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Anti-clericalism, Non-religiosity and Atheism in Croatia

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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. Croatian territory had been part of different empires for centuries (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 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, anti-clericalism, atheism and anti-religiousness were present and more or less visible.

In the nineteenth century, parallel with the emergence of more prominent and organized non-religious, 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 anti-clerical 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. The most powerful form, however, of atheism and secularism as a political doctrine or ideology (Asad 2003, 1; Wilson 2005, 8214–8215) in Croatia developed after the end of the 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 revitalization of religion. Although religiosity became a desirable (and dominant) conformity pattern, non-religiosity and atheism are still present on the individual level. In public life they are most evident in the activities of organized communities of non-religious 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 anti-clerical, non-religious and atheist manifestations in Croatian society from the nineteenth century onward. In order to better understand the topic, the social context of certain historical periods will also be presented. Additionally, some empirical data concerning non-religiosity and atheism available from the socialist period, as well as qualitative data obtained by conducting interviews ($n = 22$) with members of non-religious and atheist organizations in contemporary Croatian society have been taken into account.

Anti-clericalism in Croatia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth 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 or 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 nineteenth 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 anti-clerical attitudes can 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. The Roman Catholic Church served, in his view, as cultural retention and not advancement for the people, which ultimately went in favour 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 favouring 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 breaking 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) for 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 anti-clerical 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 reproduce the world in all its ugliness, based on the crude modern capitalist logic.

Even more prominent anti-clericalists 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 overlaps 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.

Anti-clerical ideas, which were part of the programme of the most prominent politicians, are thus also reflected in literature. The usual social function of Croatian literature, that 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 (whose member was Stjepan Radić) 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 personal 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, non-contractual and relatively closed and non-mobile 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 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 anti-clericalism (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 the 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, anti-scholasticism and anti-dogmatism. In terms, however, 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 secularization of religion, while complete non-religiosity 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 Marxists¹, 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 anti-clericalism, which was present in this period was not analogous for the most part to anti-Christian, anti-Catholic or anti-religious ideas, clerical criticist used to find sizeable and dangerous atheist tendencies in it. Such tendencies indeed appeared later as part of a new ideology. This new

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

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. Anti-clerical ideas among prominent Croatian intellectuals in the nineteenth century, however, should be seen as a consequence of spreading the ideas of the post-Christian era in Western civilization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also as the emancipatory process of attitudes toward 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 criticised 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 in 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 was published only in 2000 (Darwin 2000).

In a study on the development and reception of Darwinism in Croatia, Balabanić² (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 vs. creationism. This debate involves different protagonists (scientist, 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 non-religious 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) 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

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.

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 catechetical teaching, independently and in different manners. Religious instruction seems better adjusted, however, to younger pupils 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 non-existent among younger participants” (Jokić 2013, 334).

The acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution is highly important for the members of the newly formed non-religious and atheist organizations. The data from recent research among members of organizations of non-religious 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 non-anthropocentric 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 point out that the theory of evolution was the key factor that directed them toward non-religiosity or atheism. Mladen, who was a deeply religious person, points 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 non-religious and atheist

organizations in Croatia, providing them, to use Berger's and Luckmann's (1991) terms, with an alternative symbolic universe.

Secularism, non-religiosity 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 1943³. Already in 1894, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia, based on the ideas of Karl Marx, was 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 programme 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 likeminded personages, such as Rodoljub Čolaković, together 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 B. 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 Croatian twentieth century literature. Initially fascinated by Lenin and the Soviet revolution, he became involved in the

³ The Croatian public was informed about 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 portrayed in the 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's 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).

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 being 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 Soviet's Union Inform biro 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 neo-positivist 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 legitimacy of oppression. Non-religiosity and atheism became the institutionalized conformity patterns in socialist Yugoslavia. They were culturally transmitted through the public sphere, particularly through the educational system and media.

