Leninism and, second, by its rootedness in the Soviet way of life.

The Institute of Scientific Atheism in the structure of the Academy of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was established in 1964. Its main objectives were systematic academic research of religion and atheism, examination and mapping of actual religiosity and people's attitude towards religion, coordination of the local atheistic propagandists and educators, training specialists of professional teachers of atheism, sociological investigations etc. (Smolkin-Rothrock 2009). The Institute of Scientific Atheism published the periodical *Issues of Scientific Atheism* (*Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, 1966–1989), which succeeded *Issues of the History of Religion and Atheism* (*Voprosy istorii religii I ateizma*, 1950–1964), previously published by the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The latter included articles on the history of religion, atheism and Freethought, especially in pre-revolutionary Russia, and combating religious superstitions in the Soviet Union. The spectrum of the former was incredibly wide: from the history of religion in Russia and the Soviet Republics to methods of atheistic propaganda; from Western theories of secularization to critical analysis of contemporary Christian theology; from sociology of religion to psychology of religion; from the legacy of Marx, Engels and Lenin to new religious movements.

In the last decades of the Soviet Union, an important role in disseminating atheism among the wider population was played by the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, which was founded in 1947 and, in 1963, renamed the All-Union *Znanie* Society (Froggatt 2006). From the 1960s through the 1980s, *Znanie* was assigned to promote the atheistic worldview through providing lectures to all the groups of the population in every corner of the state and to produce a wide spectrum of periodicals and brochures. As Sonja Luehrmann indicates, "the assumption was that religious decline would result from the spread of knowledge about the advances of Soviet science. . . . The Society pitted science against religion in a rhetoric of 'knowledge' versus 'faith'" (2015, 7).

Znanie's journal *Science and Religion* (*Nauka i religiia*, from 1959 through the present) played a unique role in the late Soviet ideological landscape being the:

> primary Soviet periodical charged with articulating Marxist-Leninist answers to spiritual questions. . . . It was a space where questions about religion, atheism, and spiritual life could be debated – and not just by the ideological establishment (party bureaucrats, academics, the militant atheists of the previous generation, and the new generation of Soviet social scientists), but also by the ordinary citizens to whom the journal gave voice.
>
> (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 173)

Thus, by the 1980s, "scientific atheism" had become a highly elaborated, logically coherent, speculative system that included four main sections: studying religion from Marx-Leninist positions, a history of atheism, a critique of religion based on contemporary science and "dialectical materialism" and issues with overcoming religion and the dissemination of the scientific worldview (Угринович 1985, 6). Dmitrii Ugrinovitch, one of the leading Soviet "scientific atheists", underlined that its peculiarity consisted of the "organic unity of both critical and positive sides". Limiting "scientific atheism" to its positive side led to dissolving into other Marx-Leninist philosophical disciplines – dialectical and historical materialism (Угринович 1985, 5). In fact, "scientific atheism" as an official ideology seemed to dissolve after the collapse of the Soviet Union along with other sections of Marx-Leninism, and a great many of its promoters' writings are now forgotten. Nevertheless, a significant number of works, especially in the field of the history of religion, have outlived Soviet times and remain of interest up until now. The best examples are the works of Nikolai Nikol'sky (Никольский 1931), Abraham Ranovitch (Ранович 1959), Sergei Tokarev (Токарев 1964), Joseph Kryveliev (Крывелев 1975–1976) and others.

In general, "scientific atheism" as part of the Soviet universalist project claimed religion as a tool to substitute genuine human relationships with alienated forms, in which a person loses his or her identity by delegating it to the outside religious authority, thus following the tradition of interpreting religion in the German classical philosophy of the 19th century. The reappropriation of human essence meant the ability of the rationalist perception and the mastering of the world and of rational disciplined activity. The very possibility of rational knowledge was seen as a vivid manifestation of genuine human nature, a passionate conviction in the rationalistic design of the universe and in the human capability of its rational reconstruction. Thus, "scientific atheism" was based first, on the belief in the final victory of science over religion; second, on the deep conviction that human beings are the only constructive agents of the historical process; third, on the priority of the *collectivist* belief in scientific and technological progress over *individual*

religious superstitions that might be temporarily accepted in the phase of Communism construction only as "anachronisms", doomed to vanish in the near future. It was quite optimistic on the perspectives of liberating Soviet citizens from religion, which chained their creative potential by promoting a belief in supernatural powers. It was assumed that members of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League had to present their atheistic worldview both openly and persuasively.

In reality, the gradual separation of the public domain from the private sphere was an important feature of the post-Stalin development of the Soviet state. In contrast to the Western model, the Soviet public space was not a place to discuss common interests and the values of individuals, but rather a place to conform to the state interests without debate. In its turn, the private space became a way to hide private interests from state ideological control. Reflecting on the differences between European secularity (which never suppressed private forms of religious life) and the Soviet one, Andrei Shishkov points out "hyper-privatization" as an important feature of the latter. In the Soviet case, the main vector of the secularization process was directed towards elimination of religion, not just from the public sphere but from the private lives of citizens. Individual religiosity was therefore officially regarded as an antisocial activity, damaging professional careers and all forms of participation in public life. As a result, religion went even deeper into the secret private life of the person (Шишков 2012, 167–168).

Was the attempt to minimize the role of religion in society and the personal lives of people successful, or was the Soviet reality nothing more than a "nationwide *Potemkin* village of atheism" (Peris 1998, 9)? To answer this question, it is important to distinguish between institutional religion and private beliefs and practices. The Soviet state was much more successful in the extermination of the former than of the latter. Even in Soviet times, atheism never fully dominated mass consciousness as the official ideology would have had us believe. Declared atheism was, in many cases, merely a conformist reflection of the current political-ideological situation. "Scientific atheism" never fully became the "people's belief"; it was mainly limited to urbanites with a high educational level. Many ordinary Soviets always kept religious beliefs: in the mid-1960s, according to official statistics, from 15% to 20% of the urban population and from 30% to 35% of rural populations were confirmed believers (Smolkin-Rothrock 2009).

Since Khrushchev's "thaw" in the 1960s, a great number of the Soviet urban intelligentsia experienced a religious "revival" as a form of social and spiritual protest against the Soviet political regime. This "revival" found expression in the practice of religious rituals (usually practiced in secret), in the zeal found in the religious and religious-philosophical literature of Western and Russian origin, in the interest in collecting religious antiquities (icons)[21] and in the works of renowned authors and film directors.[22] The revival pointed to the religious needs of particular strata of society that were underestimated or ignored by Soviet officials. The theory that religion was

a product of people's backwardness to be overcome by scientific-atheistic education consequently failed.

Thus, the Soviet state conceptualized and deployed "religion" and "atheism" in different historical contexts for different political, social, and cultural projects (Smolkin 2018, 10). Generally, the history of Soviet atheism is the process of its transformation from the battle against religion towards the construction of a new spirituality:

> Soviet secularity was not just an empty space left behind by the forced marginalization of religion but a complex interaction of competing forces – modernization and scientific-technological revolution, religion and spiritual culture – all taking place in the mercurial political landscape of late socialism.
>
> (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 176; see also Smolkin 2018)

It had lost its credit with the transformation of the socio-cultural context in post-Soviet Russia.

The new coming of atheism?

As Alexei Yurchak notes, "Although the [Soviet] system's collapse had been unimaginable before it began, it appeared unsurprising when it happened" (2006, 1). Nevertheless, it would not be an overstatement to say that, in 1988, there was no sign that religion would soon occupy such a salient place in Russia's societal landscape and that the search for the new identity of Russia would include the restoration of religion as a source of "traditional" Russian spirituality. Accordingly, the place of atheism was marginalized, and it was even interpreted as an attempt to create a system of values that lay outside the historical spiritual foundation of Russia. The tremendous shift also took place on the individual level: in 2013, according to a Levada-Center poll, 70% of the population of Russia considered themselves Orthodox, about 10% adherents of other religions and about 17% nonbelievers (Общественное мнение 2013). The 2013 poll of the "Public Opinion" Foundation (*Fond "Obshchestvennoe mnenie"* [FOM]) estimated the number of nonbelievers at 25% (Кожевина 2013). A recent poll from Levada-Center indicates that 22% of people are indifferent towards religion (Церковь и государство 2016).

There is an ongoing debate among Russian scholars of religion concerning the methods and criteria of defining and counting the number of believers and nonbelievers. Some researchers consider the self-identification of respondents as a reliable criterion while others believe that it is critical to participate in religious practices (Филатов and Лункин 2011). The numbers presented by the sociological polls differ dramatically: from more than 70% of self-described believers to 4% to 5% of church membership and attendance. Therefore, the religious situation in Russia could be best described as

"believing without belonging": "In that respect, at least, the Russian case seems far more analogous to Western Europe than might, at first glance, appear to be the case" (Freeze 2015, 6–7). Nevertheless, as Alexander Agajanian underlines, religion in Russia today "is unquestionably a major factor not only for those who regularly practice and observe religion, but is also important and an esteemed reference point for a massive part of the non-religious population" (2011, 17). People usually express a high level of support for religious organizations and activities and, in general, regard religion as a positive factor in the consolidation of society.

According to the Constitution of 1993, Russia, for the first time in its history, is defined as a "secular state" where "no religion may be established as a state or obligatory one" (Section I, Chapter 1, Article 14). In fact, what is in use today is the Soviet technique of excluding religion from the public space, but with the opposite sign. In Soviet times, the state considered religion in general and Orthodoxy in particular as anachronisms that would disappear, or should be made to disappear, in the wake of the emerging Communist society. It therefore used all the powers in its arsenal to exclude religion from the public space. Atheism had served as a champion of Soviet exclusiveness, and combating religion was seen as essentially a public goal. Now, suddenly, not only had Russian authorities found themselves in unity with the leadership of its former nemesis, but it had actually recognized the Russian Orthodox Church as the embodiment of the Russian national idea, the major exponent of people's hope for a better future. As John and Carol Garrard (2008, ix) argue, since the collapse of Communism, the ROC has been filling the vacuum once occupied by "scientific atheism", reconstituting a national belief system in its own image.

Sonja Luehrmann (2005) stresses an interesting phenomenon concerning the methods of filling the vacuum, which she calls "recycling": namely, reusability of social capital – the energy of former atheists who seek to find their place in new societal reality through a radical shift in the ideological paradigm. She demonstrates this idea with the example of former Soviet promoters of "scientific atheism" – so-called methodicians, people who were in charge of interpreting the official ideology to ordinary people. After the collapse of Communism, the skills of those propagandists – journalists, teachers, managers, artists etc. – were easily adapted to post-Soviet reality, and they became active promoters of various religious ideas (Orthodox primarily). It is not incidental that the most active promoters of the "unique Russian religious spirituality" at present are former "scientific atheists" – deputies of the state *Duma* (Parliament), governmental officials, columnists, schoolteachers, educators, social scientists etc. Luehrmann concludes:

> Soviet secularity could never quite exclude religion, and post-Soviet religiosity relies on the secular training and skills of former methodicians. We should thus think of the religious and the secular not so much

> as characteristics of long historical eras that succeed each other, but as sites of engagement that alternate and overlap in the lives of both societies and individuals.
>
> (2011, 199)

In the academic domain, discussion of the role, relevance and validity of Soviet "scientific atheism" is far from complete. Discussion about the legacy of Soviet "scientific atheism" and its influence on religious studies in Russia was recently initiated by the authors of a collection of articles under the titles "The Science about Religion", "Scientific Atheism" and Religious Studies: Problems of Scientific Study of Religion in Russia of the Twentieth–Twenty-First Centuries (*"Nauka o religii", Nauchnuy ateism", "Religiovedenie": aktual'nye problemy nauchnogo izuchenia religii v Rossii XX – nachala XXI v.*) (Антонов 2014). Their criticism of Soviet atheism is based on a presumption about its purely ideological nature and political bias. In response, Marianna Shakhnovitch points out there were many honest researchers amongst the ranks of Communist Party propagandists of atheism who made a significant contribution to the "science of religion". "Scientific atheism" was, in fact, a Soviet version of religious studies (Шахнович 2015). The discussion[23] proves the need for an objective analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet religious studies in their particular socio-cultural context.

The position of an atheist in Russia today is not so much a "militant God-fighter" or a promoter of "scientific" rejection of religious superstitions, but rather an atheist for "inward use", a more personalized atheist or simply "a nonbeliever", someone who denies belief in God, although confident that religion is useful for the spiritual health of society. At the same time, as Kimmo Kääriäinen, Dmitry Furman, and Viacheslav Karpov state, "there have been believers who have kept their faith at times of very stormy atheist onsets, and there are atheists in the post-Soviet period who have survived after the blow of the religious wave, and have not betrayed their beliefs" (Фурман et al. 2007, 49). They conclude that people who now consider themselves atheists are truer atheists than the conformists of the Soviet period, because they have to identify themselves in opposition to the official trend of recognizing [traditional] religion as one of the major socio-cultural factors.

Alek Epstein reminds us that atheism is usually formatted as the antithesis to the dominant religion and bears the features of a negated entity (Эпштейн 2015). The history of 19th-century Russia demonstrates the truth of the inseparable bond of atheism to Russian Orthodoxy. The paradox of Soviet "scientific atheism" is that it was supposed to be a temporary enterprise aimed at the elimination of its subject. Atheism is only sustainable, however, when the subject of its critique exists. Accordingly, one might assume that the increase in religiosity, as well as the promotion of the idea that religion was the only legitimate depository of moral values, may have caused the revival of atheism in public and private spaces. The recent Pussy Riot case

(Uzlaner 2014), as well as the campaign for the restitution of church properties, is an impressive demonstration of such a revival. There are some signs of the popularity of the so-called new atheism in Russia. Recently, the writings of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris have been translated and published. There is a Russian branch of "the Brights" movement with the website http://brights-russia.org, which is aimed at the dissemination of the scientific worldview and the enlightenment of society. In addition, there are an increasing number of social networks (for example, the "Atheist" group in the network "V kontakte" with about 700,000 subscribers: https://vk.com/atheist__blog) and websites (for example, the site of the "*Zdravomyslie*" foundation), which promotes atheism and highlights cases of violation of freedom of conscience.

The post-Soviet religious landscape in Russia at present is highly pluralistic and diverse, and religious faith is one possibility among traditional, nontraditional, nonreligious and atheist alternatives, as in many other places in the world. On the individual level, it is not so much that religion conquers atheism. Both religion and atheism, as stratified value systems, actually retreat in confusion under the pressure of spiritualities of different types, mixed up in eclectic ways. Their main source is not traditional or nontraditional religion, but mass culture. These beliefs form unsystematic, uncoordinated, undetermined and unstable combinations, with constantly changing elements, including ones from various religious traditions, old and new. The opposite point of view could consequently be more accurately defined not as a-theism, but rather as Freethought. Finally, taking into account the swapping places of religion and atheism in the history of 20th-century Russia, it would be premature to predict if any particular religious or secular worldview will be able to predominate the country's public consciousness in the near future.

Notes

1 The 1,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia was officially celebrated in 1988; it was a sign of the so-called religious revival in contemporary Russia.

2 The word *intelligentsia* began to be widely used in the 1860s, but the roots of the concept can be traced back to the end of the 18th century (Raeff 1966). Victoria Frede writes: "Intelligentsia is identified with a set of expectations, articulated in ever more pressing terms during the nineteenth century, that to be an educated person brought with it a certain obligation toward the nation and toward humanity. Being a member of the intelligentsia meant holding oneself and others to this standard: Russia's educated minority believed it was called on – morally obligated – to point Russia and the world at large toward a better future" (Frede 2011, 14). See also Billington (2010).

3 The Decembrist Revolt took place on 26 December 1825, when a group of military officers refused to swear allegiance to Tsar Nicholas after the death of his father Alexander I. Five leaders of the revolt were then executed and many were exiled to Siberia. The martyrdom of the leaders of the revolt provided a source of inspiration to succeeding generations of Russian nobility and intelligentsia.

4 As Isaiah Berlin writes, in the 19th century, Russian intelligentsia under the influence of German idealism saw its calling as the following: “The duty of man was . . . to understand the texture, the ‘go’, the principle of life of all there is, to penetrate the soul of the world . . . to grasp the hidden, ‘inner’ plan of the universe, to understand his own place in it, and to act accordingly. . . . History was an enormous river, the direction of which could, however, be observed only by people with a capacity for a special kind of deep, inner contemplation” (Berlin 1994, 120–121).
5 The perfect illustration of the extraordinary significance that was attributed to the problem of the existence of God in 19th century Russia is Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Ivan Karamazov represents atheism and his brother Alyosha belief in God.
6 With the exception of Alexander Herzen, who was actively involved in the political struggle.
7 Vasilii Zenkovsky refers to Russian nihilism as the “secular equivalent” of the religious worldview. In his view, secularism becomes either theomachism or god-seeking; even if “nihilists” accept atheism, their atheism is impetuous and passionate and tends to shift into fanatical sectarianism (Zenkovsky 2014).
8 According to Karl Marx’s celebrated definition, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness” (Marx 1843). Thus, the real struggle is not against religion, but with the world that produces religion; the struggle against religion is placed within the wider context of the struggle for the total liberation of mankind (Thrower 1983, 18–19).
9 Plekhanov’s reference to the Russian edition of Edward Burnett Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*, which was published in Saint Petersburg in 1897, is an example of the wide spread of European religious studies in Russia at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Plekhanov 1909; Меньшикова, Яблоков 2010).
10 *Vekhi* (*Landmarks*) – a collection of essays about the Russian intelligentsia published in 1909 (Vekhi 1994).
11 In a letter to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of Communist Party, concerning the expropriation of the Orthodox Church’s valuables in aid of the victims of the famine of 1921–1922, Lenin wrote: “We must pursue the removal of church property by any means necessary in order to secure for ourselves a fund of several hundred million gold rubles. . . . We must precisely now smash the Black Hundreds clergy most decisively and ruthlessly and put down all resistance with such brutality that they will not forget it for several decades. . . . The greater the number of representatives of the reactionary clergy . . . that we succeed in shooting on this occasion, the better” (1922). For a thorough analysis of Lenin’s views on religion and atheism, see Mikhail Smirnov’s *Religia I Biblia v trudakh V. I. Lenina – novyi vzgliad na starui temu* (Смирнов 2011).
12 The 1919 Program remained in force until 1961. The call to avoid an assault on religious feelings failed to correspond with the socio-political reality, which was much more hostile, especially towards the Orthodox Church. Dmitrii Pospielovsky in *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies* (1987) depicts the repressions against clergy and ordinary believers in Soviet times.
13 The concept of “house-commune” perfectly illustrates the idea of a new Soviet man. In the house-commune, individual flats did not contain kitchens and bathrooms and eliminated the individual running of the household such as cleaning, washing and cooking. The very idea popular in large Soviet cities in the mid-1920s was based on total socialization and publicness of house-commune inhabitants.

14 For instance, the newspaper and journal under the similar name "*Bezbozhnik*", the journal "*Antireligioznik*" and many others. In the 1920s and 1930s, hundreds of antireligious pamphlets were produced. The most popular was Emelian Yaroslavsky's book entitled *The Bible for Believers and Unbelievers* (*Bibliia dlia veruiushchikh i neveruiushchikh*), which revealed the mythological origins of biblical stories and mocked church rituals and priests.
15 The State Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism (currently the State Museum of the History of Religion) was organized in Saint Petersburg in 1930 (see Шахнович and Чумакова 2014).
16 Voronitzyn's research of the history of atheism remains valid through today.
17 Alexander Lukachevsky, along with many other activists of the League of the Militant Godless, was repressed and executed in 1937.
18 Apart from philosophical writings, a great number of Western Freethought writers were translated into Russian and published in the 1920s, including Giovanni Boccaccio, Charles De Coster, Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, Anatole France, Ethel Lilian Voynich, Upton Sinclair, Herbert Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Rabindranath Tagore, Lion Feuchtwanger, Jaroslav Hašek and others.
19 The Cultural Revolution in 1928 and 1929 also brought about a return to repressions, as churches were closed and clergy subjected to arrest and execution. New legislation further restricted religious freedoms and eroded much of the earlier commitment to freedom of conscience (Husband 2002, 137).
20 In parallel with the elaboration of theoretical atheism, the new wave of repressions against all confessions in the USSR took place from the late 1950s through the beginning of the 1960s (Bourdeaux 1981; Nikol'skaya 2009, 2017).
21 See Vladimir Soloukhin's *Black Boards* (*Chernye doski,* 1969).
22 For example, Andrei Tarkovsky's "Andrei Rublev" (1966), and Larisa Shepit'ko's "Ascension" ("*Voskhozhdenie*," 1976).
23 For more, see Elbakyan (2015).

