

Enforced Secularization – Spontaneous Revival?

Religious Belief, Unbelief, Uncertainty and Indifference in East and West European Countries 1991–1998

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The religious question of men's origin and destination can be answered by belief, unbelief, uncertainty and indifference. The *degree* of secularization should increase belief against the three remaining options, unbelief against uncertainty and indifference, and uncertainty against indifference. The paper asks if the enforced *form* of secularization of East European countries has the same effects even if the degree of secularization is controlled, and if these developments are reversed after the demise of communism. Furthermore, it examines if the developments of countries and their reversal remain significant if the education, the age and the religious practice of individuals are controlled. Dependent variables are the belief in God and the Bible as surveyed in the ISSP 1991 and 1998. In 1991, the degree and the form of secularization affect the answers to the religious question as expected. Up to 1998, the effects of the degree and the form of secularization persist. Furthermore, the effects of the degree and the form of secularization do not shrink if education and age of individuals are controlled, and do shrink but remain significant if additionally religious practice is controlled.

Question: Effects of the Form of Secularization

Responses to the Religious Question

Secularization means that the 'other world' loses relevance in human life in favour of 'this world' (Yamane, 1997). It is the common denominator for a series of processes in which transcendent viewpoints lose impact in favour of immanent ones: historically, the Christian churches have handed over their domains to the state; in recent decades, they have lost believers (Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere, 1995: 91–95). Secularization, then, proceeds from the

institutional framework of churches to the personal core of religion, which is to the religious question.

The religious question grows out of the human condition itself: as people are aware of being mortal they seek to know where they come from and where they will go. This question cannot be answered immanently, neither by experience nor reasoning, nor by science or philosophy; it must be answered by a *belief*, that is, by the assumption of truth where truth cannot be proven. If belief in the Christian dogma is abandoned, a series of responses is conceivable. First, *unbelief* may give a negative answer where belief used to give a positive one. But if one is unable to answer the religious question definitely either

by belief or unbelief, one may relate to it in the form of attitudes. One may, second, stick to the religious question, yet be *uncertain* as to its answer. And one may, third, become *indifferent* to the religious question: as it cannot be answered either by belief nor unbelief, it is not worth being concerned with, since certainty (of belief or unbelief) and uncertainty are equally meaningless. Rather than being subjectively uncertain as to the answer, one is convinced that the question cannot be objectively answered. For that reason, the third is also the final answer to the religious question: one can be less certain than the believer or unbeliever, but one cannot do more than ignore the transcendental nature of the question and discard it as immanently unanswerable.

In brief, the religious question can be split up into a sequence of three. Do I believe or not? If I do not believe, am I really a convinced unbeliever or am I not so sure at all about belief or unbelief? If I am not so sure, am I uncertain as to the answer or indifferent to the question? In this manner, a *hierarchy* of three questions and answers is built up, which leads from the positive belief of religious dogma to a positive attitude to the religious question and thus allows a distinction between surface and deep effects of secularization. This hierarchy is presented in Figure 1.

As the figure makes clear, the questions pertain to increasingly smaller groups such that the answers written in italics are represented by three independent variables: the percentage of *belief* among everybody, of *unbelief* among non-believers, and of *uncertainty* among those holding only an attitude towards the religious question.

Using this hierarchy, the paper asks two questions. Did the *enforced secularization* in Eastern European countries suppress belief and positive attitudes to the religious question over and beyond the spontaneous

secularization which would have taken place without political coercion? And did the end of enforcement accordingly allow a *spontaneous revival* of belief and of positive attitudes to the religious question? To answer both questions, the effect of the enforced *form* of secularization on belief in Eastern countries is examined by a comparison with Western countries of a similar *degree* of secularization in 1991 and 1998.

Hypotheses: Secularization of Countries

The *degree* of secularization refers to the opportunities of religious freedom provided by the legal and social constitution of a country. It is reflected, and can be indirectly measured, by the percentage of the population who have left the churches and who do not attend church services, that is, by indicators of religious *practice*. If religious practice has lost its binding force, religious *belief* will become weaker as well. The higher the secularization of a country, the less common will be belief over non-belief – as defined in question I of Figure 1. But someone who has abandoned belief has to choose between unbelief and an attitude to the religious question. Unbelief negates the (Christian) answer to the religious question. The higher the secularization of a country, therefore, the more common will be unbelief over attitudes to the religious question – as defined in question II of Figure 1. Finally, someone who subscribes to neither belief nor unbelief has to choose between uncertainty and indifference. Uncertainty combines a positive attitude to the religious question with ambivalence to the answer. Indifference, however, ignores not only positive as well as negative answers, but the religious question altogether. The higher the secularization of a country, therefore, the