As a prevailing ideology, atheism can be observed on several levels. On the personal level, it was perceived as an enlightenment-rationalist programme which 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 1970, 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 1970, 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 1970, 70). It is manifested as the socio-economic aspect that seeks to unite affiliated human labour with its own power. Thus, atheist criticism of religion becomes, 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 187, 161), or as Ćimić (1970, 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* (G. Petrović, M. Kangrga, P. 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 E. Bloch, H. Marcuse, H. Lefebvre, J. Habermas, E. Fink, L. Goldmann, L. Kolakowski, K. Kosik, S. Morawski, A. 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 (V. Sutlić, G. Petrović, D. Pejović). Hence, Praxis group was resented by more orthodox Marxists gathered at other universities (in Serbia or Slovenia) that it was "making a revision of Marxism under the

influence of the fashionable trends of Western bourgeois philosophy” such as J. P. 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 anti-religious 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 comes closest to the new philosophical definition of God and religion.

Similar as philosophy, sociology saw religion through Marx, Engels and Lenin’s theses, with the enlightenment-rationalist and positivistic scientific approach of the eighteenth century, which is visible from the first theoretical texts by E. Ćimić, O. Mandić and A. 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 I. 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” and 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 favoured the non-religious worldview (Zrinščak et al. 2014). During most of this period, religious people were considered, and more or less treated, as second-class citizens. Despite, however, 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,

⁵ The different position of Yugoslavia within the Communist bloc, as well as its position and active role in establishing the world Non-Aligned Movement, affected its political reception at the international level as a more open communist country. This is the reason why, in order to discuss non-religiosity and atheism, a neglected theme within the sociology of religion, CISR (Conference Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse – today's 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 Courtain”. 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 being “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, 6 came from Eastern Europe (none from Russia), and 3 from Africa.

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 region⁶ and on the national level show data over time in this respect: for instance, there was 4% of the population that 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 non-confessionally affiliated population: in 2001 it was 6% and in 2011, 7% of Croats. Additional research confirmed this data (Črpić, Zrinščak 2010; Marinović Jerolimov 1999 and 2005; Nikodem 2004; 2011; Nikodem and Zrinščak 2012).

According to self-reported religiosity⁷, the data in table 1 show the levels of religiosity and non-religiosity in two different social and political contexts.

Table 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 non-religious in the socialist time; 2) keeping in mind the lower levels

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

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 and within those who found themselves between religiosity and non-religiosity and within non-religious 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 religions 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 toward religion; 5. I am not religious but I don’t have anything against religion; 6. I am not religious and I oppose religion.

of confessional affiliation, it is obvious that among non-religious persons there were also those who declared belonging to some (mostly Catholic) confession at that time. Furthermore, according to different research from that period, non-religious persons as well as atheists⁸ had parents that belonged to some (mostly Catholic) confession (50 to 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 non-religious 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 – a person, who is in fact a believer, but for different socio-psychological reasons, either conformism or defiance, declared him/herself an atheist (Ćimić, 1971). Also of interest are some attitudes of religious and non-religious people in the socialist period about Marxism and socialism. Asked about their worldview, respondents in the Zagreb region in 1972 answered as follows (in %):

Table 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
Non-religious	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 *non-religious*, 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 as well as 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

⁸ Following Campbell (1971), non-religiosity is understood as broader concept which includes atheism and other forms and attitudes towards religion, hostility, indifference or rejection.

taken into account, of course, that some respondents tried to avoid answering the question in these terms recognising 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 believers* confirmed it, as well as 89% of those who said they were religious, only 44% of those who declared themselves as *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 they did not know) only 9% of those *opposed to religion* find it possible. These answers both indicated and raised questions about the complexity of religiosity as well as non-religiosity and atheism. It primarily provoked a discussion about awareness of religiosity and Marxism among religious and non-religious people at that time and raised the question of the types of religiosity and non-religiosity (rational, emotional etc.).

As can be seen from the presented data, religiosity and non-religiosity and atheism were not homogenous separated phenomena. A specific type of softer and more open Marxism and intertwined elements of religiosity and non-religiosity 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 encompasses those who are opposed to religion.