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12 Slovakia as a country without atheism but with a history of atheization

Miroslav Tížik

Introduction[1]

For those interested in the study of atheism, Freethought or nonbelievers, Slovakia presents a rather particular case. For about half a century (1948–1989), the society developed under the structural influence of the materialist and secular regime of governance of the Communist Party (in a system often referred to as state socialism), but according to various surveys and censuses, there remain today relatively few people in Slovakia with atheist attitudes towards the world. In addition, results from surveys conducted during the period of the materialist state socialist regime demonstrate that the situation then was the same. An important change took place, however, in the influence and role of the atheist movement between the period of state socialism and its collapse in 1989. If atheism and Freethought found many sources of inspiration and impulses for diffusion after World War II, and likewise in the preceding periods of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a radical shift took place after 1989, and atheism lost public legitimacy as a component of the democratic system. In order to better understand this situation and analyze the spread of atheism or secularism in Slovakia, it is important to take into account multiple dimensions of analysis.

The first indicator I will analyze involves relations between the church (or particular churches) and the state over the last 100 years. One important aspect of this relation is the fact that, during the last two centuries, Slovakia has been a part of multiple state entities: the Habsburg monarchy (until 1867), the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy (1867–1918), the Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939), the Nazi client Slovak Republic (1939–1945), postwar Czechoslovakia (1945–1948), the so-called Peoples' Czechoslovakia (1948–1960), the Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic (1960–1990) and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (1990–1993), and only after 1993 did the nation-state begin to function as an autonomous political and self-governed entity. As a second indicator, I will investigate intellectual movements and the influence of intellectual leaders in the spread of Freethought, atheism and secular humanism in various historical periods. As a

third indicator, I will identify the spread of ideas among the general population of Slovakia.

The aim of this study is therefore to obtain detailed insight into the state of religiosity and secular worldviews in Slovakia at three levels of analysis: a) to investigate changes in the state's approach towards religion and nonreligious thought, b) to study the various movements and intellectual figures who have spread atheism, secular humanism or Freethought and finally c) to consider the range of worldviews of the Slovak population.

The period before the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918

One way to explain the current very weak state of Freethought and atheism in Slovakia is by reference to the historical role of religion in Slovak society. Over the past 200 years, the territory of present-day Slovakia was part of various state entities with very different political regimes and different relations between church and state. Until 1867, Slovakia was an integral part of the Empire of the Catholic Habsburgs. During this period, there was an alliance between the Catholic Church and the ruling family. During this same period, however, the empire also underwent secularist reforms instituted by the Enlightenment-influenced ruler Joseph II (1741–1790, reigned 1780–1790), which weakened the role of religion and especially of the Catholic Church in the monarchy. In the Hungarian part of the monarchy (including today's Slovakia), there was an important tradition of Protestantism, much stronger and more influential than in the Austrian part of the monarchy (which included the Czech Lands), where the process of re-Catholization in response to the Reformation went deeper and was more complete. Two Protestant traditions were influential in the Hungarian part of the monarchy – Calvinism, chiefly in central Hungary, and Lutheranism in upper Hungary, covering the territory of today's Slovakia. In that period, the Slovak National Movement was established with two branches, both connected to religion and composed mostly by priests – one branch was led by the Catholic Anton Bernolák (1762–1813) while the other was led by the Lutheran Ján Kollár (1793–1852). In the time when the Slovak National (and at the same time religious) Movement was establishing itself, the first figures of the freethinking movement appeared as well. The most significant individual who introduced some secular ideas, or ideas critical towards religion, was the Catholic priest Ján Horárik (1808–1864), who came close to humanistic (called anthropological by some authors) atheism and was strongly opposed to Catholic and Protestant ecclesiasticism.[2] Horárik came to be influenced by the Young Hegelian movement and converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism in 1845 after the law changed to allow changing one's religion (but still did not permit individuals to be without a religion). He contacted liberal German Lutheran theologians and philosophers and became a member of a "free community" in Halle (Germany), which was an important part

of the radical antichurch movement. After his return to the monarchy, he worked as a journalist in Hungarian-language newspapers, due to which his influence on the Slovak reading public was not very great. He only entered the intellectual history of the freethinking and atheist movement a century later, in the middle of the 20th century, after the first translation of his book, at the very beginning of Communist Party rule in Czechoslovakia.

During the 19th century, the Slovak National Movement looked to the imperial capital Vienna for support against the Hungarian assimilation effort (a process known as "Magyarization"), which was directed at ethnic Slovaks in the Hungarian part of the monarchy. After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and the creation of a dual monarchy, Slovakia was more deeply integrated into the autonomous Hungarian part of the state. The Hungarian political and legal systems encouraged the creation of a Hungarian political nation (*Natio hungarica*, see Miskolczy 2011) united by the Hungarian language and a more secular legal framework than was present in the Austrian part of the empire. In this period, a kind of Catholic-Lutheran dualism formed in the Slovak National Movement, especially after the *Matica Slovenská* association was founded and led by Catholic and Lutheran priests and intellectuals.[3] After the compromise, two processes began. A dual system of church-state relations was implemented in Austria-Hungary, and a process of ethnic homogenization took place within Hungary. In contrast to the Catholic Austrian part of the monarchy, Hungary was a religiously more pluralistic territory with a strong influence of Protestant churches (Lutheran and Calvinist) and a liberal religious policy.

The few Slovak cultural and educational institutions founded during the 1860s – *Matica Slovenská* and three Slovak secondary schools – were abolished in 1875. In view of the fact that the modernization of Hungary was interconnected with Magyarization and that declaring Slovak nationality was an obstacle to individuals' progress up the social ladder, the Slovak nation lost the loyalty of much of its middle classes and many intellectuals. The basis of the Slovak national and intellectual movement was provided by Catholic and Lutheran priests, and they were generally opposed to the liberal tendencies that were connected to the Hungarian National Movement.[4] The role of religion in Slovakia, in both its Catholic and Lutheran forms, was, in terms of opposition, deeply connected to the Hungarian political tendency to denationalize (that is, Magyarize) the Slovak-speaking population of Upper Hungary. The churches, therefore, came to be important sources of Slovak national and collective identity in religiously pluralistic and more institutionally secularized Hungary.

Freethought and atheist tendencies began to appear in some workers' associations and political parties, but they represented only a minor phenomenon in the context of Slovak society as a whole. Despite many differences and tensions among religious denominations, the denominations were unanimous in their attitude towards new ideas connected to liberalism as well as to Freethought and atheism. Each expression of modern liberal

thinking met with resistance, and eventually freethinkers, liberals and atheists were heavily criticized both by the churches and by representatives of the Slovak National Movement, who saw a danger of national apostasy in attempts to weaken religiosity.

Freethought found support, however, from another source: the Czech Lands. In the period between 1905 and 1915, the Czech movement *Voľná myšlienka* (Freethought) was established in Slovakia, and in 1913, another Czech movement, *Zväz socialistických monistov* (Union of Socialist Monists), an oppositional movement that worked within the framework of Freethought, was established in Slovakia.[5]

Slovak intellectual and cultural life in this period (including the activity of the Slovak National Movement) was still deeply connected to religion. Most Slovak intellectuals before 1918 were either Christian clergy (mostly Catholics or Lutherans) or came from clerical families in the Lutheran milieu. The spread of new ideas was also deeply connected to the intellectuals' confessional background. The most significant figures who introduced a secular humanist approach to the world were, at the beginning of the 20th century, Lutheran priests Ján Maliarik (1869–1946) and Ján Lajčiak (1875–1918) and Czech journalist Edmund Borek (1880–1924), who lived in Slovakia from 1906.[6] Their ideas and works were not well received during their lifetimes, however. They instead met with rejection and resistance, which negatively affected their social lives. Although they had some intellectual allies and were known as public intellectuals of a sort, they were marginalized not only within their churches but also in society more broadly.

One of the sources of secularist ideas was the Social Democratic political movement. A group of Social Democrats began to struggle with the Catholic Church for the hearts and minds of workers in the industrial and urban environment in Upper Hungary at the turn of the 20th century. The Catholic Church was also interested in such workers thanks to so-called Christian Socialism. There were social, tactical and strategic issues at the center of the conflict between these two groups (Holec 2011, 61). According to Holec, the Slovak Social Democrats considered religious beliefs to be a private matter of every individual, and their goal was not to secularize or get rid of workers' faith. They paradoxically used the symbolism of Christian events to mobilize the proletariat. They mainly criticized the church for supporting the existing system. Despite the mentioned tactical and intellectual setting, all other issues aside, religion really became one of the key arguments in the ideological confrontation between Social Democracy and the other different trends connected to the church and religion (Holec 2011, 61).

In the period before World War I, there was one additional important source of Freethought and atheist ideas. As Holec stresses, the antireligious and antichurch tendencies were brought into the Slovak Social Democratic movement from outside, mostly from the Czech Lands. Only a few Slovak liberals, who were influenced by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (*Hlasistické hnutie*), and some of the most educated Social Democrats, who were

mainly of Czech origin (Václav Chlumecký and Edmund Borek), were brave enough to criticize religious dogmas, clericalism, the church, the priests and the hierarchy of the church, but they were not criticizing religion in itself (Holec 2011, 62). It should be emphasized that some Slovak students were also educated at Czech universities in Prague and were connected to the Czech national and intellectual milieu. Most of these students, however, were also connected to the Slovak National Movement, especially its Lutheran part.

An influential current of liberal intellectuals with a national-emancipatory program, the so-called *Hlasistické hnutie* (the *Hlasist* movement, also known as the *Hlasists*) was founded in Slovakia at the end of the 19th century.[7] The *Hlasists* were a free association of young, liberal intellectuals connected especially to the magazine *Hlas* (*Voice*) and later also to the magazines *Slovenský obzor* (*Slovak Horizon*) and *Prúdy* (*Currents*) (Klobucký 2006, 8). Klobucký also describes the *Hlasists* as an anticlerical, modernizing movement, oriented on individual rights and engaged in efforts to reduce the influence of the state. They emphasized the morality of every individual, utilitarianism and democracy. The magazine *Hlas*, published from 1898 to 1904, became the initial platform for the whole movement. This movement also included personalities shaped by the thinking of the Czech sociologist and philosopher Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937). Some of them later became important figures in the new Czechoslovak state. Vavro Šrobár (1867–1950) considered a “radical anticlerical” in his initial *Hlasist* period (Klobucký 2006, 53), became, for example, an important political personality and a representative of the Czechoslovak Republic with full legal power to administer Slovakia. Other important political figures in this movement included Milan Hodža (1878–1944),[8] Anton Štefánek (1877–1964) and Pavel Blaho (1867–1927). According to Klobucký, a specific feature of this liberalism was its opposition to the ruling Hungarian liberals, who supported some liberal principles such as religious freedom and civil marriage registration but were also undemocratic in their attitude towards national minorities and supported the idea of a Hungarian nation, unified ethnically and linguistically, that granted few if any cultural rights to other nationalities. They were gradually transformed into the “class” party of big business. At the same time, Slovak *Hlasist* liberalism was opposed to Slovak conservatism and thus became a target of attacks from the churches, both Catholic and Lutheran (Klobucký 2006, 54). In religious circles, the word *liberal* began to be identified with the enemies of the church, with Freethought and with atheism (Kováč 2000; Lipták 1998). In spite of their anticlericalism, however, the *Hlasists* were not anti-Christian but were actually oriented on Christian ethics. In the spirit of Masaryk’s view of Christianity, they distinguished between personal religion, with an internal relationship to God and the ethical consequences of such a relationship on the one hand and official religion with the dogmas and activities of the churches on the other (Klobucký 2006, 55).

In general, more of an anticlerical than an antireligious emphasis can be found in their thought. Even the most influential freethinkers of this period were in some way connected to or rooted in Christianity. There was hardly anything at the time that could be properly considered an atheist movement. The aforementioned factors led to a scarcity of personalities who might introduce freethinking, secularist or atheist ideas in Slovakia before 1918. It can be argued that atheism and Freethought were less important in their thought than humanism, which was again partly due to the influence of Masaryk, who influenced many Slovak students at Prague University before World War I and whose influence grew further after the creation of an independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 with Masaryk as its first president.

Religion as a factor in conflicts in Czechoslovakia (1918–1938)

The creation in 1918 of a new state composed of three territories previously belonging to Austria-Hungary (the Czech Lands, Slovakia and, after 1919, Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia) created a situation in which there was a need to create a new common legal, administrative and symbolic system for the state. The new state emerged, however, in a situation often described as revolutionary or at least as exhibiting various attributes of a revolution. One problem that the new state addressed was the creation of a symbolic framework that would legitimize the new state political regime and would be meaningful and acceptable to the inhabitants. A second problem, one that is sociologically harder to grasp, is the question of what importance religion actually had for public life in Slovakia and in the Czech part of the new common state. It was precisely the widespread emphasis on religious difference, with Slovakia presented as the religious, Catholic part of the country in contrast to the Protestant and atheist Czech part, which was used as an argument to explain the influence of the autonomist movement and the eventual breakup of the common state, which took place between autumn 1938 and March 1939. There were also many important differences in the freethinking and atheist movements in the two main parts of the new state. If, in Czech Lands, there was an important historical tradition of various atheist figures or movements, in Slovakia, by contrast, there was no such tradition, or it was very marginal in public life.[9] The creation of the new state also marked the beginning of some new Czechoslovak initiatives, and many ideas born in the Czech Lands found their way into Slovakia as well.

With the emergence of the new state, the question of changing the relationship between the state and the churches, and especially of the separation of church and state, was raised for the first time. Anti-Catholicism played a key role in the legitimization of the newly established state and its political regime (Václavík 2010, 77). At the same time, a movement of reformist priests arose in the Czech Lands. They demanded the strengthening of the lay element in the church, holding the liturgy in the national

language and abolishing priestly celibacy. When Pope Benedict XV rejected their demands, a schism split the Catholic Church in the Czech Lands, and the national Czechoslovak Church was formed. The situation in Slovakia developed differently. There were individual clergy, both Catholic and Evangelical, who espoused a strongly anticlerical and republican ethos, but they did not create an organized theological or political current that would break away from established churches, as occurred in the Czech Lands. The Catholic priest Ferdiš Juriga (1874–1950) can be placed among the radical republican priests at the time of the origin of the republic. He supported the new state headed by a democratically elected president, and he proposed similar democratic changes in the church, where he demanded the abolition of priestly celibacy and the direct election of bishops by the people. The part of the Catholic Church that feared the secularizing ambitions of the new state, however, was more influential.

The character of the common Czechoslovak Republic was also shaped by diverging developments in the relationship of Czechs (including the Moravians and Silesians) and Slovaks to religion. Although some historians and church representatives expressed the view that Slovakia was a traditionally Catholic country and that Catholicism was the national religion of the Slovaks, the historian Rychlík (1997) stated that no religion could be identified as a distinguishing feature of the Slovak nation as a whole because the population was historically divided by confession. Similarly, the Czechs had no "national" religion, although in 1918, the majority of them were registered as Catholics.

The adoption of Czechoslovak legislation, which derived mainly from originally Austrian legislation, maintained legal continuity in the Czech part of the republic, but it meant a significant change for Slovakia in many cases. Before 1918, various more liberal laws had applied in the kingdom of Hungary than in the Austrian part of the monarchy. Paradoxically, the confirmation and expansion of the validity of Austrian legislation into Slovakia actually strengthened the position of the Catholic Church in many areas where there was no such strong influence before, in spite of the intentions of the Czech elites to accomplish the opposite (Tížik 2011, 46). Examples include legislation concerning civil and familial affairs as well as the position of the church and marriage law as Rychlík (1997) has observed. Václavík (2010, 88) also points to further legislative changes adopted after the origin of the republic. In education, the obligatory participation of pupils and teachers in religious acts and prayers at the beginning and end of teaching was abolished by new Czechoslovak legislation.

Other factors also need to be taken into account when describing the specific features of Slovakia within the Czechoslovak Republic. One source of tension was the arrival of Czech officials and teachers in Slovakia, where they entered a considerably more religious rural environment. Slovakia appeared backward to them, and, according to Rychlík (1997), their efforts to raise its cultural level often meant behaving in an insensitive way

towards religion. This led to them being accused of atheization. Opposition to religion was not part of government policy but was rather, according to Rychlík, the private initiative of specific people, which made it inappropriate to speak of official efforts of "atheization" or "de-Christianization". At the same time, this was the only period in the existence of Czechoslovakia when there was a stronger flow of migration from Bohemia and Moravia to Slovakia than in the opposite direction. The character of this migration is important to note. In addition to soldiers and gendarmes, immigrants from the Czech Lands included public officials and other personnel from the state and public services, which meant that they represented a relatively high social class (Bahna 2011, 69). These educated members of public and state services became representatives of the Czech element in Slovakia. They were more closely associated with the values and ideas of the new state, which included its secular republican character. Educational, economic and cultural differences between the incomers and the existing population in the two parts of the republic created new stereotypes and new forms of conflict.

The different orientations of political party programs were a further source of difference. Some of the political and intellectual representatives of Slovakia originally had strong links to Czech political movements, but after the formation of the republic, their positions significantly changed. In the period of developing a new symbolic system for the newly formed Czechoslovakia, three currents of thought competed with each other in Slovakia (Klobucký 2006, 40), and only one of them could be considered pro-church or pro-religion. Neither the (not very strong) socialist current nor the liberal or *Hlasist* current looked very favorably on the church, which found its main political ally in the conservative current associated with the leadership of the Slovak National Party based in the town of Martin[10] and with the Catholic intelligentsia led by Andrej Hlinka and Ferdiš Juriga. In the initial period of the existence of Czechoslovakia, the representatives of the liberal current had the dominant position in Slovakia.

During the existence of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), there was an explosion of civic and voluntary associations in the Czech as well as Slovak parts of the Republic, and among these associations were some with anticlerical and antireligious attitudes, including several workers' organizations. The Czech movement *Voľná myšlienka* (Freethought), for example, continued to be active in Slovakia in the interwar period. Some new associations were also created, such as the *Zväz socialistických bezvercov* (Union of the Socialist Nonbelievers, 1919–1926), *Federácia komunistických osvetových jednôt* (Federation of Communist Educational Unions, 1921–1926) and the Czech movement *Zväz proletárskych bezvercov* (Union of the Proletarian Nonbelievers in Slovakia, 1926–1933; its largest groups were located in Ružomberok and Trnava). The latter also published the review *Maják* (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 396). Apart from organized movements and associations, influence also came from the Czech Lands thanks to the activity of many Czech intellectuals who worked in Slovakia in

the interwar period and who published and were active in promoting anti-clerical, Marxist and materialist ideas. Doctor Ivan Hálek (1872–1945)[11] who had a medical practice in one of the most underdeveloped regions of Slovakia, and the Communist teacher and writer Peter Jilemnický (1901–1949) are very good examples of such activists.