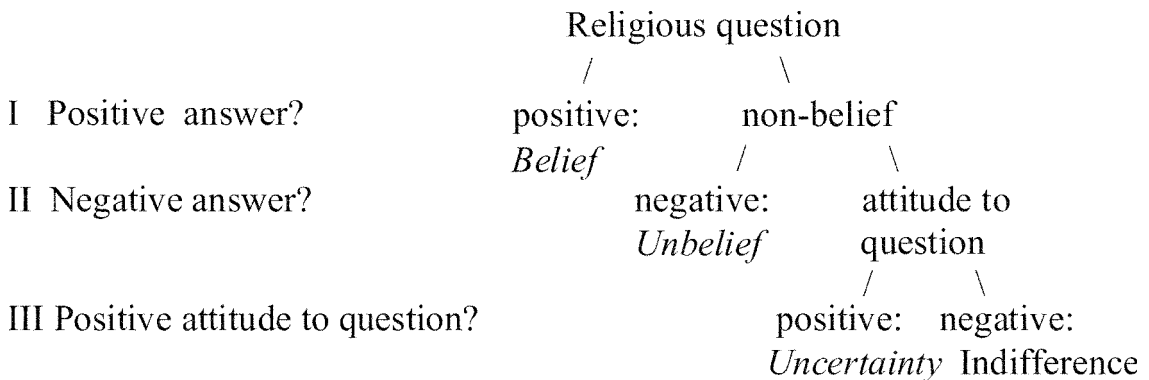


Figure 1 Responses to the religious question, split up into three sub-questions

less common will be uncertainty over indifference – as defined in question III of Figure 1. This first pattern of predictions will be called the *degree of secularization hypothesis*.

The *form* of secularization reflects whether constitutionally granted freedoms are respected by the political system. In the capitalist West European countries, the freedoms granted to individuals and the limits set to the power of the state over society by the democratic constitution have become social and political realities. In these countries, therefore, people were free to leave churches and to abandon Christian faith if they no longer needed them. Secularization was a socially autonomous, *spontaneous* process.

The constitutions of former socialist Eastern European countries, however, granted individual freedom only nominally. The ‘leading role’ of the communist party gave the state the means to directly govern society. The supremacy of politics over society provided the means to suppress the churches and Christian belief and to put the ideology of ‘scientific materialism’ in their place: in the long run, political practice can, by means of science and technology, build up paradise in this world. This ideology can paradoxically be called a secular belief, namely that the religious question has found an imminent answer. It was at the heart of the communist ideology and has, through political coercion and educational indoctrination, become a common world-view. People did not leave churches, but were expelled from them (Pollack, 2001: 138); they did not abandon Christian belief, but were willy-nilly taught a secular surrogate. Secularization became a politically *enforced* process.

Enforced secularization worked against belief – as defined in question I of Figure 1. Furthermore, the doctrine of ‘scientific materialism’ transformed unbelief into a secular belief allegedly proven by science. What has remained nonconformist in Western countries became conformist in Eastern countries. Enforced secularization worked in favour of unbelief – as defined in question II of Figure 1. Finally, the pressure in favour of unbelief affected the balance of the two remaining options as well. In secular matters, uncertainty is an inferior response – it is unwise to be uncertain where proof is seemingly available and, moreover, majorities and propaganda testify to the truth. Beyond unbelief, therefore, indifference is preferable to uncertainty. Indifference escapes the conflict between the delining old and the imposed new belief by neglecting the religious question altogether. In this manner, intentional propaganda in favour of unbelief also favoured indifference unintentionally. Enforced secularization worked against

uncertainty—as defined in question III of Figure 1. This second pattern of predictions will be called the *form of secularization hypothesis*.

Yet political enforcement will attain its aims the better the weaker the countervailing societal powers are. Conversely, social acceptance of the churches and a religious foundation of national identity may stall the enforced secularization. Therefore, the degree and the form of secularization may interact: the expected effects of the enforced secularization should be stronger in highly secularized than in less secularized Eastern countries; this third pattern of predictions will be called the *enforcement without resistance hypothesis*.

In principle, the effect of enforced secularization on belief must be gauged by comparing countries before and after this ‘treatment’, which is not possible. Nevertheless, if the effect of enforcement is thought to be super-added to the degree of secularization spontaneously arrived at, it can be gauged indirectly by comparing countries with and without enforcement for a given degree of secularization *immediately after the end of communism*. Weaker belief in Eastern than in Western countries with a similar degree of secularization can be attributed to the enforced form of secularization.