Non-religiosity 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 non-religiosity and atheism, on the other hand, have changed their social desirability with the changes in the socio-political system. Non-religiosity and atheism thus moved from being socially preferred and conformist positions to undesirable and nonconformist. Empirical data indicate a change in the share of non-religious persons and atheists (see Table 1). Similar as in the communist period, however, data indicated a mixing of religious and non-religious elements often making it “blurry”. For instance, part of the religious citizens, along with a high level of confessional and religious identification, religious socialisation 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 as it was evidenced in the communist period, part of the non-religious persons and atheists adhered to an affiliation to a certain confession (mostly Catholic), comes from families within which they received religious instruction, states high level of confessional belonging of their parents and celebrates religious holidays in their families (Hazdovac Bajić 2017).

On the more general level, it is apparent that in socialism Croatian society was marked by socialist modernisation (which included planned industrialisation, urbanisation, an increase in education, women's employment, and atheism) and secularisation, i.e. secularism¹⁰, 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 within 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 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 criticising the notion that an agnostic could be the president of 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 non-religious (and non-Catholic) citizens in an unequal position. They became second-class citizens (although this cannot be perceived in terms of oppression).

⁹ It should be taken into account that both in communist and post-communist times part of non-religious 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).

This was confirmed by research conducted among parents of non-religious pupils that 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 favour 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 a 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” in “to know to prevent and convert” (Marinović 2018). Furthermore, the organizing of non-religious citizens and atheists in various formal and informal groups (whose aim is to protect and promote non-religious 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 i.e. an attempt to organize the Atheist Bus Campaign in Zagreb (Marinović Jerolimov and Hazdovac Bajić 2017).

There are 9 organizations of non-religious persons and atheists in Croatia, five of them are formal: *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 the type of their internal organization, goals, activities, strategies, group dynamic, etc., their main interest is to protect the rights of atheists and non-religious persons as a minority group in Croatia. Organizations of non-religious persons and atheists (especially formal ones) gather together 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.

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 entitled ‘Coffee with Unbelievers’, which are held simultaneously in various towns in Croatia.

Milan Polić (1946–2015), founder of *Protagora*¹², the largest and most renowned formal organization of non-religious persons in Croatia, was a prominent Croatian philosopher. Although his main field of interest was philosophy of education, his basic ideas are 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 follows the development of a free personality, which often involves resistance to collectivity or the rejection of conformism, in the philosophical thought from Socrates (who first theoretically stands for it and then confirms it through the historical act of civil liberty), through Rousseau to classical German idealism. Another two prominent philosophers included in this type of activism are Željko Porobija and Pavel Gregorić, who co-authored 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 positions¹³, but who express distinct similarities and firm agreement regarding the relationship toward 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 of the organized groups of non-religious 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 on the group level. The very emergence of organizations of non-religious persons and atheists in Croatia coincides with the momentum of New Atheism in the UK and the US¹⁴ 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

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 re-examination (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 non-religious people and atheists established in 2006 in Zagreb. Most of the New Atheists’ books are translated into Croatian.

Split and regular *Sceptics in the Pub* gatherings, celebrating *The Festivus*, attempts to organize *Atheist Bus Campaign* in 2009 modelled on the British example, printing the book *Humanism for Kids* written using the example of a book under the same name which was published in the USA. Along with the above-mentioned 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 interviewers also point out that New Atheists had an important role for them personally because they influenced the formation of their non-religiousness 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. Criticism is also focused on, for some interviewees, 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 non-religious 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 than to prominent New Atheists. In other words, New Atheism is important in terms of providing forms for public appearances, modes of public outreach and offering ideas for criticizing religion, which creates the common foundation for non-religious 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, 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 non-religiosity and religiosity in Croatian society follows similar patterns which can be observed in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Borowik et al. 2013). One might ask the question to what extent global trends in the relationship between religion and non-religion unfolded 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 religion, which was under strong anti-religious pressure during socialism, in the post-socialist period would experience the resumption of secularization and an overall decrease in the significance of religion. Notwithstanding, religion experienced a great return since revitalization of religion and a religious revival occurred, not only in Croatia but 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 non-religious 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), which are active in promoting their ideas and concepts.

As stated before, Croatian society has a strong mono-confessional 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 is 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. We are also witnessing in the last several years the spread of elements of culture war 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 war 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.

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