Among the movements with some influence on public opinion and popular beliefs in this period, some intellectual and political movements might be counted as well. The Slovak intellectual group DAV (whose name was derived from the first letters of the first names of the group's founders, Daniel Okáli, Andrej Sirácky and Vladimír Clementis) published in Prague, beginning in 1924, a journal for art, critique, politics and philosophy, with strong Marxist and Communist ambitions.[12] This movement can be considered the most influential group of people who were among the intellectual core of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from its beginning (and later of the Communist Party of Slovakia) and who, in various forms, shaped the state's policy toward religion and churches in the territory of Slovakia from 1948 until the end of 1989. The intellectuals concentrated around the journal, who rejected tradition and called for internationalism, were influential in the spread and development of Marxism in Slovakia. Among the journal's authors in the 1930s were such figures as the poet Ladislav Novomeský (1904–1976), the poet Ján Rob Poničan (1902–1978), the philosopher Ladislav Szántó (1894–1974), the politician and lawyer[13] Gustáv Husák (1913–1991) and the literary theorist Alexander Matuška (1910–1975), as well as the intellectuals and writers Eduard Urx (1903–1942) and Peter Jilemnický. The journal *DAV* also published Czech socialist- and Communist-oriented intellectuals such as Zdeněk Nejedlý, Július Fučík and Ivan Olbracht. After 1929, they shifted the focus from art to political and social issues, criticizing Fascism, conservatism and nationalism. They promoted the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin and Soviet culture. They were also critical of Masaryk's philosophy; they published on class consciousness and socialist realism and declared themselves followers of the Third (Communist) International. In comparison with Masaryk's humanist anti-clerical philosophy, with its strong emphasis on individual religious piety, the approach of the DAVists was orientated more towards atheism and the criticism of religion as such. In this sense it was the first openly atheist movement (going beyond individual efforts) of intellectuals in Slovakia. The journal ceased publishing in 1937.[14]

The DAV movement's materialist approach to the world drew support from the natural sciences. The core of the atheist movement in Slovakia (and Czechoslovakia) thus came from Marxist philosophy (Hajko 1987) and associations were established for the promotion of atheism and scientific knowledge in Czechoslovakia after the Communist Party took power in 1948. One of the leading members of DAV, Vladimír Clementis, was also a supporter of the cremation movement under the name *Spolok pre spaľovanie mŕtvych Krematórium* – "Crematorium" (Association for the

Cremation of the Dead) and, in 1927, supported the establishment of a crematorium in Bratislava. This initiative was not supported by the municipality, however, and the first crematorium was not opened in Bratislava until much later, in 1964, at the initiative of the *Spoločnosť priateľov žehu* (Society of Friends of Cremation).

Although there were many such associations with ambitions to spread secular or atheist ideas, and although the Czechoslovak state was in the period 1918 to 1938 quite liberal with regard to religious issues, religious affiliation in Slovakia remained stable.

Slovakia from 1938 to 1948

In 1938 there began a process of radical political change connected with the rising influence and power of the autonomist political party Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSĽS), which promoted the teaching of the Catholic Church as the primary source of political life. In autumn 1938, Slovakia achieved autonomous governance within the Czechoslovak Republic, and many radical changes and restrictions to political and religious life were implemented. At the same time, after the Munich Agreement and later after the First Vienna Award, Czechoslovakia lost significant parts of its territory.[15] Later, Nazi Germany annexed the entire territory of the Czech Lands. From autumn 1938 until the end of the Czechoslovak Republic in March 1939 (the republic in this period was known as the Second Czechoslovak Republic), there was a strong tendency of rising religious and political conservatism, with restrictions placed on secularist and freethinking movements and groups.

On 14 March 1939, an independent Slovak state was established under the patronage of Nazi Germany, with the Catholic priest and head of the HSĽS Josef Tiso (1887–1947) as its president. The state openly declared its Christian character, establishing the dominance of the Catholic Church and legally reducing religious and worldview plurality (abolishing not only some small religious groups and churches, but also all political parties except the HSĽS). According to state legislation, no humanist, secularist or atheist organizations were allowed.

The experience with this clerical regime influenced a strong secularist or at least anticlerical movement. The first anticlerical initiative occurred in the so-called Christmas Treaty in 1943, organized by anti-Fascist political forces in Slovakia (which established the illegal Slovak National Council, with the participation of some of the members of the prewar DAV movement); the document declared that, in a restored postwar Czechoslovakia, "religious freedom should be guaranteed, and the influence of churches on the direction and character of the State should be excluded". Later, with this anticlerical approach, the Slovak National Council organized the Slovak National Uprising, which began on 29 August 1944. The anticlerical features of the uprising lent legitimacy to political parties and intellectuals

who rejected the religious and clerical character of the state. After World War II, these politicians and intellectuals enjoyed legitimacy and power in reestablished Czechoslovakia, and there was a rise in anticlerical attitudes in the Slovak population, with an increase in the legitimacy of the Communist Party.

A power struggle started just after the end of the war between a unified Communist Party in the whole of Czechoslovakia and a divided opposition in two separate parts of the state, represented especially by the Czechoslovak People's Party in the Czech Lands and the Democratic Party in Slovakia. Political opposition was limited by the system of a national front of legal political parties, in which the Communist Party occupied the dominant position. Before the Communist Party fully took power in Czechoslovakia, in the period from 1945 to 1948, Catholics were members of or primarily supported three political parties: the Communist Party (in the Czech Lands and Slovakia, supported largely by the lower clergy and laity of working-class background), the People's Party (in the Czech Lands, supported largely by the higher clergy, farmers and businesspeople) and the Democratic Party (in Slovakia, supported, like the Czech People's Party, largely by the higher clergy, farmers and businesspeople) (Tížik 2015b).

In the brief period between the end of the war and the establishment of state socialism, there was an increase in the influence of Communist ideas, and some associations from the interwar period were renewed, such as *Voľná myšlienka* (Freethought, 1945–1948), while many other associations were established, such as the *Zväz občanov bez vyznania* (Union of Confessionless Citizens) in 1945, which published the review *Nová skutečnost* (*New Reality*) starting in 1947. These movements, however, did not have such public success (in terms of membership) as in the interwar period. After 1948, such movements ceased their activities, and their program was taken over by the Communist Party and its initiative *Spoločnosť pre šírenie politických a vedeckých poznatkov* (Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge) and, later, *Socialistická akadémia* (the Socialist Academy) (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 713).[16]

Slovakia during state socialism (1948–1989)

In the time between 1948 and 1989, when Slovakia was governed by a state socialist regime, with regard to the shifting relationships between the state and the churches (especially to the Catholic Church), six different periods can be identified (Tížik 2015b, 60).

1 symmetrical schismogenesis between the state and churches, as well as a kind of schism within the churches themselves (1948–1949)
2 complementary schismogenesis between the state and churches (1949–1952)
3 stabilization of Communist Party dominance (1953–1967)

4 weakening of the strong asymmetrical relations between Communists and Catholics (1962–1965)
5 a second period of schismogenesis within the Catholic Church (1968)
6 stabilization of the superior position of the Communist Party and increased conservatism within the Catholic Church (1970–1989)

A look at these relationships can help one understand that the regime, in spite of its materialist character, was not secular or simply antagonistic toward religion, but rather integrated religious actors and religion into its system of rule (mostly from the year 1953). The regime was more anticlerical than antireligious.

As a result of conflict between the state and the Catholic Church during the first years of the state socialist regime, state control was established over churches, and a schism took place within the churches themselves. One group of priests and church members ("progressive" priests and laity) supported the policy of the people's democracy while another created parallel (secret) structures and in some cases ceased public activity. The first group was eventually integrated into the official Peace Movement of Catholic Priests, the movement of supporters of the people's democracy. In the early 1950s, nearly one half of all 3,000 priests in Czechoslovakia were more or less active in this movement (Balík and Hanuš 2013, 127). The conflict between the state and the Vatican was thus institutionalized. The highest clergy, loyal to the Vatican, were isolated from the active life of the churches, and a new official church hierarchy was formed. In this period, the basis of a system of church regulation was established, and it persisted with only small modifications until the end of 1989.

From the very beginning, the new regime declared itself to be materialist and competed with religious actors in private and familial issues connected mostly with the life cycle and rites of passage (birth, marriage and death). Civil ceremonies organized by the local "national committees" began to be a secular alternative to church ceremonies. The period of 1948 through 1989 can thus be seen as a period of radical transformation of official ritual and festive culture (Beňušková 2017, 114). Official regulations gave rise in 1953 to institutions functioning within municipal offices (national committees), with the task of arranging and ensuring the development of ceremonies. These institutions were called *Aktívy pre občianske záležitosti* (Corps for Civil Affairs) and were renamed *Zbory pre občianske záležitosti* (Assemblies for Civil Affairs) in 1964. Together, they were meant to ensure that the contracting of a marriage or the recording of the birth of a child was not only an official act, but also acquired a festive character. They were also in charge of conducting decent burials of citizens who were not members of any religious society. Already during the first decades of the Assemblies for Civil Affairs, state-funded cultural and educational institutions were organizing training courses, seminars, conferences and meetings and publishing many methodological materials. Several other occasions were added

to the purview of its activities – including the issuing of ID cards to young people and graduation from elementary school. The year 1972 brought qualitative change in the activities of the assemblies when new regulations were approved for the organization of civil ceremonies. After the suppression of the democratization efforts in Czechoslovakia in 1968, they clearly became promoters of state ideology. Their civil function was accompanied by propaganda at a new level. The Slovak Board of the Assemblies for Civil Affairs was set up at the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Socialist Republic (Beňušková 2017, 116). The formation of this "new" socialist ceremoniousness was a manifestation of a systematic, often violent, atheization of social life in Slovakia. This pressure was felt mainly by civil servants, teachers, the military and police, officials and important personalities in cultural and social life, who were expected to serve as models for others and not attend church rituals (Beňušková 2017, 119). Also for this reason, these assemblies lost some of their civil legitimacy in the last period of the Communist era as they were linked with the power of the Communist Party.

The cultural and civic liberalization of the 1960s also gradually brought about changes in the relationship between originally competing ideologies. In the 1960s, in reaction to the antagonistic religious policy of the state in the period from 1949 to 1953, there had been a decline in those currents in the churches that were positively inclined towards ideas of Christian socialism and similar currents, sometimes in cooperation with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. In the 1960s, there emerged initiatives in the opposite direction: namely an intensified interest on the part of Marxist-oriented thinkers in Christianity or in dialogue with it (Landa and Mervart 2017). These interpenetrations and discussions between Christianity and Marxism also point to an important feature of Czech and Slovak religiosity. Just as the influence of Marxism on Christianity was generally stronger in the Czech part of the state than in Slovakia before 1948, in the 1960s, the Czech Lands also saw more interest on the part of Marxists in Christianity and more intellectual discussion between Marxists and Christians. Landa and Mervart (2017) emphasize that while a very lively Marxist-Christian dialogue took place in the Czech intellectual environment, very little of this sort took place in Slovakia. Similarly, although the sociology of religion was reborn in both parts of Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s, there were important differences between Czech and Slovak sociologists in terms of approach. While Czech sociologists actively participated in organizing discussions between Christians and Marxists as part of the democratization process, in Slovakia, the more dominant line was to approach religion more in the spirit of the party's struggle to overcome religion as a remnant of the old system, which was seen to be gradually retreating from social life by spontaneous evolution or under the influence of deliberately science-based atheist education. In one state with a single legal regime, regulating religion, religious life and the relationship to religion developed in two different ways.

In 1952, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia organized *Československá spoločnosť pre šírenie politických a vedeckých poznatkov* (Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge), which was renamed *Socialistická akadémia* (the Socialist Academy) in 1965 and which existed with some changes until 1989. This organization had two branches – one Czechoslovak (in reality, Czech) and another Slovak, each with the same structure and mission.[17] One of the main goals, except for organizing the promotion of scientific knowledge, was to educate people in the "spirit of the Marx-Leninist attitude to the world" and to organize the fight against clerical anti-Communism and spread atheist ideas (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 586). The dissemination of scientific knowledge to the country was closely related to the ideologization of society, i.e., to the spreading of those scientific theories and paradigms that were observed as ideologically correct by the regime. The society also became involved in publishing, putting out the journals *Príroda a spoločnosť* (*Nature and Society*) and *Svet vedy* (*World of Science*) in Slovakia and, for the Hungarian-speaking minority, *Természet és Tarsadalon*. In addition, it established its own publishing house, but this was based in the Czech part of the state (Olšáková 2014, 624). The society edited its own book series *Veda ľudu* (*Science of the People*) in the Slovak publishing house Osveta (Olšáková 2014, 119). One field was especially supported in the activities of this association – scientific atheism, which became its main activity during the whole period of its existence. Scientific atheism was clearly approached according to the relationship of humanity to religion as defined by official Marx-Leninism. From this point of view, religion was an escape from reality to superstitions and obscurantism in the past, but when industrial society came, the most unnatural phenomena were possible to explain. Education in scientific atheism meant an elaborate system of scientific lectures, the aim of which was to explain natural laws, physical phenomena etc. to the public from the point of view of Marx-Leninism. Many planetariums, for example, were built under the auspices of the society (Olšáková 2014, 626). Throughout the entire existence of this association, it was tightly connected to the ruling powers and to the Czechoslovak and Slovak Academies of Sciences. The ruling powers played the role of ideological controller and supported the society's activity from the state budget. The Academies of Sciences, as the leading scientific institutions in the country, guaranteed the professional level of popularization (Olšáková 2014, 632).

Scientific research institutes concerned with promoting as well as researching atheism, and with investigating the remnants of religious thought in Czechoslovakia, were established in both parts of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s as part of the support for the official policy of the state, and these institutes collaborated with the Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge. In the early 1960s, departments for scientific study of religions (from a Marxist or materialist point of view) were formed in the Institutes of Philosophy of the Czechoslovak Academy of

Sciences in Prague and the Slovak Academy of Science in Bratislava, where atheism was studied within the framework of the Marx-Leninist approach to science (Tížik 2016). From 1971, the Institutes for Scientific Atheism were established at both academies (Tížik and Siták 2019).

In Slovakia, continuity was maintained by intellectuals who were directly or indirectly connected to the department for scientific atheism of the Institute of Philosophy of Slovak Academy of Sciences and who referred to the intellectual legacy of the DAV movement from the 1920s; a second source of continuity, partially connected to the DAV movement, was the involvement of participants in the Slovak National Uprising, chiefly those connected to the Communist Party. An important figure in terms of continuity was Andrej Sirácky (1900–1988), one of the founders of the DAV movement (discussed earlier),[18] who was a figure in the first generation of atheist and antireligious philosophers from the period of Communist Party rule.[19] He published several books on religion from a Marx-Leninist point of view. He also promoted an atheist approach to the world.[20] His basic works on religion and atheism came from the first period of the building of the so-called people's democracy in Czechoslovakia (1949–1955). During this short period, he published 16 books, among them 12 related to problems of materialism or religion. His approach was mostly apologetic towards the regime newly established after February 1948 in Czechoslovakia and towards the policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

Another important figure in the atheist movement was the jurist and politician Félix Vašečka (1915–2001), who became a member of the Communist Party in 1936 and was an active participant in the Slovak National Uprising in 1944. From 1951 to 1953, he headed the Slovak Bureau for Church Issues at the national branch (*povereníctvo*) of the Ministry of Culture.[21] From the viewpoint of his books,[22] he could be described mostly as an anti-Catholic and anticlerical author. From 1972 to 1985, he directed the Institute for Scientific Atheism of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and was editor in chief of the journal *Ateizmus* (*Atheism*).

The second generation of the atheist movement, deeply rooted in materialist philosophy, or at least integrated into the milieu of Marxist philosophy, is connected to the activities of the Department and later the Institute for Scientific Atheism at the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The first incarnation existed from 1961 until 1967 as the Department of Scientific Atheism at the Institute for Philosophy of Slovak Academy of Sciences under the direction of Jaroslav Čelko (1923–2017). For the period of 1967 through 1971, after the department was closed, researchers were moved to other institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences – the Institute for Sociology, the Institute of History and the Institute for State and Law. In 1971, the Cabinet of Scientific Atheism was founded, and, in 1972, it was transformed into the Institute of Scientific Atheism of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Tížik and Sivák 2019). This institute worked until February 1990, when it was abolished by the office of the president of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. In addition

to Jaroslav Čelko, Ladislav Szántó and Félix Vašečka, other noteworthy researchers in the field of scientific atheism at these institutions included Peter Prusák, Bohumír Kvasnička and Ondrej Dányi, all of whom can be considered a bridge between the first (DAVist) and second generations of atheists, especially scientific atheists, in Slovakia, who entered academic and public life in the 1970s. This “bridge” generation shifted their focus from promoting scientific atheism or Marx-Leninist ideology to scientific research on worldviews and religions. In general, it is hard to talk about other free-thinkers or atheist movements or initiatives outside the associations controlled by the state during this period; virtually all were connected in some way to the Communist Party.

Although the Communist Party lost much legitimacy after 1969, when it ousted Alexander Dubček, the symbol of the Prague Spring in 1968, and replaced him with Gustáv Husák as party leader, the party went on to stabilize its hold on power. The party also continued its policy towards religion and churches from the period before the Prague Spring of 1968. The Central Committee of the Communist Party emphasized in May 1970 the necessity of intensifying the ideological struggle, with a special focus on intellectuals and youth. Although a kind of latent conflict between the state and churches was still present, a high level of religiosity among citizens and even Communist Party members was tolerated (Kmeť 2014, 176), and there existed collaboration between part of the church and the organs of political power. After the collapse of the “peace movement” of Christian priests in 1968, a new peace movement of priests called *Pacem in Terris* was established in 1971 under the control of the Communist Party; it functioned until the end of 1989. This new organization repeated as its credo an older statement that socialism represented the practical realization of Jesus Christ’s ideals (Kmeť 2014, 174).

During the 40 years of state socialism in Czechoslovakia, there emerged many initiatives devoted to the spread of freethinking, secular and atheist approaches to the world. In contrast to earlier periods, these were not only free civic initiatives or movements but were also integrated into state policy and into the program of the Communist Party. At the level of university education, departments and institutes of Marx-Leninism were established, with the result that most university students were influenced by this kind of education. In addition, a Department for Marx-Leninist Philosophy and Scientific Atheism was established in the 1970s at the University of Prešov in the east of Slovakia, an area with a high level of religiosity. There were also additional educational activities and institutions, established from the 1960s to promote scientific and materialist approaches to the world – the Institute of Marx-Leninism at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia and departments of scientific atheism at institutes for Marx-Leninism at universities. There were also some other associations and organizations in this period. The publishing house Pravda published translated works by Marx, Engels and Lenin (as well as writings on atheism and

critical of religion and the church) and many books by Soviet authors. The Communist Party edited several journals promoting materialist and atheist ideas – *Nová mysl*, *Nové slovo*, *Tvorba* and the scholarly journal *Otázky marxistickej filozofie* (*Questions of Marxist Philosophy*). The *Múzeum vývoja spoločenského vedomia* (Museum of the Development of the Social Mind),[23] dedicated to the history of Freethought and atheist ideas, was also established as part of the Slovak National Museum (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 49–54).

Although the dominance of the state over the church continued until the end of 1989, the situation inside the church changed in the second half of the 1970s (Tížik 2015b). The 1978 election of Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II brought renewed support for conservative theology, opposition to Communism and "progressive movements" within the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. From the mid-1980s on, Catholics enjoyed a series of successes – a mass of believers participated in a pilgrimage to Velehrad, and a public petition for religious freedom was circulated while interest rose in the separation of church and state (in the sense of ending state control over the churches), which was called for at a public "candlelight" protest for the church in Bratislava in 1988. The period from 1988 to 1989 can be seen as the end of hitherto-official church structures, which were replaced when the conservative Underground Church became recognized as a model for the church and as an important anti-Communist (or antitotalitarian) body (Tížik 2015b). Reformist and progressivist theology were, as a consequence, delegitimized. In a parallel process, the heritage of the Second Vatican Council was weakened in Czechoslovakia.

Religion, especially in its Christian and Catholic forms, was framed by official Communist discourse as regressive, not a modern part of the system. It was excluded from public space and relegated to private life. Some surveys conducted in 1968 and in later years showed, however, that religiosity in Slovakia was still high, and the policy of the state did not radically change the basic traditional ways of religious life. State socialism in Slovakia, with the privatization and strict regulation of religious life, can be considered a conservative factor in the religious structure of Slovak society and of religiosity in general.

Slovakia in the post-Communist period (after 1989)

After the end of the dominance of the Communist Party and its official materialist ideology in November 1989, a new political period in Slovakia began. It offered new opportunities for various protagonists to fight over the souls of the people. For three more years after 1989, Slovakia was still a part of a democratic federation in which it shared a common legal and symbolical system with the Czech part of the state. In 1993, after the declaration of Slovakia's independence, the new republic found itself in a situation that can be characterized as a struggle among various traditions. The first

problem was how to deal with and adopt an attitude towards the period of the preceding 40 years of state socialism, which had declared itself a materialist order. Dealing with the end of Communist Party rule was a matter of legitimizing the new order. As a result, the official rhetoric of the new Slovak Republic rejected continuity with this era. A second problem in discussions about the character of the new state was the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, i.e., the rupture with common Czechoslovak traditions and the search for self-definition outside the heritage of the united federative republic and in contrast to the Czech Republic.

In the new context of the liberal democratic system that emerged after 1989, many new associations and groups were created to promote atheist and secularist ideas. In contrast to religious groups, however, they could not receive financial support for the salaries of their employees or for running their offices. Such groups as, for example, *Spoločnosť Prometheus – Združenie svetských humanistov* (Society Prometheus – Association of Secular Humanists) were established. *Spoločnosť Prometheus*, established in 1990 in Bratislava, can be considered the first such association formed in Slovakia after the end of Communist Party rule. Many members of this association were formerly so-called scientific atheists (from university departments or the Institute for Scientific Atheism of the Slovak Academy of Sciences), such as Jaroslav Čelko, who was the principal founder of the association, as well as Peter Prusák, Bohumil Kvasnička and Ondrej Dányi. In this sense, this association established the continuity of organized Freethought with the secular humanist and atheist movement from the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic from 1918 to 1938. In the first two years of its existence, local clubs of the association were established in Bratislava, Košice, Banská Bystrica, Gelnica, Považská Bystrica, Nové Zámky, Prievidza and Prešov.

The association later moved its center to Banská Bystrica. The association is a member of the European Humanist Federation (EHF) and the International Ethical and Humanistic Union (IHEU). From the very beginning, the association published a bulletin for its members called *Prometheus*. The association started to publish the quarterly *Prometheus* for the public in printed form in 2005, supported financially by American humanists. As of 2009, this has appeared only as an online journal. In many activities and ideas, the association continued those activities established in the period of the institutes of scientific atheism and personally involved mostly the older generation of people active before the year 1989. Later, the younger generation split from the initiative, and, in 2008, the association *Humanisti Slovenska* (Humanists of Slovakia, Civic Association of Rationalists, Sceptics and Secular Humanists) was established – however, without engaging in any public activities. In 2013, another split followed, and *Etika, Tolerancia, Humanizmus, Občianstvo, Sekularizmus* (Ethics, Tolerance, Humanism, Citizenship, Secularism) (Ethos) was established. There are only a few articles on their web page, however, and they are mostly present on the social

network Facebook. *Prometheus* is also connected to the virologist Rastislav Škoda, editor of the journal *Zošity humanistov* (*Humanists' Notebooks*). His publications and web page devoted to the criticism of war, religion and capitalism are also mostly present on the Internet and have not achieved wide public recognition; they mostly involve the individual activity of their founder. There was also an unsuccessful attempt to achieve state recognition for an *Ateistická cirkev neveriacich* (Atheist Church of Nonbelievers) in 2006 and 2007.

One association that has historical roots in the humanist and secularist movements, though it no longer explicitly promotes such ideas, is the *Združenie zborov pre občianske záležitosti – človek človeku v SR* (the Union of Assemblies for Civic Affairs), a civic association established in 1991 on certain fragments of its predecessor. This association's predecessor, the Assemblies for Civil Affairs, found itself in a very precarious situation after the change of regimes. It lost its national structure and the support provided to it by the state; many professionals and trained volunteers ended their engagement in these structures, which organized rites of passage (birth, marriages and funerals) on civic and nonreligious bases. The association faced stronger competition from traditional churches and lost prestige as a symbol of the Communist regime. It faded from public view during the first years of the post-socialist transition until it was later revived in a modified form. In 1991, the Assemblies for Civil Affairs created a civic association called *Človek človeku* (Human to Human). The association provides them with methodological assistance, organizes competitive displays of civil ceremony programs, obtains financial support through grants and defends the interest in these activities (Beňušková 2017, 119). After 1989, the Roman Catholic Church took a very negative position towards civil ceremonies and the Assemblies for Civil Affairs and conditioned the arrangement of church ceremonies on people's nonparticipation in civil ceremonies (Beňušková 2017, 120). After years of researching the position of this association in public life, however, it can currently be considered an equal and very often-used institution of life-cycle rituals, operating alongside churches. In comparison with the period from 1948 to 1989, however, it no longer holds atheist connotations or harbors ambitions of atheization, and it has far fewer cells in Slovakia. But only a quarter of all villages or towns have such an organized assembly.

Although the political and legal system radically changed after 1989 in comparison to the period of state socialism, Slovakia's religious structure in general remained very stable, with a slight increase in the number of people without religious affiliation. The structure of religion and worldviews in Slovakia should, however, be investigated in a deeper way.

Changes in worldviews in Slovakia

In order to reach a better understanding of the spread of atheism and Freethought, it is important to take into account the results of various

surveys and censuses. A comparative approach is necessary for describing some developmental tendencies.

In general, according to census data (Figure 12.1, Tížik 2015a), after about 200 years of freethinking and atheist initiatives and several waves of secularization, it is clear that Christianity in its various forms remains the dominant worldview in Slovakia.

Figure 12.1 shows that there have been changes in the composition of the non-Catholic religious population, including, most notably, the near extermination of the country's Jewish community during World War II. There has also been an increase in the number of people without a declared religious affiliation, but censuses do not distinguish how many of these are atheists or possess some other worldview.

It is impossible to deduce from available census data how many people in Slovakia are atheist. The only conclusion that can be drawn from the results is how many people do not consider themselves to be affiliated with any religion or church. As various surveys presented later in this study show, among people without religious affiliation, only a very small number declare themselves to be atheist. A comparison between the years 1968 and 2014, for example, can provide a basic overview of the worldview changes that have taken place in Slovakia. The surveys carried out in 1968 (SPOS 1968)[24] and 2014 (DOS 2014)[25] can help us describe more clearly the characteristics of people without religious affiliation. Survey data reveal the clear tendency of an increasing proportion of people who are not affiliated with any religion, which is also supported by census data. The survey data can also provide, however, a basis for investigating the proportion of people who declare themselves atheist.

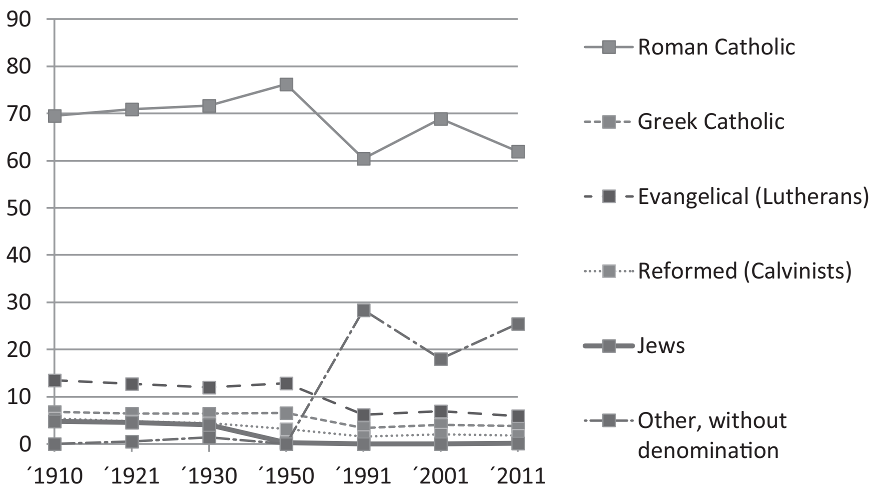

Figure 12.1 Religious structure in Slovakia.

Table 12.1 Atheists and *nones* in the Slovak population.[26]

	With religious affiliation	*No religious affiliation*	*Atheists*	*No data*
1968	93	5.2	0.8	1
2014	75.7	14.4[27]	8.4	1.5
2017[28]	72.8	17.2	10.2	0

The results of these surveys suggest that it was not the first 20 years of state socialism but the first 20 years of liberal democracy that opened the space for the acceptance of atheism as part of a personal worldview.

Conclusion

Social, political and international changes over more than 100 years in Slovakia and more than 25 years of the Slovak Republic point to some basic conclusions. Religion, in some situations, can be an important component for the mobilization of collective identity. As an effect of the integration of religion into the symbolic character of the state, traditional Christian beliefs have grown increasingly prevalent in public life, exhibited even among people without religious affiliation. In this sense, religion serves as a kind of compensatory legitimating tool in cases in which few other symbolic sources of collective or national identity are available in the collective memory or in the principles of institutional functioning. Nevertheless, even while religion helps preserve the homogeneity of society in "critical" situations, this does not manifest itself as an increase in religious affiliation. Only in some basic religious practices and beliefs are there some increase of religious activity in the Slovak population.

Although there have been many secular humanist and Freethought associations and movements in Slovak history, and although the state enacted a strong antichurch policy in the period from 1948 to 1989, these did not exert a powerful influence on the general religious affiliation of the population. Most of the organized structures, institutions and movements that promoted humanist or atheist approaches to the world lost their legitimacy after the end of Communist Party rule in Czechoslovakia and in Slovakia as part of Czechoslovakia. Some successors of these movements tried to continue spreading such ideas, but they did not involve a significant part of the population. In the face of the rising influence of churches after 1989, people and organizations with nonreligious attitudes have tended to be nonreligious rather than atheist in their ways of life. The genuine secularization of the Slovak population began only after the fall of the state socialist regime, which had actually conserved many traditional religious beliefs and practices. A specific form of anticlericalism, however, manifested in the rejection

of any deeper engagement of the clergy in public life in Slovakia, can be considered to have been one of the most salient features of Slovak society for over a century.

If we compare the present situation of religious life, in the churches and in the public, with the situation in the past, various interesting parallels can be seen with the conclusions drawn in the sociologizing considerations of the Lutheran pastor Ján Lajčiak regarding the period immediately before the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. His description of religious life in his time reads rather like an account of the situation today. After looking at current religious practice among the inhabitants of Slovakia, one might be inclined to think that no radical changes of political regime and no world war have taken place since the writing of Lajčiak's study. His words, that the church is "a powerful factor of constancy, which firmly maintains historical continuity" (Lajčiak 1994, 99), appear to still be true today. In his book, Lajčiak spoke of the church and the clergy's retreat from public life, high levels of superstition, religious ritualism and the search for mysticism in religion. In contrast to what is today officially declared as the Christian and Catholic past of Slovakia, Lajčiak – writing during the final days of the monarchy – described the educated and cultured elites keeping their distance from religion and maintaining critical stances towards it. At the same time, his sociologizing ambitions also led him to present the views of members of the various confessions living in Slovakia. Although he stated then, as many state today, that "We Slovaks say about ourselves that we are an eminently religious nation" (Lajčiak 1994, 106), he also described church life in Slovakia as stagnant. The parallels between Slovak society at the beginning of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st centuries point to the persistence of some models of religious life and some perceptions of religion in Slovakia.

Notes

1 The author would like give many thanks to Roman Kečka for many inspiring comments, which helped clarify the text's structure and argumentation.
2 He wrote a book called *The Struggle against the Hierarchy and the Church 1841–1845* (1953), originally published in 1847 in German as Johann Horarik, *Kampf mit Hierarchie und Kirche in den Jahren 1841–1845* (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 52, 237; Čelko 1997).
3 The first chairman and vice chairman of *Matica Slovenská* was the Catholic bishop Štefan Moyzes, and the first vice president was the Lutheran superintendent Karol Kuzmány. See Matica Slovenská (n.d.).
4 For more on the roots of Slovak patriotism, see Kowalská (2004, 2011).
5 According to the Slovak edition of the *Dictionary of Scientific Atheism*, neither movement had significant influence in Slovakia (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 683).
6 Edmund Borek published his book *Kresťanstvo a socializmus* (*Christianity and Socialism*) in 1910. In 1913, he published a book called *Sociálna demokracia a náboženstvo* (*Social Democracy and Religion*), in which he was close to a Marxist approach to religion and atheism (*Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 52).

7 This movement is considered to be the first relatively influential form of anticlericalism in Slovakia at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, but it mostly focused on criticizing the church as an anti-emancipatory force among nations (see "*Antiklerikalizmus*" in *Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 24–28).
8 Hodža repeatedly held ministerial positions in the Czechoslovak government during the interwar period and served as prime minister from 1935 to 1938.
9 The authors of the dictionary also stress this difference in the *Dictionary of Scientific Atheism* (see "*Ateizmus v dejinách Československa*" in *Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* 1983, 49).
10 The Slovak National Party (established in 1871) was nationalist-conservative, but after World War I, a pro-Czechoslovak party was also organized on the principle of Catholic-Lutheran dualism in the leadership of the party (see Roguľová 2013).
11 The most social-critical books he wrote were *Zápisky slovenského lekára* (*Notes of a Slovak Doctor*, 1932) and *Kysuce* (1937). He also wrote the book *Moja cesta od Tolstého k Marxovi* (*My Path from Tolstoy to Marx*, 1950).
12 Sivičeková (2016) emphasizes that they were, also according to the words of Andrej Sirácky, representative of the first generation of Marxist artists, writers and scientists in Slovakia.
13 And later, from 1975 to 1989, president of the Czechoslovak Socialistic Republic.
14 Later, after the Communist Party took power in 1948, two of the intellectuals from the DAV group were accused of bourgeois nationalism, and Clementis was executed. Only Andrej Sirácky had an important political and academic career during the whole period of the state socialist regime.
15 The Munich Agreement was the document signed in Munich (Germany) on 29–30 September 1938, permitting Nazi Germany's annexation of territories of Czechoslovakia (specifically in the Czech Lands) along the country's borders. The First Vienna Award (or Vienna Arbitration) was a treaty signed on 2 November 1938 as a consequence of the Munich Agreement. It separated the largely but not exclusively Magyar (Hungarian) populated territories in southern Slovakia.
16 For a more detailed look at this organization, see Olšáková (2014).
17 Most institutions in Czechoslovakia before federalization in 1968 (and many even after that) functioned in an asymmetric model, in which Czechoslovak institutions were located in and were connected mostly to the Czech part of the state while subordinate Slovak institutions functioned only in Slovakia. There were, for example, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Slovakia, the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, without independent Czech national structures.
18 Although Sirácky ceased to be active in the movement in 1926, and although in the 1950s, during the official campaign against bourgeois nationalism in the party, he was very critical of some former members of DAV such as Vladimír Clementis and Gustáv Husák, he was generally presented after the 1960s as an important figure in DAV (Sivičeková 2016).
19 Sirácky was a very important figure in academic, political and ideological life from 1948 until the end of the 1970s. He was Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the Slovak University (today Comenius University) in Bratislava (1952–1953), later rector of the university (1953–1955) and then head of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (1955–1961). From 1955 to 1975, he was a professor of philosophy and sociology and, for a few years, was also head of the Comenius University Department of Sociology, which he helped renew in 1964. He was also Director of the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences

(1965–1970), later Director of the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (1975–1978). In the 1960s, he was a deputy in the Slovak National Council; in the 1970s, he was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, a member of the ideological commission of the Central Committee, a member of the Marx-Leninist section of the Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge in Bratislava and a member of many other institutions. See also Nešpor (2008, 231–232) and *Slovník vedeckého ateizmu* (1983, 579).

20 Karol Kollár (2001) considers his attitude to be antireligious and militantly atheist.

21 Before 1948, when the Communist Party took power, he was a member of the sociological branch of *Matica slovenská*. Later he was connected to political life as a *povereník* (minister) in the Slovak government and was professionally considered to be a scientific atheist fighting against religion (Nešpor 2008, 268). Later, especially after the intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies in Czechoslovakia in 1968, he served as a deputy of the Slovak National Council and the Czechoslovak Council and as Minister of Justice in the Slovak government (1969–1970).

22 *Buržoázny štát a cirkev* (1957), *Funkcie cirkví v spoločnosti* (1960).

23 Research and reflections on the "social mind" were part of the official ideological concept of replacing the religious mind-set with an atheist one in the process of modernization. This was to be the result of building a socialist and later Communist society. The museum, as well as research on the social mind, was therefore devoted to atheism.

24 Data set and all the information related to the Survey of World View Attitudes in Slovakia 1968 (SPOS 1968) are available on the web page of the Slovak Archive of Social Data (n.d.).

25 Data set and all the information related to the survey Democracy and Citizens in Slovakia 2014 (DOS 2014) are available on the web page of the Slovak Archive of Social Data (n.d.).

26 The three surveys drawn from here employed differing methods of measuring atheism. In 1968, "atheist" was one option among the list of "confessions." In 2014, "atheist" was an option in a question on the intensity of one's religious faith: "Which of the following statements best describes your faith in God (your general relationship to God)?" And in the newest data from the FOCUS Survey 2017, "atheist" was an option in a question measuring the intensity of personal faith: "deeply religious", "religious", "I hesitate", "not religious", "atheist".

27 From the 22.8% of nonaffiliated respondents, the 8.4% of respondents who declared themselves atheist was subtracted.

28 Data are from the FOCUS Survey April 2017.

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13 Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century

Anna Mariya Basauri Ziuzina and Oleg Kyselov

Introduction

"The Ukrainians are very religious people" is a celebrated myth which the Soviet atheists attempted to fight, replacing it with another myth, "The Ukrainians have an old tradition of freethinking, anticlericalism and atheism". The truth lies in between. The history of Ukrainian intellectual thought contains freethinkers and atheists as well. Did this thought affect ordinary people and peasants, though? Peasants' protests against Greek Catholic clergy in Western Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century brought them to change their affiliation (to Orthodoxy), but not to abandon religion.

Estimating the actual level of atheist belief before the Soviet rule in Ukraine is mission impossible. The census of the Russian Empire did not show the number of unaffiliated persons because a religious identity was equal to an ethnic one: Russians were supposed to be Orthodox, Jews – Judaists, Tatars – Muslims etc. The same can be said about the real dynamics of the increasing number of nonbelievers in Soviet Ukraine. Firstly, there were no surveys on religiosity in three decades (from 1933 until the beginning of the 1960s) (Молчанов 1970, 189). Even the results of further surveys cannot be given credence (Єленський 2002, 183): they were never published in full, and the scholars only used the numbers that confirmed the secularization process. In 1961, the Communist Party issued a decree against the falsification of statistical data, but it still existed all around the Soviet Union. Also, the citizens often concealed their beliefs. We can also distrust the number of nonbelievers in independent Ukraine because it is not trendy to be an atheist; it is considered better to be religious or at least to have some religious identity. In the 1990s, after Ukraine gained its independence, a national revival took place, as well as a religious one, because the national identity of the Ukrainians was closely connected to Orthodoxy in the central and eastern parts of Ukraine and to Greek Catholicism in the western regions. Atheism is currently associated with the Soviet past, which is negatively perceived in the collective memory of the majority of Ukrainians.

Anticlericalism and atheism in the Ukrainian lands in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

The dissemination of the antichurch and anticlerical disposition was not always associated with the propagation of specific philosophical or political ideas. Not all the protests against a certain confession grew into secularization or atheist movements; they sometimes even caused new movements inside religions (e.g., the Reformation). Anticlericalism was a movement against church domination in the public sphere, but not against religion as such. In the former Soviet Union, the anticlerical ideas were often associated with Marxist philosophy. Leonid Heretz wrote, "the break with traditional religiosity came first, and 'Communism' was simply a means of expressing it" (2015, 155).

Secular antireligious freethinking and atheism began to be a visible phenomenon among Ukrainian intellectuals in the late 19th century. A number of prominent Ukrainian writers, publicists and thinkers shared antichurch, anticlerical and atheist sentiments, among them Mykhailo Dragomanov (1841–1895), Mykhailo Pavlyk (1853–1915), Ivan Franko (1856–1916), Pavlo Hrabovsky (1864–1902), Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky (1864–1913), Lesya Ukrainka (1871–1913) and others (see Головаха 1987, 240–249).

The most productive among them was Ivan Franko, who may be regarded as one of the founders of religious studies in Ukraine (Колодний 2013). As a freethinker, he is known for his criticism of the Catholic clergy. During the Soviet period, Franko was regarded as an atheist: his worldview and philosophy were somewhat materialistic. Before his death, Franko refused to confess, and the clerical authorities prohibited the conducting of a religious funeral for him, although this prohibition was not observed (Головаха and Гром'як 1987, 266).

An opposition between science and religion was typical for Franko. Science explores only the real natural world and does not have anything in common with the supernatural (Франко 1986c, 32). The fight for truth is the fight against religion and faith: "More science – less faith, because science is not faith, but doubt, criticism; more faithless science" (Франко 1986b, 124). Franko believed that when science became the central principle of history, religion would disappear. He opposed the teaching of religion at schools and insisted that the worship should be a private, not a public, matter (Франко 1986a, 164).

In a celebrated scientific work *Bibleyne opovidannya pro "Stvorennya svitu" v svitli nauky* (*Bible Story of the "Creation of the World" in the Light of Science*, 1905), Franko wrote on the discrepancies between modern scientific data, especially Darwinism and archeology, and the biblical concept of world creation; also he presented the problem of the authorship of the Pentateuch (Франко 1982, 273–274).

Modern historians are not eager to label Franko as an atheist (see Музичка 2007; Захара 2012). They prefer to call him an agnostic because his ideas

changed gradually from Christian idealism to positivism, rationalism and finally to socialism. Franko did not want to destroy the church and religion but to secularize society itself, separating church from state, privatizing religion etc. Being the leader of the Ukrainian Radical Party, he moved from a critique of clergy to a more moderate or conservative approach, which would guarantee his party the support of some clergymen and eventually their congregation (Медвідь 2017).

Another important person among Ukrainian freethinkers at that time was Lesya Ukrainka. Franko and Ukrainka knew each other personally and discussed their political views. One of her most important works is the handbook *Starodavnya istoriya skhidnykh narodiv* (*An Ancient History of Eastern Peoples*, 1918), in which she made a substantial account of the history of ancient peoples. Ukrainka paid attention to the issue of origins and the evolution of religion with a perfectly rational mind (Українка 1918, 8). Ukrainka believed that religion was a product of human, not divine, activity; religions gradually progress and evolve:

> One needs to remember that all faiths were created not at once, but very slowly. Therefore the faith of the Brahmans, further developing its pantheistic ideas, came to Buddhism, and then the Brahmans were in enmity with the Buddhists. Because only one part of the people evolved in their faith so far, that it reached Buddhism, but the rest were left with older Brahmanism.
>
> (Українка 1918, 37)

The plots of some of Ukrainka's dramatic works take place in the early Christian period: for example, *V katakombakh* (*In the Catacombs*, [1905] 1976), *Rufin i Pristsilla* (*Rufin and Priscilla*, [1910] 1976) and *Advokat Martian* (*Attorney Martian*, [1911] 1977). The main characters are atheists, freethinkers and skeptics who question the Christian doctrine. Ukrainka describes "the lost Christianity", not yet institutionalized religion, without a strict hierarchy of power: Christ's fraternity of equals (Забужко 2014, 194). Modern scholars have doubts as to whether Lesia Ukrainka was an atheist, although, based on some of her phrases, Soviet researchers made such a conclusion (Олексюк 1958). She had an ambivalent attitude, for example, towards spiritism, which she referred to as "half-amusement", "half-illness" and "half-charlatanry". She thought it could assist future science, especially psychology, similarly to alchemy, which had positively affected the progress of chemistry earlier in history. At some point, Lesya Ukrainka confessed: "I believe in only one spirit, the one which was eulogized by Heine in his *Bergidylle*, and the one which was served by the most prominent human souls. And this belief is enough for me" (Українка 1978). Heine was writing about the Holy Spirit, being himself antitrinitarian.

The anticlerical legislation and antireligious policy of the 1930s

The Russian Revolution of 1917 promoted anticlerical ideas among the people not only in Eastern Ukraine, part of the Russian Empire, but in Western Ukraine as well. Soviet scholars usually pointed out the wave of worker strikes against clerical organizations, the seizure of church lands by peasants and the banishment of priests from villages. There were recorded cases when people refused to participate in public religious rituals, as well as solitary instances of weddings and funerals without a religious ceremony (Сливка et al. 1981, 15–23).

For an understanding of this period, it is sufficient to know the new legislation in this field. Modern Ukrainian scholars (e.g., Кравченко and Сітарчук 2005; Пащенко and Киридон 2004) point out that the secret instructions for fighting religion existed along with the official legislation during the rules of Lenin and Stalin. The content of these instructions contradicted the guidelines of the Soviet legislation.

The foundation for the Ukrainian legislation on religion was the Decree of the Provisional Workers-Peasant Government of Ukraine on the Separation of the Church from the State and School from the Church, issued on 22 January 1919. This decree was almost a word-for-word copy of the analogous "Lenin's decree" of 1918. The principal statements were separation of church from state, free belief or disbelief in any religion for citizens, prohibition of conducting any religious rites in state and public institutions, handing over of civil registration acts from the church to the state, separation of school from the church and the prohibition of teaching religion at schools, prohibition of mandatory (forced) church fees or taxes and the handing over of church property to the state (Литвин and Пшеничний 1973, 71–72).

In 1919, the separation of school from the church was specified: a prohibition on teaching religious doctrine at school, removal of religious symbols and images from university premises and noncompulsory teaching of religious disciplines. Religious schools and seminaries were nationalized and turned into secondary schools of general education. In 1922, the law on people's education in UkrSSR was issued, stating that upbringing and education should be free from any religious influence. Scientific and educational institutions were obliged to carry out antireligious propaganda (Литвин and Пшеничний 1973, 84–86).

The Bolshevik atheist propaganda was aimed at the denunciation of religion and the criticism of the clergy, but it lacked a well-considered plan and was rather occasional and ineffective. Several decades later, this approach was even criticized by Soviet scholars themselves (Лобовик and Колодний 1991, 135). Due to the fact that the Orthodox Church was the dominant confession in Soviet Ukraine, it became the main target of the antireligious policy. This policy was conducted in several directions: promotion of the church schism, seizure of church property, closure of churches, confiscation

of bells, financial pressure, discrimination, psychological and physical pressure on the clergy, arrests, repressions and executions.

In 1929, the active attack on religion included the seizure of church bells and the mass closure of churches and prayer houses. The number of closed prayer houses in Ukraine was 46 in 1924 and 1925, 29 in 1926, 58 in 1927, 97 in 1928, 136 in 1929 and 234 in 1930 (Пащенко and Киридон 2004, 231–243). The premises of the closed churches were used by village councils, schools and clubs and as garages for tractors, mills, storages, newspaper editorial offices, shoe repair shops, dormitories, cinemas and museums. A number of shrines were simply destroyed. By the end of 1932, more than 1 million shrines were closed, while 8 million continued to function in Ukraine (Пащенко and Киридон 2004, 238–243).

The period between 1933 and 1937 was called by Stalin "the Godless Five-Year Plan". During this period, all the confessions and manifestations of religion were supposed to be eliminated (Зінкевич and Воронин 1987, 1037). During the "decisive assault" about 75% to 80% of churches were eradicated in Ukraine. At the beginning of the 1940s, there were regions without a single functioning church or only one (Пащенко and Киридон 2004, 255, 265). All the clergymen and representatives of religious organizations were regarded as enemies of the Soviet regime (Пащенко and Киридон 2004, 174). Discrimination, permanent harassment, deportations and executions had a tremendous impact on the clergy. Some priests rejected their benefice (Кравченко and Сітарчук 2005, 149). Nearly 2,000 people renounced benefice in 1929 and 1930 (Зінкевич and Воронин 1987, 1031).

New rituals for a new life

Apart from the persecutions of the clergy, the Soviet authorities also attempted to replace religious rituals and customs with new Soviet ones. The development and implementation of new nonreligious rituals was an important part of the antireligious campaign in the 1920s and 1930s and the Soviet propaganda and education starting in the late 1950s and particularly in the 1970s and 1980s.

On 25 January 1918, Ukraine was obliged to follow a new calendar. Religious holidays were excluded; the week system was changed, turning Sundays into working days and making it impossible to commemorate any religious events. If the Ukrainian citizens did not obey the instructions to decorate their houses with red flags or revolutionary slogans, they were regarded as acting against the Soviet regime and punished according to the criminal law of the state (Келембетова 1967, 73). These examples clearly show that becoming an "atheist" in Soviet Ukraine was not an issue of free choice and belief, but survival.

In the 1920s, new secular life-cycle rites appeared in the Soviet Union. As soon as the Bolshevik authorities dismissed the church wedding ceremony as mandatory and made it a private matter, so-called red weddings appeared.

This ceremony consisted of the registration of the couple in the local club, congratulations to the newlyweds from colleagues and the giving of presents. A new ritual replaced baptism – *oktyabriny* or *zvezdiny* – the primary function of which was to name a newborn. The ceremony was accompanied by the same elements as the red wedding. The very first *oktyabriny* was held in Kharkiv in 1923 (Закович 1980, 57–58). The “red ritualism” of the 1920s and 1930s held an apparent antireligious orientation and was spontaneous. There were also other antireligious ceremonies, e.g., Komsomol Easter and Komsomol Christmas. As an example of the popularity of red rituals, one can recall the following fact. In Poltava, with only a population of 85,000 in the autumn of 1924, around 1,500 red *oktyabriny*, civil weddings and funerals were conducted (Киридон 2017, 15).

For educational purposes, selected churches were turned into antireligious or atheist museums. This initiative originated in the second half of the 1920s and lasted up until the end of Soviet rule. One of the first and most well-known museums was Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. In 1930, the All-Ukrainian Antireligious Museum was opened on the premises of Volodymyrsky Cathedral (Зінкевич and Воронин 1987, 1034).

Union of Militant Atheists and Commission for Research of Religious Ideology

This period is also marked by the activity of the Union of Militant Atheists, which was founded in Moscow in 1925 and became a republican organization in Ukraine in 1928 (Кравченко and Сітарчук 2005, 168). In 1937, there were 93,698 union members in Ukraine (Молчанов 1973, 35) and 16,965 atheist cells three years later (Келембетова 1967, 13). A small calculation shows that each cell numbered only five or six people. Nonetheless, the union was active enough in advocating atheism all over Ukraine. The union organized anti-Christmas and anti-Easter campaigns, antireligious carnivals, disputes with clergymen, concerts, exhibitions, a celebration of new holidays (Harvest Day, Kolkhoz Foundation Day etc.), lectures on religion and atheism etc. An organization called the Young Militant Atheists was created for children. In 1932, it numbered about 700,000 members in Ukraine (Келембетова 1967, 98) because such clubs were organized in almost every school (*Инструкція* 1928, 15–16). It was recommended to organize conferences for children to learn about religions and atheism, wallpaper about atheism, plays with antireligious content, excursions to antireligious exhibitions and museums etc. (*І Всеукраїнський* 1928, 95).

During this period, new educational institutions were organized to prepare “professional atheists”, i.e., people whose job was to advocate atheism and to fight religious remnants. The union held the All-Ukrainian antireligious courses, in which particular attention was given to female students, who were supposed to actively advocate antireligious ideology not only at home but in the kindergartens and schools where they worked. The

Department of Philosophy and Atheism at the All-Ukrainian Institute of Communist Education, founded in 1928, graduated 17 specialists in atheism (Келембетова 1967, 98–100). In 1929, the first theoretical courses on atheism were taught at the Institute for People's Education, Workers University and the Soviet Party School.

In May 1927, the Commission for Research of Religious Ideology at the Department of Marxism and Leninism of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences was established to conduct religious studies research. The tasks of the commission were the following: 1) to work on Marx's theory of the origins of religion; 2) to elaborate a Marxist history of religion, especially the history of religions in Ukraine; 3) to study modern religious movements in Ukraine and abroad in the context of the proletarian revolution; 4) to systematically work on the philosophy of atheism and 5) to analyze contemporary science, assisting it in overcoming idealism and mechanism (Нирчук 1930). The commission also conducted an academic seminar on atheism, published collected volumes *Kultura y religiya* (*Culture and Religion*, 1929) and *Revolyutsiya i religiya* (*Revolution and Religion*, 1930) and, in cooperation with the Union of Militant Atheists, worked on the implementation of antireligious disciplines in educational institutions (*С-ич* 1929). A philosophy professor Myhaylo Nyrchuk headed the commission.

Nyrchuk's main topic of scholarly interest was the philosophy of atheism. He distinguished between three forms of atheism in European thought: 1) bourgeoise, 2) petty-bourgeoise and 3) proletarian. In his opinion, bourgeoise atheism destroyed the feudalist ideology and criticized religion but made it from the perspective of the bourgeoisie. Bourgeoise atheism prepared the ground for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. It was enlightening atheism – atheism for the elite, but not for the masses. With the term *petty-bourgeois*, Nyrchuk made reference to the antireligious ideas of Ludwig Büchner[1] and Ivan Stepanov-Skvortsov,[2] who proved the materialistic grounds of religion, but without any philosophical arguments. Proletarian atheism grounded itself in dialectical and historical materialism and explained the natural phenomenon from the materialistic perspective. Its main characteristic was its practical application in everyday life (Нирчук 1929).

In 1929, the commission issued a report about its activity. The research directions included the study of the papacy, bourgeoise atheism, scientists and religion, religion in pedagogics, state-church relation in Byzantium, Darwinism and religion, personality and religion in literature, philosophy and religion, a methodology for fighting religion etc. The educational direction was aimed at preparing scholars of atheism, who would work in universities, conduct atheist seminars and publish atheist articles. The commission's activities also included publications, lectures for students and workers etc. (Хроніка 1929, 292–295).

The scholarly work of the commission stopped with the political repressions in 1936, when most of its employees were accused of participation in a Trotskyist terrorist organization and sentenced to five years of prison; some

were executed, among them Nyrchuk. From 1955 to 1961 and in 1989, all the participants of this trial were freed from indictment (Шаповал 2010, 503–504).

The attitude towards religion in World War II and a decade later

During the German occupation of the Ukrainian territory in World War II, religious life was renewed. According to a survey in 1942, 99.9% of the Kyiv population stated that they were believers (Зінкевич and Воронин 1987, 1051). That same year, the Union of Militant Atheists dissolved its activity, which is eloquent evidence of the change in Stalin's religious policy. Five years later, however, a new organization was created on the union basis: the Society for the Circulation of Political and Scientific Knowledge, which in 1963 was renamed the Society *Znannya* (Knowledge). One particular direction of its activity was to promote atheist knowledge by publishing scientific and popular literature and giving public lectures.

The Soviet regime exploited famous writers and men of letters as propagandists, among them Yaroslav Halan (1902–1949). He was born in Lviv to a Greek Catholic family. For some time in his childhood, he lived in Russia, where he grew acquainted with Lenin's ideas and contemporary Russian literature. When Western Ukraine was joined to the Soviet Ukraine, he worked for the popular newspapers *Vilna Ukrayina* (*Free Ukraine*), *Pravda Ukrayiny* (*Truth of Ukraine*) and *Radyanska Ukrayina* (*Soviet Ukraine*), being famous for his pamphlets against Catholicism and the Uniate Church. This literature prepared the background for the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church, and Soviet authorities watched the reaction of the population to these publications carefully (see Bociurkiw 1996, 107–113). He accused the metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and the Greek Catholic Church of cooperation with Fascism and bourgeois nationalism (meaning primarily collaboration with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). They were proclaimed to be enemies of Communist society (Галан 1953a, 286). In his pamphlets, *Na sluzhbi v Satany* (*At Satan's Service*, [1948] 1953b) and *Ti, shcho vyyshly z t'my* (*Those Who Walked Out of Darkness*, [1948] 1953d), Halan describes Vatican international policy directed against democracy and promoting Fascism and imperialism. Simultaneously, Orthodoxy is shown as a native Ukrainian tradition. In 1949, Pope Pius XII excommunicated Halan from the church, and in response, the Soviet writer published the pamphlet *Plyuyu na papu* (*I Spit on the Pope*, [1949] 1953c), which was one of his last works. On 24 October 1949, Halan was murdered in his apartment. The official version of the reason for his death was that he was murdered by Ukrainian nationalists, although modern scholars argue that it might have been at the order of the KGB (Генега 2007, 111). Halan's anti-Catholic journalism became a model for Ukrainian atheistic literature. All his successors, writing about the Greek Catholic Church, used his expressions and definitions as

clichés even in their academic publications. They borrowed from his works the image of this church as an ideological enemy of the Communist idea and as an enemy of the Ukrainian people in general. Halan's name was given to social and political clubs in Western Ukraine.

Institutionalization of scientific atheism

The advancement and institutionalization of scientific atheism as a scholarly discipline and area of research continued in the first years after WWII. The documents of the Communist Party "On Major Problems in Scientific and Atheist Propaganda and on Measures for Its Improvement" (1954) and "On Mistakes in the Course of Scientific and Atheist Propaganda among People" (1954) (see Литвин and Пшеничний 1973, 47–57) called for an intensification of antireligious propaganda and atheist education. Ukraine became the first USSR republic to establish a Department of the History and Theory of Atheism at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University in 1959. Prior to this, the discipline Introduction to Scientific Atheism had been introduced to the educational plans of all higher educational institutions. In 1957 and 1959, the educational program Introduction to Atheism was elaborated and became the basis for the all-USSR program Introduction to Scientific Atheism (1962). The first head of the aforementioned department, Volodymyr Tancher,[3] wrote the handbook *Osnovy ateyizmu* (*Basics of Atheism* 1961) and the anthology *Pytannya ateyizmu* (*Questions of Atheism* 1962). The handbook consisted of six chapters: "Marxist Atheism: The Highest Form of Atheism", "Origins of Religion", "Judaism", "Modern Christianity", "The Radical Opposition Between Science and Religion", "Religion and the State" and "The Marx-Leninist Party and Religion". The last chapter ended with a paragraph on the propaganda of scientific atheism, which could be implemented through lectures, thematic evenings, FAQ evenings, reading groups of popular science literature and discussions with believers (Танчер 1961, 331–338).

The department studied the origins of religion, the causes of religious survivals, the opposition between science and religion and the criticism of religious ideology (Матеріали 1967, 130–138). The department engaged students to question people all over the republic in sociological surveys. These surveys showed that, even in spite of the fact that many respondents said they were not religious, they did not believe in God and so on, they still baptized their children, had icons at home and celebrated religious holidays. Departments of scientific atheism were established at O.M. Horkiy Kyiv Pedagogical Institute and Lviv State University in 1964 (Козачишин 1973, 145–146).

The Department of Scientific Atheism of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of UkrSSR was established in 1957. For more than 30 years, scholars of the department researched the following problems: social factors of the decay of religious consciousness, religion and

atheism in the context of cultural progress, Soviet rituals, a critique of modern religious philosophy and theology, religion and scientific and technical revolution. The department employees gave propagandist lectures, wrote publicist articles to Soviet newspapers and published a considerable number of popular science brochures. This department was headed by an expert in ancient Greek philosophy and Freethought Arsen Avetysyan (1958–1963), a researcher of the religiosity of Soviet people Anatoliy Yeryshev (1963–1969), a researcher of the modernization of religion and a theoretician of atheist education and counter-propaganda Oleksiy Onyshchenko (1969–1978), a renowned Marxist philosopher of religion Yevgraf Duluman (1979–1982) and a researcher of religious consciousness Borys Lobovyk (1982–1984). In 1984, the department was reorganized into the Sector of Theoretical Issues of Scientific Atheism, which was headed by Lobovyk until 1989. From 1989 to 1990, the sector was renamed the Sector of Philosophical and Worldview Issues of Religion and Atheism and was headed by a theoretician of atheism and renowned scholar of the religious history of Ukraine, Anatoliy Kolodnyi. The following collective monographs reflect the research activity of the department: *Religious Adaptation and Atheist Upbringing* (1965), *On the Character of Current Sectarian Beliefs* (1968), *Spiritual Culture and Religion* (1972), *The Ideological Crisis of Religion and Religious Modernism* (1974), *Atheism and Cultural Progress* (1977), *The Scientific and Technical Revolution and Formation of an Atheist Worldview* (1980), *A Critique of the Philosophical Anthropology of Religion* (1985), *Orthodoxy and Modernity (Philosophical and Sociological Analysis)* (1988) and *Culture. Religion. Atheism* (1991).

The Ivano-Frankivsk Department of Scientific Atheism of the Institute of Philosophy existed since 1969. The establishment of this department was primarily focused on ideological tasks. This department assisted local party centers in studying religiosity and carrying out atheist events (AIP 1). The primary research direction of the department was identified as “the study of sociological problems for overcoming religious remnants” (AIP 2). The archive materials confirm that the department and its employees played an essential part in the atheist activity of the Ivano-Frankivsk region. The research plans and its activity were coordinated with the party apparatus and were implemented under their promotion (AIP 3). Over the 20 years of its existence, the department carried out research projects on the study of religiosity and religious consciousness, elaboration of the methodology of atheist education and its connection to international and moral education, problems of the elaboration of Soviet rituals and Greek Catholic clericalism.

In 1983, the department of scientific atheism provided the Ivano-Frankivsk regional committee of the Communist Party with an inquiry involving a preliminary analysis of the sociological survey data (SAIFR 1). The inquiry stated that the department had conducted the research of the actual religious level in 1970, and the survey of 1983 recorded quantitative

changes and displayed "the tendency for evolution of the believers' spiritual world under the influence of the changes in specific living conditions, the effectiveness of the scientific and atheist education and the state of public opinion on the questions of atheism and religion" (SAIFR 2). The survey determined that the actual religiosity level was 35% (SAIFR 2). Therefore, the inquiry postulated the obviousness of the secularization process: gradually vanishing religion and its exclusion from citizens' consciousness and life, a steady inclination for disbelief on the part of people affected by the Soviet ideology (SAIFR 3). The following groups were distinguished: convinced atheists, unbelievers, those indifferent to religion and atheism, those wavering between belief and disbelief and fanatical believers (SAIFR 4). The use of this typology had an applied value; the inquiry demonstrated the necessity of a differentiated approach to the atheist education of different groups of citizens, depending on their attitude towards religion and atheism (SAIFR 5). It is apparent in this example that the sociological surveys were conducted not purely to satisfy scholarly interest, but with a practical goal: to fight against citizens' religiosity through planned and systematic atheist education.

All these atheist institutions maneuvered between actual philosophical and sociological research on the one hand and ideological propaganda on the other. Some scholars who worked during the Soviet period and work now in the field of religious studies have said in private interviews and conversations that there were situations in which the sociological survey results contradicted the Communist ideology, and therefore, these results were concealed from the public (Йолон 2016; Онищенко 2017).

The structure of scientific atheism embraced three parts: Marxist religious studies, atheist studies and theory of atheist education (Танчер 1985, 100; Саух 1988, 53–55). The analysis of the thematic specialization of 18 scientific and educational subdivisions, working in the field of scientific atheism in 1980 (CSA 1), demonstrated that almost equal attention was given to problems of Marxist religious studies (meaning critical study of religious doctrines and sociological survey of religiosity) and theoretical and methodological issues of atheist education and propaganda. Less attention was paid to the elaboration of the theory of atheism.

Modernization of religion from the perspective of scientific atheism

Among different religions, scientific atheism was mostly concerned with Christianity, mainly Orthodox Christianity and, to a lesser degree, Catholicism and Protestantism. The study of Orthodox Christianity intensified on the threshold of the millennium anniversary of the introduction of Christianity in Kyiv Rus. Catholicism was attractive for two reasons: modern Catholic theology and philosophy (neo-Thomism, neo-Augustinism and Chardin's concept) and the Greek Catholic Church. The texts devoted to the

latter were more of an ideological than a scientific and scholarly character. The same could be said about Protestantism, because Greek Catholics, Pentecostalists, Adventists and especially Jehovah's Witnesses were considered equally dangerous and anti-Soviet elements. Protestant groups were traditionally regarded as "sects", propagating fanaticism, because their followers were more religious than the Orthodox believers, and they had religious motivation for their activity. Because of the Protestants' connection (especially Jehovah's Witnesses) to their religious centers outside the USSR, they were regarded as agents of bourgeois imperialism. The study of other religions was weak. There were, for example, books published and a thesis on Judaism defended (see Басаури Зюзина 2017, 212–217), but most of them had no serious scholarly value.

One of the main ideas in scientific atheism was the steady secularization of Soviet society, which was to be promoted by atheistically oriented scholars of religion. The study of religion equaled the research of "religious remnants". Up until the middle of the 1980s, Marxists steadily held to the view that religion was in crisis throughout the world, especially in the Soviet Union. The reaction of religion to this crisis was its modernization. It is important to understand that, because scientific atheism was supposed to be part of Marxist philosophy, it studied the religious consciousness described by contemporary religious philosophers (philosophers-idealists) and theologians and ordinary religious consciousness as well.

Writing about contemporary Christian theology, Ukrainian scholars presented it as one of the aspects of modernization of religion. Scientific atheists especially pointed out the modernizing tendency of the diversion from theism to deism and pantheism. Simultaneously, the attitude towards these two teachings was ambivalent. On the one hand, it was recognized that deism and pantheism once played a progressive role in the history of human thought: they undermined the basics of Christianity. Now, however, according to scientific atheists, theologians used a deist and pantheist idea to interest ordinary believers. Based on the sociological survey data, Soviet scholars demonstrated that ordinary believers tended towards pantheist and deist ideas (Онищенко 1977, 205–207). The correlation between theology and ordinary religious consciousness was also a subject to reflect on. The modernization of theology was considered legitimized by the change in the consciousness of ordinary believers, who were influenced by social changes in Soviet society (Бондаренко 1989, 90–91).

The central tendency in Christian theology, especially in Orthodox Christianity, was the proclaimed shift from theocentrism (although it was not rejected) to anthropocentrism, or from the problem of relations between God and human to relations between human and human. This shift in theology was explained by the fact that theologians needed to prove the participation of believers in social activities (Лобовик 1985, 34–35). Scientific atheists believed that this participation was caused by massive social transformation (meaning primarily the spreading of literacy and education,

industrialization and urbanization, which was connected to Marxist ideology and the domination of the Communist Party in the country). Theologians allegedly elaborated the concept of Christian serving the world to demonstrate the participation of believers in social life and give this participation religious meaning. Indeed, theologians did all this, according to scientific atheists, because they wanted to return and intensify their influence on ordinary believers (Бондаренко 1989, 104).

Generally, the modernization of Russian Orthodoxy was associated with the change in the Soviet policy towards Orthodoxy, the formation of the loyal position of the church towards the USSR, which took place during WWII. According to popular thought, the modernization of theology began in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when new believers joined the church, and the final legitimation of this process came about in 1971 at the Russian Orthodox Church local council. The modernization process was also influenced by external factors: for example, church participation in the ecumenical movement. Scientific atheists often wrote about the changes in the dogmatic part of theology (e.g., Лобовик 1988, 37–38), but none of them gave specific citations or examples. Those of them who went deeper into the problem were eventually compelled to write not about the dogmatic changes, but about the partial reinterpretation of the doctrine.

In general, the modernization of Christian theology was considered somewhat ambivalently. Firstly, it was traditionally evaluated negatively because its goal was to keep religion "afloat", to somehow influence believers. Secondly, the modernization was evaluated positively (especially Orthodox theology), because the changes in theology were brought to life by social changes and certain "correct" ideas entered it.

The campaign against "religion in person"

In the 1950s, the USSR was not officially "fighting against a person in religion anymore, but against religion in person" (Стоцький 2008, 187). Khrushchev's antireligious policy was aimed at a decrease in the number of religious communities. Monasteries were closed, disabled monks were moved to nursing homes, and those able to work had to find themselves a legal workplace. At the beginning of the 1950s, for example, in the Ternopil region (which joined the Soviet Ukraine only after World War II), there were five functioning monasteries, but at the end of 1959, the only functioning monastery was Pochayiv Lavra, which operated over the entire Soviet period (Стоцький 2008, 364).

In the 1950s and 1960s, a campaign for the removal of religious symbols from public places was conducted in Western Ukraine. They especially pertained to stone statues of the Virgin Mary, crosses and small chapels. The plenipotentiary in religious affairs of Ivano-Frankivsk region reported, for example, that in 1961 and 1962 there were 4,000 crosses and 450 chapels demolished or moved (Стоцький 2008, 279).

It became widespread again for priests and religious activists to "disclaim religion". Atheist propaganda used these renunciations; they were collected and published. One of the most celebrated examples in Ukraine was the case of Yevgraph Duluman, ThD (1957), a professor at Samara Theological Seminary. Duluman later became an active atheist, graduated from the philosophy department at Kyiv State University and became a professional scientific atheist. He worked at the Department of Scientific Atheism at Kyiv Pedagogical Institute and then at the Department of Scientific Atheism at the Institute of Philosophy (AIP 4).

The most popular book by Duluman is *Ideya boga* (*The Idea of God*, 1970) published in Moscow. The author refutes the arguments of God's existence, considers theodicy, a relation of God's attributes as absolute freedom and absolute intelligence, omnipotence and mercifulness. Duluman points out the contradictions in Christian theology, thus arguing that the idea of God is absurd. Another one of his books is more academic and is entitled *Religiya yak social'no-istorychnyi fenomen* (*Religion as a Social and Historical Phenomenon*, 1974), published in Kyiv. Dealing with a range of issues, the author also writes about the future of religion. Duluman criticizes the Western futurology of religion, which assumes a new universal religion will appear in the future on the foundation of the previous forms of religion using modern scientific knowledge. Although the cited Western futurologists wrote about a global, ecumenical religion, Duluman, in contrast, gave actual examples, such as Meher Baba, who was supposed to have a mental illness. Duluman stated that sects and cults were not new religions, but just a modification of the old ones. These sects and cults could not satisfy the need for a new religion. Capitalist societies therefore still made use of the old religious traditions, which served the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The proletariat did not need any religion. It liquidated its social roots. Marxism was convinced that religion would vanish but did not know the exact time of this vanishing. Scientific atheism should promote the overcoming of religious survival. The ideological work of scientific atheism should consequently include exposure of the social role of religion, showing it as illogical and absurd, giving scientific explanations for various aspects of religious life. Citing the sociological survey data, Duluman (Дулуман 1974, 247) affirmed that the ideological work promoted Soviet citizens' alienation from religion.

Culture at the service of atheist propaganda

The atheist propaganda made use of all the available methods to affect people's minds: popular scientific antireligious films were shot, and feature films and literature included some atheist motifs. Radio and TV programs were produced, theater plays were devoted to appropriate topics, specialized journals and series of newspaper articles were published, workers made antireligious stands and posters, propagandists gave lectures and

school teachers were obliged to emphasize atheist and anticlerical aspects in natural science and humanity disciplines. Seminars, courses and even atheist departments and universities encouraged propagandists and party activists to acquire special knowledge and skills for implementation of atheist propaganda. Upon completing such kinds of training, activists would open atheist rooms, circles, houses and clubs. Hryhoriy Mukvych (Муквич 1973, 201, 203) states that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were 300 atheist houses and clubs in Ukraine. In 1958, 113,163 atheistic lectures were given, and, in 1969, there were 219,600. In 1957, 102 titles of atheist books and brochures were published (2,291,000 copies), and, in 1960, 403 titles (6,224,000 copies) (Муквич 1973, 207). The publishing house Politvydav Ukrayiny published a book series entitled *Besidy z viruyuchymy* (*Conversations with Believers*) starting in 1980, which included ten brochures with 40,000 to 50,000 copies each. Between 1982 and 1989, the publishing house Vyshcha Shkola published a popular scientific series *Ateisticheskaya Biblioteka Studenta* (*Student Atheist Library*), which included 30 brochures with 4,000 to 10,000 copies each.

In the USSR, antireligious posters (*Padziecki plakat anyreligigijny* 2013) and caricatures were popular in the 1920s, and 30 years later, they had a new cycle of development. Regardless of their plot, the goal was to profane and desacralize religious images. Religion was presented as an element of the previous social order, a reactionary force, an integral part of the capitalistic world, which did not blend with socialist reality. After World War II, the comic magazine *Peretz'* (*Pepper*) was very trendy in Ukraine. It mocked priests, who were presented as having extremely pragmatic, rather than spiritual, motives and ordinary human weaknesses, like alcoholism. During the late Soviet period, subjects of ridicule were also ineffective atheist propaganda and the religiosity (participation in religious rituals) of Soviet citizens, including members of Komsomol and the Communist Party. Soviet citizens continued to practice religion even in the late Soviet period. According to the research of that time, child baptism or church marriage did not affirm the religiosity of the participants in these rituals. Victoria Smolkin (2018, 211) found another explanation circulating among scientific atheists. Religious rituals were often performed by young people, as we put it today, "for fun", meaning for some entertainment. Visiting church could be compared to visiting the theater or the circus.

Soviet authorities actively used cinema to influence the masses. It is no surprise that Ukrainian film studios made antireligious films as well. The most popular movies were *Ivanna* (*Ivanna* 1959, director Viktor Ivchenko) and *Tsvetok na kamne* (*Flower on Stone* 1962, director Sergey Paradzhanov). The story of *Ivanna* takes place in Soviet Lviv in 1940. *Ivanna* demonstrated that during World War II, Greek Catholic clergy cooperated with the Germans and blessed the murders of partisans, Jews and civilians. Special attention was given in the film to the metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who was depicted as a negative character. The second mentioned film tells the

story of a young Ukrainian girl, Khrystyna, who came to Donbass to work, where she joined the Pentecostal community. The presbyter Zabroda held his religious activity secret, being an ordinary librarian and recommending antireligious literature to readers. Here the film clearly demonstrates the double face of the clergy. Eventually, Khrystyna was convinced that there was no God in heaven and deconverted.

In fact, the religiosity of the population of the Soviet Union was associated, first of all, with the low level of education of certain strata and the low qualifications (Сливка et al. 1981, 56–57). In our opinion, we need to take into consideration the opposite side of this phenomenon. Believers were often prevented from getting a higher education, taking key posts and making a career in general. A decision was made, for example, to deny the children of clergy access to higher education in 1953 (Стоцький 2008, 204).

In the late 1960s, the second wave of establishing antireligious museums began. Unlike the museums of the 1930s, they often combined exhibitions devoted to religion and cosmonautics (see Smolkin 2018). In Ivano-Frankivsk, for example, the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism was established in an Armenian temple in 1971. In front of the museum, a space rocket was erected to "symbolize the eternal human striving for knowledge, light and happiness" (Повх et al. 1982, 1). The museum was a scientific and methodological center for atheist propaganda in the region. It hosted seminars for ideology functionaries and assemblies for young atheists. The museum employees paid particular attention to the criticism of Catholicism, because this religion was dominant in the region. At the beginning of 1972, there were at least nine museums in the region, with some of them located in former shrines.

In 1973, Lviv Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism was opened in the building of the Dominican shrine and monastery. This museum is the only one that continues to function up to the present, but without the word *atheism* in its name.

The theoretical background for new Soviet rituals

After World War II, Soviet nonreligious rituals were elaborated in special commissions. In the Soviet Ukraine, Parliament's Commission for the Study, Generalization of Experience and Implementation in Everyday Life of New Civil Holidays and Rituals was established. Later, in 1969, it was transformed into the Commission for Soviet Traditions, Celebrations and Rituals under the Council of Ministers of the UkrSSR. The commission's activity was not directly connected to antireligious policy. Nevertheless, it researched a comparison of the implementation of new rituals with the popularity of church ones (CSA 2).

The theoretical grounds for promoting socialist rituals were elaborated by scholars, who considered that rituals became religious historically. This statement was based on James Frazer's opposition between magic and

religion. Although magic is erroneous, it is somewhat similar to science, because it is grounded in the laws of nature (false ones). The aim of the magic ritual is not to flatter supernatural beings, but to change the natural course of events (Москалец 1987, 11, 23). Frazer's statement, combined with the Marxist approach to history, produced a deduction that each social and economic formation elaborated its rituals. Therefore, primitive rituals were associated with a classless society and a mythological worldview. They were regarded as a single means of communication between generations and were inseparable from myths. Religious rituals reflected the class society religious worldview. They were used for worshipping supernatural beings. The Soviet nonreligious rituals therefore reflected socialist society and a scientific and materialistic worldview. The rituals were divided into six groups: social and political (e.g., marches and parades on May 1 and 2 [International Workers' Day] and May 9 [Victory Day]), labor rituals (e.g., rituals associated with factory anniversaries, celebrations of work collectives etc.), militant and patriotic (e.g., military oath-taking, ceremony of the presentation of awards etc.), children, junior and youth (e.g., the first day of school, the admission of pioneers), popular (rituals of the holidays of the year: New Year, Maslenitsa) and family and home (weddings, funerals) (see Лобовик et al. 1986, 188–199). If the natural and supernatural were united in the mythological worldview and opposed in the religious worldview, then in the materialistic worldview, only the natural existed. Therefore, when overcoming the religious worldview, all the rituals did not disappear – just the religious ones (Романова 1987, 11, 14–19).

The research on religious rituals was conducted in different directions. First, it was studied as part of religion in general. Mykola Zakovych (Закович 1980, 170) considered rituals to be the most conservative element of religion, which appealed to human's emotion, but not the rational mind. He noted that church rituals deliberately used aesthetic and attractive aspects to affect human emotions. By means of suggestion, emotional contamination, imitation, identification etc., religious leaders could easily lead believers wherever they wanted (Москалец 1983, 72). Understanding the consolidation role of religious rituals, scientific atheists claimed this consolidation to be an illusion because it could not consolidate higher classes with lower ones. Moreover, during religious rituals, believers learned religious values and norms, which were usually associated with a passive position in life, which contradicted the Marxist approach of an active human's place in all spheres of life.

Scholars (Москалец 1987, 67) noted that often participation in religious rituals was motivated by nonreligious reasons (a tribute to tradition, the customs of a specific milieu). The modernization of religious rituals (permission for parents to be present at their child's baptism, change of the time of worship, permission for Catholics and Protestants to be godparents for Orthodox children etc.) was also criticized. Another essential thesis was that historically, traditional popular rituals were not religious: not all the rituals were connected to religion; they had "a deeper meaning". According to one

of the prominent theoreticians of religious and secular rituals, the rituals emerged in primitive society to transmit habits of work, norms and rules of behavior, thoughts, perspectives and feelings from generation to generation (Закович 1980, 22). Soviet rituals, therefore, had an important atheist tool, because they were supposed to replace religious rituals and strengthen the socialist way of life. These rituals were usually called "new nonreligious rituals" or "nonreligious civil rituals".

The shift in scientific atheism during Perestroika

Starting with Perestroika, interest in religion began to expand in society. It was connected to both the liberalization of relations between the state and church and the activation of the religious organizations close to the 1,000th anniversary of the Christianization of Kyiv Rus, which was celebrated on the state level in 1988. Intellectuals began taking an interest in the religious aspects of culture and the religious heritage of Kyiv Rus. Indian religious practices and doctrines began to spread actively, and Ukrainian and Russian religious philosophy were studied. Scientific atheism and brutal Soviet antireligious policies were also criticized. As a result, scientific atheists became more flexible. In the atheistic works of the late 1980s, one can find not only moderate but even positive attitudes towards religion and believers. Volodymyr Tancher (Танчер 1988, 29), for instance, wrote that religion in Soviet society was under the influence of socialist ideology, and ideas of humanism and progress appeared. Soviet believers had no reactionary ideas and theories and supported Soviet authorities.

In late Soviet publications (e.g., Лобовик and Колодний 1991), we observe a retreat from certain dogmatic Marxist statements and blame of the antireligious policy of the 1920s and 1930s. It should be mentioned that it is difficult to find strongly negative characteristics of religion and church in the atheist literature of the second half of the 1980s. Viktor Bondarenko (Бондаренко 1989, 3), for example, writing about the influence of the Orthodox Church on various areas of social life, noted that this influence cannot be evaluated unambiguously, because in various historical periods, the church had both positive and negative effect on the life of a specific society.

Soviet intellectuals were searching for religiosity and spirituality while at the same time criticizing atheism. Scientific atheists admitted the deformations and exaggerations of the Soviet antireligious policy but marked off scientific atheism from these mistakes. Party functionaries were responsible for the persecution of believers and clergymen, destroying shrines and so on, and not the scientific atheists. Atheist and antireligious activities were contra-distinguished, which was done not to identify scientific atheism with an antireligious policy. Antireligious activities were defined as administrative pressure, which hurt believers' feelings and victimized the priests. Indeed, the atheist activity was presented as an ideological struggle against

the religious worldview with the help of propaganda of scientific knowledge among the population. "Atheism militancy," wrote Kolodnyi, "is not roughness toward believers, not harshness of statements, but profundity, meaningfulness, conclusiveness, the scientific foundation of the atheist's word" (Лобовик and Колодний 1991, 259).

The ideological nature of scientific atheism consists in the fact that the new policy of Perestroika, declared by Mikhail Gorbachev, directly affected scientific atheism. This meant that the adjustments of official Soviet ideology influenced some theoretical theses within the discipline. These changes seemed to be an important factor in the rise of contemporary Ukrainian religious studies because the Perestroika approach present in the book *Kultura. Religia. Ateizm* (*Culture. Religion. Atheism*, 1991) is close enough to that of the academic study of religion. One can find here a tolerant attitude toward religiosity, believers and the church. Nevertheless, some secularist and atheist directives still remained: religion must be left in the past, and atheism was recognized as a true worldview, which should be widely spread. The authors dissociated themselves from some classical Marxists theses, overcoming atheist dogmatism. Atheism itself had become an object to examine. We consider this fact to be one of the features of scientific atheism in the times of Perestroika. Scholars stopped studying religion and instead gave theoretical proof of scientific atheism's expediency in a society deficient of religion. It also seems that the authors realized that religion would not actually disappear in the near future. The desecularization of Ukrainian society began during Perestroika.

Atheism in independent Ukraine

When Ukraine gained independence in 1991, more and more people began to proclaim their religiosity publicly. The number of religious organizations has grown rapidly, e.g., in 1991 there were 12,962 religious communities registered and 24,311 in 2000 (Колодний 2003, 571–581). The same dynamics of religiosity were shown in sociological surveys. In 1990 and 1991, only 35.6% of the population of Ukraine identified themselves as believers, and 62.6% did so in 1998 (Косуха 2003, 67, 73). According to the latest sociological survey, in 2018 only 3% identified themselves as convinced atheists and 4.7% as nonbelievers; 11.5% admitted they wavered between belief and disbelief, 5.3% were indifferent to religious issues and 3.7% did not identify their position. This total of 28.2% was opposed by the 71.8% who identified themselves as believers (Особливості 2018, 12). It is obvious that such a dynamic change in self-identification in two decades was not always connected to a genuine conversion to religion, just as positioning oneself as an atheist or unbeliever did not necessarily mean not believing in God or not participating in worship. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the turn to religion was a symbol of opposition to the Communist regime, a way of political freethinking, while in the 1990s, when everything associated with Marxism was denied, religious identification was widespread. Orthodox religiosity

became not only a religious but also a cultural marker. In 2003, for example, nearly one third of believers, those indifferent to religion and atheists identified themselves as Orthodox (Кочан 2003, 8). Being an open atheist was not fashionable any longer and was sometimes even perilous because society blamed atheists for all the Soviet antireligious policy.

During the independence years, only four books on freethinking and atheism were translated and published in Ukrainian: *The Selfish Gene, The God Delusion, The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins and *Traité d'athéologie: Physique de la métaphysique* by Michel Onfray. Books of Ukrainian authors were few; among them the most noticeable were devoted to skepticism: a historical and philosophical study by Oleksiy Panych (Панич 2007) of British epistemological skepticism and religious studies research by Valeriy Klymov (Климов 2013) on skepticism and freethinking from Classical Antiquity to the Enlightenment. Illya Yagiyayev (Ягіяєв 2017), based on his empirical research, argued that atheist beliefs were negatively connected to most of the elements of well-being. Compared to religious and indifferent people, atheists valued money, success and scientific knowledge for their well-being and manifested a strong positive correlation between social sources of happiness and psychological well-being. In 2018, an internet survey of nonbelievers was carried out in order to find out whether they could use their right of freedom of consciousness in full: 80.7% of the respondents felt themselves to have experienced discrimination or atheophobia, 68.2% felt pressure from their families and 49.3% from other close people. Also, 40.1% of the respondents pointed out the violation of the right to freedom of consciousness of nonreligious people in Ukrainian society, and 36% had personally experienced the violation of the freedom of consciousness in educational institutions (Дубровіна 2018a, 2018b).

The process of desecularization in post-Soviet countries, particularly in Ukraine, according to Vyacheslav Karpov (2010, 232–270) and Viktor Yelensky (Єленський 2014, 61–68), was directed "from above" as well as "from beneath". The political and intellectual elites viewed the church as the only social institution not associated with the Communist regime. The church consequently had hopes for the consolidation of the Ukrainian people to build an independent state. In general, atheism was invisible in the 1990s. Only in the 2000s did atheist websites appear, e.g., Atheism in Ukraine (not active any longer), Ukrainian Atheist Site (opium.at.ua), SOTREF (sotref.com) etc. A number of atheist events were somehow associated with Yevgraph Duluman, who, unlike most of his colleagues, did not switch from scientific atheism to religious studies.[4] His most well-known events were three debates with renowned Orthodox and Muslim theologians held in 2011 at the National Technical University Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. A certain result of Duluman's atheist activity was presented in his book *Bog. Religiya. Svyashchenniki. Veruyushchie i ateisty* (*God. Religion. Priests. Believers and Atheists*, 2012). It is a collection of articles, written mainly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The book has a polemic

character, often reflecting online and offline discussions. There are also texts containing practical advice on how to conduct discussions with theists. The first advice is the following: "Never enter a contest with theists!" The author then admits that it is truly difficult sometimes to refuse the discussion. He therefore has more advice: "Be calm and benevolent to the end"; "Know how to stop at the right time"; "Display honesty"; "Pay attention to what he says to you" etc. In 2013, the society Razum was founded; they began to publish a journal with the same name, but their activity ceased upon Duluman's death. Most of the atheist resources are currently full of Marxist and Communist rhetoric. In our opinion, this rhetoric is one of the obstacles to the advancement of the atheist movement in Ukraine.

Conclusion

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, antichurch and anticlerical critique was promoted by prominent Ukrainian intellectuals. This did not necessarily mean that they shared atheist ideas. Their understanding of God was philosophical, as a transcendent being or natural force, but they understood the need to educate ordinary people, which usually meant the refusal of creationist ideas and religious beliefs. During the Soviet period, they were presented as strong atheists, cutting "uncomfortable" ideas from their texts.

For most of the 20th century, forced secularization in Ukraine was promoted by the Soviet authorities. The theory and practice of atheism were elaborated on the state level with support and promotion from the government. Soviet atheism was limited to the Marxist approach, which was considered the highest form of atheism.

Scientific atheism as a research project and educational discipline was undoubtedly ideologically biased and was of applied significance. It did not merely construct the only "correct worldview" but substituted religion in a way (nonreligious rituals were created by scholars, who gave a theoretical background for them and worked out practical recommendations on how to use them). We consider this period of Ukrainian history to be quite interesting and worth studying by modern social scholars.

Despite the rich history of forced secularization, at present, Ukraine is very weak in atheism. It is now associated with a few active personalities, but it cannot be called a "movement". Atheism in modern Ukraine does not have any considerable influence on society. After the Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014), the nationalist and religious discourse is mainstream while the left and secular one is marginal.

Notes

1 Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899) was a German physiologist, one of the promoters of the ideas of materialism in Germany and founder of the German Freethinkers League.

2 Ivan Stepanov-Skvortsov (1870–1928) was one of the translators of Marx's *Das Kapital* into Russian and initiator of the atheist propaganda in the USSR.
3 Volodymyr Tancher (1915–1998) was a prominent specialist in scientific atheism in the post-Stalinist period.
4 The transformation of scientific atheism into religious studies was a gradual process that began in the middle of the 1980s. Volodymyr Kozlenko, former associate professor at the Department of History and Theory of Atheism, said that this transformation happened easily enough. Only one lecture about the attitude of the Communist party towards religion was removed from the curriculum while the rest of the curriculum remained almost the same because it consisted of the history of religions (see Козленко 2018).

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14 Nonreligion in the CEE region

Some remarks

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In the following text, we will discuss the ramifications of the topics that emerged in the chapters of this volume. We will begin with a meta-analysis of how the chapters have been written, what kind of presumptions they rely on, and what their methodological perspectives and focal points are. We will then move on to the patterns and ideas that have influenced nonreligion in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region over the last 150 years. Our main question is: what are the intellectual, cultural, social and political factors that influenced nonreligion in the area the most? Lastly, gaps that emerge in our material, identifying blank spaces for future research, will be demonstrated.

Different shadows of "Soviet state atheization"

When we planned the book and worked on the rationale, we focused on a certain area and on two aspects: nonreligious thought from the point of intellectual history and its position in the socio-historical context. When we look at our book, however, it is evident that most of the chapters – including our own contributions – are not written from the point of what might be called "nonreligious (intellectual) traditions". Instead, the primary focus is on different political periods and their influence on different aspects of non-religion. This is partially a result of the guidelines we sent out to the contributing authors – who, being independent thinkers, mostly ignored these suggestions – but it is evident that by thinking about nonreligion through political changes, nonreligion becomes a secondary product of political history: for instance, a change of regime or state leader. We therefore learn not only about the development of nonreligious thought but often about the influence of political history on religious life.

Of these political periods, the Soviet era emerges as the most important for spreading nonreligious thinking. The implicit Soviet-centeredness, considered a high peak of nonreligiosity, renders all studied phenomena and periods either pre-Soviet or post-Soviet. The last implication is perhaps one of the main reasons the study of different forms of nonreligion has been scarce in the CEE region since the forms of nonreligious thought and

lifestyle can easily be interpreted as relics of Communist ideology and therefore often leftist, unoriginal, loaded and therefore unattractive.

Perhaps this common historical experience of CEE countries generates similar thinking, which is expressed in the fact that "Soviet atheism" is often understood in terms of the church-state relationship – generalized into one monolithic era – and not so much in terms of intellectual influences from either the East or West. While there are signs that the Soviet past has become distant enough to ease the general negative attitude, the negative attitude towards "Soviet atheism" in the chapters is still more or less explicitly perceivable and, in some cases, exceeds even the pre- and post-Soviet eras.

Another question is whether we, as religious study scholars working on this volume, are fully equipped for such a task: in other words, whether our knowledge of nonreligion and atheism is both sufficient and appropriate, taking into consideration that our primary focus is the study of religious thinking and behavior. Is the study of nonreligion then a task rather for sociologists, historians, philosophers or a completely different, perhaps even a newly established, academic discipline? Is it possible to understand nonreligion only in relation to understanding religion or, on the contrary, should nonreligion be studied completely independently of studying religion, i.e., as a phenomenon of its own?

As editors, we were struggling with the attitude that nonreligion was understood only in relation to institutionalized and organized religion – that is, the churches – and most of the time in the form of opposition. One has to agree with Lee (2012) that nonreligious cultural manifestations are unfamiliar to our thinking, and this is perhaps one of the greatest differences between scholars who are contributing to the emerging study of nonreligion in "the West" and many authors of this volume. The research agenda in the field of nonreligion that has emerged during the past decade focuses more and more on differences from rather than opposition to religion (although not excluding that side). Alternatively said, the focus is on the essence of nonreligion.

Our aim was also to discuss nonreligion as a phenomenon in its own terms, as something that can come into existence and develop either as an individual or a social phenomenon, not as a negation or lack of religion. In the CEE region, however, the mainstream academic thinking is still perceivable, viewing atheism and other forms of nonreligion mainly as a distance from organized religiosity, and, with respect to the Soviet era, "atheism" is still being studied under the banner of church-state relations.

Another difficulty closely related to the previous one was the strong tendency of the contributors brought up on a negative relationship of politics to religion (especially, but not only during the Communist era) to schematically explain nonreligion and atheism by outlining the opposite relationship of two key institutions, one traditional, the other modern: i.e., the relationship between church and state, between religion and politics. It is this approach specifically that leads to an understanding of nonreligion in terms of a dichotomy-ridden secularization theory.

With Bullivant et al. (2019), it is quite evident that contemporary societies cannot be reduced to the polarized opposites of believing and nonbelieving, religious identification and its negation, as there is great diversity and overlapping in terms of worldviews, lifestyles and values. In order to understand the development of nonreligious thinking, we must get rid of certain dominant stereotypes, including the claims that the state plays a key role in and represents a fundamental instrument of modern secularization. Instead, in today's pluralistic societies, we should study nonreligion as an ideologically independent and self-contained phenomenon. Moreover, the hypothesis of the "rise and fall" (economic categories, in fact) of religion, which automatically assumes the "fall and rise" of nonreligion, is rather controversial. In pluralistic societies, religion and nonreligion are less and less categories that interact, but instead, as different forms of life, they coexist side by side without having an inherent need to respond to each other. In other words, many forms of contemporary nonreligion simply do not grow out of resistance and self-definition to religion or the biblical concept of God. This also implies their much greater diversity than they had in the past.

However, if we continue to apply the stereotypical model of "state versus church" into our elucidations of modern forms of nonreligion and atheism and, similarly, if we continue to interpret the levels of religiosity and secularization on the basis of the amount of state political control of the life of churches and religious societies, we will not be able to fully grasp the highly diversified secular scene in CEE.

Striving for freethinking as a vehicle of secular life

One of the important findings of this volume is that anticlericalism is one of the most influential phenomena that accelerated nonreligious thinking in this region. Various forms of antichurch (i.e., anticlerical, but not necessarily antireligious) attitudes criticizing especially the influence of churches and their institutions on the public as well as private sphere can be considered an important, if not the most fundamental, vehicle of secular thinking in Europe. The emphasis on the right to think and act freely and independently of church teachings and morals constituted a significant demand of modern thought and its effort for emancipation both in Western European and in Central and Eastern European countries.

Anticlericalism can be seen as an aggregate term comprising criticism of churches, rejection of churches and their representatives and also religiously nonconformist attitudes. The term is therefore ambiguous because it can denote a purely personal, individual attitude, but it can also refer to various expressions of social discontent: sometimes latent, sometimes manifest.

In the CEE region, anticlericalism draws especially from the legacy of the Enlightenment, which was influential all over the region from the Czech Republic to Russia at various times and with varying degrees of intensity. We dare to claim that the spread of free, nonreligious thinking and the

anticlericalism related to it depends on geographical, linguistic and cultural proximity to the Enlightenment's main centers: i.e., to France and Germany. Therefore, those countries of CEE that were under German cultural influence were logically impacted sooner and to a greater degree than countries farther away from such influence (i.e., Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Ukraine). Thus, we can speak about territorial variations of anticlericalism: i.e., about Czech, Polish, Slovak, Russian or Estonian anticlericalism etc.

In many CEE countries in the 19th century (i.e., during the first phase of their development), anticlericalism was primarily spread by the (usually secular) elites, despite the fact that, at that time, elites mostly consisted of clergymen. The spread of anticlericalism eventually gained a broader social importance, also reaching urban working classes and, in some countries (Poland, Slovakia and Russia), even rural areas. In some countries, it created an ideological connecting link, a platform for mass protest (the Czech Lands) uniting rationalists, nationalists, democrats, anarchists and even believers (including clergy) of various confessions. Some practical expressions of anticlericalism, for example, the French (i.e., hostile) model of the separation of church and state, became an integral part of the programs of Social Democratic political parties and movements.

Factors such as the general level of education and the degree of industrialization and urbanization played significant roles in the spread of freethinking. Interestingly enough, the latter does not feature as unambiguously at present: i.e., the high level of industrialization does not necessarily parallel a high degree of anticlericalism. Some countries such as Poland and Slovakia have undergone significant industrialization in recent decades, but it does not seem to have had as strong an influence as it had, for example, in the Czech Lands.

It must also be noted that, in many CEE countries, secular thinking has not been evolving continually and naturally because, in certain phases of the 20th century, political history was controlled by political regimes. Secular thinking's dependence on politics is obvious in many cases, but it was not the only factor determining its development. Politics often escalated anticlericalism on the one hand, but politics were also able, on the other hand, to purposefully reestablish religious institutions in the public space – Soviet Russia and current Russia are good examples here. Some countries, such as the Czech Republic and Estonia, have historically experienced a high level of anticlericalism regardless of whether or not it was politically supported. In these two countries, anticlericalism is even regarded as a feature of the national character. In some religiously homogeneous countries, such as Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, anticlericalism was generally perceived negatively and as a foreign element, something imported from the outside and conflicting with the idea of national identity.

The fact that official politics often intensified anticlericalism did not necessarily mean that it supported independent thinking at the same time but quite the opposite, as Communist regimes clearly demonstrate. Nevertheless,

Communist states politicized anticlericalism, defined it philosophically, nationalized and institutionalized it.

Currently, anticlericalism is apparent in some CEE countries, particularly during the election campaigns of certain political parties, which employ it purposefully just to attract voters. At the same time, political and public discussions generally include topics such as restitution of church property and church property as such, sexual scandals in the Catholic Church, the issue of unborn children and the so-called ideology of gender. Although these issues resonate in society, intellectually far more inspiring are the concepts of so-called New Atheism. Its relative popularity is due to the accessibility of modern technologies and the global spread of English, as well as its ability to clearly formulate and forcefully critique religious fundamentalism and church rigorism. New atheism is apparently more influential among the younger generation, which is related not only to their age but also to their competence in English and ability to operate in the virtual (internet) world.

The place of nonreligion and atheism in the process of nation-building

The issue of modern national identity in various narratives is a reoccurring topic in the majority of the book chapters. While the relationship between national identity and a particular religious tradition in the variety of ethnic and cultural contexts of the CEE region is a relatively well-researched topic,[1] the possible impact of narratives connected to the phenomenon of nonreligion is little known. Nevertheless, it seems that such narratives may have played a significant role. In the case of, for instance, Czech and Estonian societies, this fact is probably not surprising. The majority of "national studies" included in the book confirm, however, that such narratives even echoed in societies traditionally viewed as deeply religious. Romania is a typical example here – a country seen not only as one of the most religious in the area but also as one where the ties between religion and national identity have traditionally been very strong.[2] Alternative interpretations of national identity, profoundly influenced by the period's secularism and anticlericalism, nevertheless appeared in Romanian society in the early 20th century.

Contrary to the essentialist concept of a nation emphasizing a common origin and shared traditions, memory and culture, typical of the majority of CEE countries, the alternative interpretations were based on the civic understanding of a nation, a narrative common, for example, in France. Such an alternative narrative quite logically considers any essentialist connection of national identity with a specific religious tradition as an obstacle. However, it views the strict separation of church and state and the restricting of religious feelings to the private sphere as key prerequisites for the development of national identity. In this concept, to be a member of nation X is not bound to identification with religion Y and to accepting historically

determined and culturally specific values Z. On the contrary, it is constituted by the acceptance of universally understood civic values and respect for the state institutions that preserve and cultivate them. In other words, this narrative is based on the liberal concept of humans and society while the former one, more typical for the CEE region, is based on the communitarian concept.[3]

Generally, one can argue that, in the CEE countries, the adherence to the communitarian concept of society together with a certain emphasis on regionalism and regional specifics is usually connected to a kind of religiously constructed nationalism. The emphasis on "universalist" values and on liberal individualism supports, in contrast, a rather secular form of national identity.[4]

It should be pointed out that, with the exception of the Czech Republic and Estonia, the liberal interpretations have been regarded as foreign and in many cases even as dangerous. Their adherents were often excluded from the community of the nation as renegades or traitors, their value system was delegitimized and labeled as atheist (which typically implied debased), freethought etc. – simply as strange, as other.

Interestingly, this notion of the "foreign" has changed in various countries. While at the end of the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th century, "foreign" was understood in terms of competing nations and language, and religious otherness was usually emphasized, "foreign" later became more abstract and universal – it was represented by nonreligion, atheism or liberalism. After WWI, a significant number of political and cultural representatives in the CEE countries began to equate nonreligion and atheism with national disloyalty and dangerous cosmopolitanism. This tendency was particularly pronounced in countries where national identity was closely related to religious identity, such as Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia. The fact that some countries felt directly endangered by the Bolshevik regime certainly contributed to this tendency as the countries concentrated on what distinguished them from Soviet Bolshevism.

It has to be admitted, however, that the Bolshevik regime both in Soviet Russia and after 1945, in its Central and Eastern European satellites used atheism and nonreligion to form a new communal identity. On the ideological level, it was popularly symbolized by the effort to create a new Soviet man who would overcome all traditional cultural and religious differences and represent a new social-political entity with a clearly universalistic ambition. After 1945, this "ambition" gained a new dimension as its proponents believed that it would help in overcoming traditional ethnic and cultural animosities among various CEE societies in which religion often played a significant role[5] and form the new transregional identity of the Soviet bloc. Communist International (Comintern) serves as a good example here because its objective was to propagate Communist ideas internationally and prepare world revolution – after 1945, the concept of a socialist commonwealth headed by the Soviet Union continued in its legacy.

Induced from above, the atheization of Soviet bloc countries was, in a way, not only the result of ideological conflicts, but, from the point of view of the new leaders dependent in all major policies on the Kremlin, atheization was a necessary prerequisite for the formation of the new collective identities. For these identities, class was to play the key role, not traditional categories such as religious affiliation. It is equally interesting that this process was not just accompanied by the elimination of traditional religions, but also of "alternative" forms of nonreligion and atheism. The so-called scientific atheism, based on the Leninist-Stalinist interpretation of Marxism, was the only acceptable kind of atheism.

In some societies, such as Czech, these attempts at inducing atheism from above fell on fertile ground (Václavík 2007). In numerous others, however, their impact was considerably smaller. This explains why, after the breakup of the Communist regimes, many CEE countries returned to the traditional and historically "proven" models of national identity formation and have begun to stress their specifics as well as their ties to a particular religious tradition once again.

Atheism and nonreligion are thus perceived as something connected to the past regime and therefore as something not to be affiliated with or, even better, to reject straightaway. In the last few years, however, certain changes can be discernible. The narrative linking atheism and nonreligion exclusively to the Soviet regime no longer makes sense 30 years after its fall and has lost its intelligibility, especially for the younger generations. At the same time, the phenomenon of culture wars, so well described especially in the American context (see Hunter 1992; Thomson 2010), is becoming more pronounced in the CEE region as well. Some of the previously mentioned processes, particularly the growing tension between secular (or secularized) liberalism and traditionalist conservativism, frequently connected to religious tradition and specific religious institutions, can be understood in this light.

It is worth noting in this context that many representatives of the latter movement often label secular liberals as neo-Marxists and in that way link them implicitly to atheism, viewing the entire conflict as a struggle for the soul of the nation or even as a "struggle for Europe".[6] This tendency is particularly strong in countries such as Hungary and Poland but is discernible in most countries of the CEE region. Even in such a highly "secularized" country as the Czech Republic, this rhetoric is relatively common and effective.

Secular liberals, on the other hand, strictly reject it and also refuse any interference of religious institutions into political life, including attempts to influence the topics of public debates. Increasingly hotter debates thus center not only on "classical" issues of culture wars (abortion, same-sex marriages, multiculturalism) but also on issues which had seemed to be solved a long time ago, especially the place and role of religions and religious institutions in public space and their influence on political life.

Transformation and differentiation of nonreligion in the CEE region at the beginning of the new millennium

The collapse of the Communist regimes after 1989 marked a key milestone in the history of the 20th century, resulting in the majority of the CEE countries turning politically as well as culturally to the West. Judging from their widespread national narratives, for some of the countries it was simply a return after a (nonvoluntary) 40-year-long hiatus. For others, it was a historically new experience. All the post-Communist CEE societies shared, however, the experience of coming to terms with their Communist past. Nevertheless, this process was different in various countries, a fact that only confirms our claim that, despite its seeming homogeneity, the CEE region is quite a differentiated space. Thus, even the reactions to the state-controlled and forced atheization were varied.

A number of the CEE countries strictly rejected it, and the newly gained freedom and political independence was linked to the old concept of ethnic-religious identity,[7] usually in the form of romanticized calls for the return to one's roots. Some countries simply left the former atheization behind without necessarily attempting to address or cope openly with the issue. In still others, atheization fell on relatively fertile soil and deepened already-existing tendencies. Nevertheless, all the countries of the region had to cope with several common aspects that fundamentally altered their attitudes towards various narratives of their identities.

The first aspect was the ultimate breakdown of religious monopoly and the dominance of one or two major religious traditions the Communist regime had either initiated or, in some countries, even successfully completed. This led to a dramatic growth of religious plurality after 1989 or, more precisely, a plurality of worldviews including various forms of secularity. This correlation between the level of religious/worldview plurality and the increasing significance of various forms of nonreligion in the CEE region has been demonstrated by many studies and much sociological research. They prove that in countries where one religious tradition had clearly dominated, the position of various forms of nonreligion is relatively weak in comparison with countries where no single religious tradition had dominated, and nonreligion's role and influence grew significantly.[8]

The second aspect is the rise of consumerism and of a highly individualized society in which values, as well as social and cultural mechanisms, change greatly. It was also due to these changes that various countries were confronted with new forms of secularity and nonreligion. While nonreligion was represented mainly by what many contemporary scholars label as analytical atheism for most of the 20th century,[9] over the last few decades, other forms of nonreligion have become more relevant – especially so-called apatheism and inCREDulous atheism.

The concept of apatheism is understood as a result of the lack of motivation to preserve and develop religious beliefs. Within it, the attitude

towards religion grows indifferent, and the influence of religion in society declines simultaneously but not as a consequence of the process of individualization or the privatization of religion but because of religion's social and existential uselessness. The concept has been successfully applied to Scandinavian societies. According to Ara Norenzayan, one of the proponents of the concept, the low religiousness in Norway, Sweden and Denmark can be explained by the fact that these countries have a high level of social welfare and equality. In addition, a high degree of predictability of one's life's prospects and a sense of existential safety lead to a diminishing of the motivation to consider God or gods as sources of support (Norenzayan and Gervais 2013).

The concept has been applied to selected countries of the CEE region in recent years, yielding some very interesting results (Willard and Cingl 2017), demonstrating, for example, that the CEE region countries with a high occurrence of atheism and other forms of nonreligion (such as the Czech Republic) are also countries with a high degree of social equality, low poverty and functional and effective systems of health care and education. At the same time, these countries manifest high levels of a sense of safety.

So-called inCREDulous atheism is rather the result of people not obtaining enough cultural stimuli to strengthen and preserve their beliefs that any supernatural beings are powerful enough or even exist (Gervais et al. 2011). This type of atheism is theoretically grounded in the works of Joseph Henrich (2009) and Jonathan Lanman (2012), who claim that people in general prefer to follow those ideas and concepts and imitate such behaviors that are considered normative, are commonly shared and are presented and/or supported by key figures and important members of one's community. In other words, we tend to imitate models and patterns of behavior that increase the credibility of our expressions and acts (credibility enhancing displays, or CREDs).

In order to apply this model to the CEE region, one would have to take into consideration and analyze profoundly the impact of the demographic, social and cultural changes the region underwent in the 20th century. The changes include, for example, the mass relocations of inhabitants, resulting in cultural and social devastation of large areas, or rapid and from-above-induced industrialization and urbanization. The latter two lead to a breaking of traditional cultural and social ties and a discontinuity of cultural memory that has affected current generations as a consequence.

We also have to bear in mind that, in many countries of the Soviet bloc, it was very difficult to practice religious rituals and other religious activities. Thus, for almost two generations, models and patterns of behavior bound to religion were not imitated and were not passed from one generation to the next, even if the youngest generation was born into a new political situation, after the Soviet bloc disintegrated. In other words, this form of atheism and nonreligion is the result of discontinuity in lived and practiced religious life. Consequently, religion becomes an unintelligible, empty, unnecessary

entity for new generations, and its significance in private as well as public life gradually decreases and turns marginal.

This phenomenon appears in all CEE countries (just as it appears in other European countries), but in varying degrees. It strongly influences current forms of nonreligion in the Czech Republic and Estonia, significantly less in Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Both the contemporary forms of atheism point (albeit indirectly) to yet another important fact, and that is the need to reevaluate methods used for the study of the phenomenon of nonreligion in this region. The majority of studies (to a degree, including the ones in this volume) base their understanding of the phenomenon mostly on various forms of historical methods or combine them with discourse analysis of texts and other materials (museum items, public space, cemeteries etc.). Such a methodology, however, is capable of adequately addressing only certain types of atheism and nonreligion: for example, the aforementioned analytical atheism or institutionalized forms of secularity. These have been considered key and have been viewed as oppositions to (or communicating vessels with) traditional religiousness and long-established religious institutions, and their influence and position are regarded as fundamental in the traditional interpretations of history, society, politics and the culture of the individual countries of the region.

Nonreligion in transition

Almost all the case studies included in this volume have shown that, during the 20th century, the category of atheism has undergone a relatively fundamental transformation. While at the beginning of the 20th century, it was understood primarily as an ideological position rejecting traditional religious interpretations and institutions as unsustainable and obsolete, at the end of it, atheism was more a form of ignoring religion because of its irrelevance to personal and social life. In other words, being an atheist in the first half of the 20th century meant that the person knew why he or she rejected religion, whereas the "atheist" at the beginning of the 21st century did not understand why he or she needed something like religion.

This shift can be seen on several levels, the most important of which are two – ideological and institutional. As already mentioned, atheism in the first half of the 20th century represented, above all, a comprehensive ideological system in which one of the primary ideological sources of modern atheism could be discerned. In CEE countries, there were mainly the influences of positivist-scientist atheism, Marxist atheism and, to a lesser extent, existentialist atheism associated with Friedrich Nietzsche and his followers, or psychological atheism inspired by the ideas of Sigmund Freud. With some exceptions in several countries (e.g., the Czech Republic), the actual social, cultural and political implications of such formed atheism (or, more precisely, atheisms) were rather small and limited to intellectual circles. Their

representatives often imported atheistic ideologies or their combinations from Western countries (mainly France and Germany) and considered them a condition for modernizing their societies.

In general, one can say that the "ideological" atheism of the first half of the 20th century was mainly influenced by the thought systems that followed the Enlightenment critique of religion. Two of its dimensions in particular resonated strongly – the critique of the religious interpretation of the world was considered a contradiction and an obstacle to scientific knowledge and, at the same time, a critique of religious institutions regarded as an obstacle to social and political development. It is therefore quite logical that we come across a criticism of religion based on these principles in the works of many prominent representatives of atheism in CEE countries. They developed, in contrast, thought concepts that accentuated rationalism, scientism and anticlericalism and, at the same time, emphasized the importance of social and political progress as well as the critical importance of human freedom.

It should additionally be said that there is a diversity of ideas in the "ideological" atheism of the first half of the 20th century in the countries of the CEE region. Until the mid- 20th century, there was no dominant form or movement. It is also important to stress that the accepted ideas are often interpreted and implemented differently in the particular countries of the region.

The situation changed somewhat after WWII, when Marx-Leninism became the dominant ideology in the entire CEE region. As a result, all other atheistic ideologies were de facto marginalized, but there was also mass atheization from above. As the Communist regimes fell, however, its effects were much smaller it might seem. Indeed, most CEE companies have been rather negative towards ideologically based atheism at the end of the 20th century. In the first phase of creating a new, democratic identity, in most Central and Eastern European societies, this negative delimitation towards the Communist regime was coupled with a strong religious revival.

It is interesting to note that, despite the end of the monopoly of "Marxist" atheism, there have been no significant restorations of other, non-Marxist atheist ideologies after the political changes at the end of the 20th century. This applies not only to the traditional ones (see earlier notation) but also to the phenomenon of so-called New Atheism, which has had much less response and influence in the CEE region than in Western Europe or the US. In most CEE countries, any "ideological forms of atheism" seem to have been discredited, and their influence is extremely marginal. This is true even in countries where most people are considered either atheists or unbelievers without any particular religious tradition or institutions like, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

Similarly, there have been changes in the institutions that were associated with atheism and dissemination during the 20th century. While in the first half of the 20th century, it was the specific institutions (societies, political parties or various associations) that primarily disseminated and promoted

atheism in CEE, at the end of the century, their influence was minimal. This was partly because, during the 40 years of the Communist regime, most of these organizations were banned or subjected to strict control by the Communist Party, and after the fall of the system, they was no longer able to build on their past. This was also partly because of the aforementioned shift in the nature of atheism in CEE.

In other words, there was a shift during the 20th century that could be characterized as a shift from explicit, analytical, usually institutionalized atheism to deinstitutionalized indifferentism or apatheism, which corresponds to a much greater extent to the situation of late-modern societies undergoing a transition from totalitarian to liberal societies. To put it another way, "a typical atheist" or "unbeliever" at the end of the 20th century and in the early 21st century is no longer a person with conscious and active opposition to religion and the institutions that represent religion, but rather someone who ignores religion, does not consider it important and, in some ways, actually does not understand it.

The research gaps

Finally, as the volume provides a basis for the study of secularity in CEE, it does not answer all the questions – on the contrary, it generates new ones and also points out blank spaces for future research.

First of all, as the Soviet experience, apart from geography, is what draws the CEE region together, the influence of Soviet atheist propaganda is often used as (part of) an explanation for the contemporary religious situation. It is quite common to emphasize the overarching atheist propaganda, with this meme also being repeated in some chapters of this volume. There are accounts, however, that see the reach of atheist propaganda in a much more critical light (e.g., Smolkin 2018). This is also reflected in some other chapters in this volume, which point to the much lower visibility of atheism than is usually suspected (Hungary, Estonia), therefore questioning its influence. This may point to local differences but also to gaps in current data, reliance on "common knowledge" and overgeneralization of certain examples and sub-periods of Soviet rule. One part is the organizational ability of the Soviet propaganda system and the ideals described in party documents, while another factor is their actual implementation on a grassroots level. Our chapters point to different reasons that there was a reluctance to promote scientific atheism – for instance, the nationalist attitude that contrasted with the "red subject" in Latvia (Kiope et al. 2019) and Estonia (Remmel and Friedenthal 2019) or the influence of personal relationships in the rural areas of Hungary (Balogh and Fejérdy 2019).

Thus, the reach, visibility and influence of atheist propaganda should be studied further, especially in connection to alleged secularization. Perhaps the connection is not so obvious at all or has only a partial influence? This also brings us to the question of what should be considered "atheist

propaganda"? Obvious examples are articles in newspapers and *Znanie* lectures, but one should include secular rites of passage created as substitutions for religious ones, considered the most successful means for rapid secularization – today we might add, in combination with the lack of visibility of religion – during the Soviet period? The topic of promoting atheism – or, rather, secular thinking – in the educational sphere also needs further examination. With several exceptions, most of the chapters are remarkably silent about (local forms of) scientific atheism or even address it in quotation marks, indicating its obvious incredibility and no need for deeper analysis. The question asked by Alles (2018) – "[A]re there some elements of scientific atheism that scholars in Western Europe and North America might actually learn from, without endorsing totalitarian oppression?" – still remains unanswered.

Perhaps one of the most interesting topics is how nonreligion as a set of attitudes, certain ideas or practices is passed on from one generation to another. Thus, the questions about "generations of nonreligion" can be answered, for instance, from the point of view of the sociology of (non)religion or intellectual history. This question is even more interesting as the history of nonreligion in CEE seems to be a continuation of constant disruptions. In almost every political period, the earlier representatives were abandoned and frowned upon: local "pre-Soviet" authors were considered to be reaching only halfway in understanding the essence of religion and atheism during the Soviet era and were replaced by Soviet authors. Similarly, "post-Soviet" atheism attempts to distance itself from its "Soviet" predecessor due to its negative connotations while the most vocal representatives of contemporary nonreligions usually rely on Anglo-American examples of skepticism or New Atheism. One can talk about the globalization of nonreligion in this respect.

Notes

1 See, for example, Schulze Wessel (2006). The strong ties between national and religious identity have been researched in a variety of sociological studies. See, for example, Pew Research Center (2017).
2 Based on the aforementioned research conducted by the Pew Forum (2017), 74% of Romanians, 66% of Bulgarians, 64% of Poles, 58% of Croatians, 57% of Russians, 56% of Lithuanians and 51% of Ukrainians consider a particular religious tradition significant for their national identity.
3 We use this term in the same sense as political philosophy.
4 It would be worthwhile to analyze what role the aforementioned conditions had on the transformation of universalistic Marxism to Soviet Bolshevism, which also tended to highlight regional specifics, originally Russian, after WWII in Central and Eastern European. The emphasis on local specifics possibly helped to create the historically first notion of a certain shared identity of the CEE region which had not existed before. For more on the discussion on the CEE region in the last two centuries, see, for example, Křen (2007).
5 Insightful analyses of fragmentation, mutual tensions and the resulting conflicts within the CEE region can be found in the work of the historian Timothy Snyder

(for example 2003, 2010), who is a renowned and well-respected Western specialist on the modern history of the CEE area.

6 In connection with the phenomenon of culture wars, American scholars note a special paradox as both sides of the "conflict" consider themselves endangered, as those whose rights have been compromised or denied. However, similar attitudes have also recently been noticed in many CEE societies.

7 It should be noted in this context that, after WWII, this part of Europe underwent dramatic demographic changes. Due to the Holocaust and the ethnic "cleansing" in the aftermath of the war, some of the states became "ethnically homogenous" for the first time in their history. This fact made it easier to return to the old models of forming and preserving national identity. Ethnic conflicts appearing after 1989 in some parts of the CEE region can therefore be perceived as a "last" wave of ethnic and national homogenization, resulting in a historical paradox of sorts – many European states that used to be the most mixed ethnically, culturally and religiously became, in a historically short time span, the most ethnically, culturally and religiously homogeneous.

8 One of these is the study by Borowik et al. (2013) proving this relationship with data from significant sociological research such as EVS and ISSP. Based on the data, they divide CEE countries into six categories according to the degree and character of religious plurality. In countries with a high level of religious homogeneity, the number of individuals who can be labeled "atheist" is about 7%, and some additional 10% refuse to explicitly affiliate with a specific religious tradition or ideology. On the other hand, in countries where no single religious tradition and related institutions dominate, on average more than 30% of the population identify as atheists, and a large portion of the population rejects being explicitly affiliated with a religious tradition or ideology.

9 This type of atheism includes both explicit and implicit rejection of religious concepts based on a rational and analytical attitude that blocks or even overrides intuitive support of religious images but supports religious skepticism instead. It includes positivist-scientific atheism, or Marxist atheism, and its variants, as well as the so-called New Atheism connected with figures such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett.

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