Yet as time goes by, the effects of the degree and the form of secularization should develop differently, for spontaneous and enforced secularization are differently rooted in the long-term development of modern societies. *Spontaneous* secularization results from the differentiation of social spheres, which in turn allows for personal freedom and civil rights, religious tolerance and moral pluralism. It has continually widened the range of personal options – and should continue to do so if not disturbed by politics. *Enforced* secularization, however, is a late branch grafted onto the stem of spontaneous secularization. It did not rest on social differentiation, but on social de-differentiation: Society had been subjugated under the ‘leading role’ of the communist party, and religion under the monopoly of ‘scientific materialism’. The range of personal options had been restricted – and should widen again once the old differentiations are re-established.

In brief, just as enforced secularization was super-added to the spontaneous one, there should be a spontaneous revival of religion once the enforcing powers have resigned. Where secularization was spontaneous, that is in the Western countries, first, answers to the religious question should remain constant or continue to follow the path of spontaneous secularization (Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere, 1995: 93); in any case, there should be no reversal. Yet where political power has enforced the

spontaneous process, that is in the Eastern countries, *second*, a spontaneous revival should compensate for the enforcement: belief should increase, unbelief decrease, and uncertainty increase. *Third*, the spontaneous revival should be stronger where the enforcement has been stronger, that is in the highly secularized Eastern countries. This fourth pattern of predictions will be called the *revival hypothesis*.

Hypotheses: Education, Age and Religious Practice of Individuals

Yet differences between countries in belief can only be understood as consequences of different aspects of the secularization process if individual level variables which foster belief are controlled for.

First, *education* fosters a rational, scientific attitude to immanent questions of ‘this world’ which can be transferred to transcendental questions of ‘the other world’ (Felling *et al.*, 1987: 87; Tomka and Zulehner, 2000: 71; Pollack, 2001: 140). The higher, therefore, a person’s education, the less should he or she be inclined to belief, the more to unbelief and the less to uncertainty – as defined in Figure 1. Second, with increasing *age* men become increasingly aware of their mortality (Ester *et al.*, 1994: 63; Kelley and de Graaf, 1997: 653, 658; Felling *et al.*, 1987: 79; Tomka, 1998: 303). The greater a person’s age, the more should he or she be inclined to belief, the less to unbelief and the more to uncertainty – as defined in Figure 1.

While education and age affect belief only indirectly by producing attitudes favourable or unfavourable to religion, the *religious practice* is directly geared to foster belief (Felling *et al.*, 1987: 64–65). The more frequently someone follows religious practices, therefore, the more should he or she be inclined to belief, the less to unbelief and the more to uncertainty – as defined in Figure 1.

Data and Steps of Analysis

The following article builds up on an earlier one (Meulemann, 2000). It uses the classification of countries justified there and extends the analysis in two ways: by following the development and by controlling for individual level variables. Data are drawn from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 1991 and 1998.² It comprises 18 countries. All non-European countries except the USA were excluded such that nine ‘Western’ and five ‘Eastern’ countries remained. As all indicators of religious *practice* collected in the above

mentioned article show, Eastern and Western countries can be consistently classified into lowly and highly secularized ones and countries within these four groups can again be ordered from highest to lowest degree of secularization: Ireland, Northern Ireland, USA and Italy *versus* Austria, West Germany, The Netherlands, Great Britain and Norway; Poland, Slovenia, Hungary *versus* East Germany and Russia. These four groups can, therefore, be considered as a sort of experimental ‘treatment’ on religious belief.

The ISSP contains only two questions on belief with response options indicating uncertainty and indifference. The first asked ‘Which statement comes closest to expressing what you believe about God’: ‘I know God exists and I have no doubts about it’ and ‘I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind’ – both coded as *belief*. ‘I don’t believe in God’ – coded as *unbelief*. ‘I find myself believing some of the time, but not at others’, ‘While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God’ and ‘Can’t choose, don’t know’ – all three coded as *uncertainty*. ‘I don’t know whether there is a God and I don’t believe there is any way to find out’ – coded as *indifference*.³

The second question asked ‘Which statement comes closest to describing your feeling about the Bible’: ‘The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word’ and ‘The Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything should be taken literally, word for word’ – both coded as *belief*. ‘The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends and moral teachings recorded by man’ – coded as *unbelief*. ‘Can’t choose, don’t know’ – coded as *uncertainty*. ‘This does not apply to me’ – coded as *indifference*.

Responses to both questions will be analysed in two steps. First, the hypotheses regarding the secularization of countries will be examined by percentage point differences in tables and by logistic regression with dummy variables. Second, the hypotheses regarding the secularization that have been confirmed on the level of countries in the logistic regressions will be examined by controlling for individual level variables.

Results: Belief in God

Secularization of Countries: Percentage Point Differences

As to the belief in God, the responses according to Figure 1 in Western and Eastern countries with a low and high degree of secularization in 1991 and 1998 are presented in Figure 2.

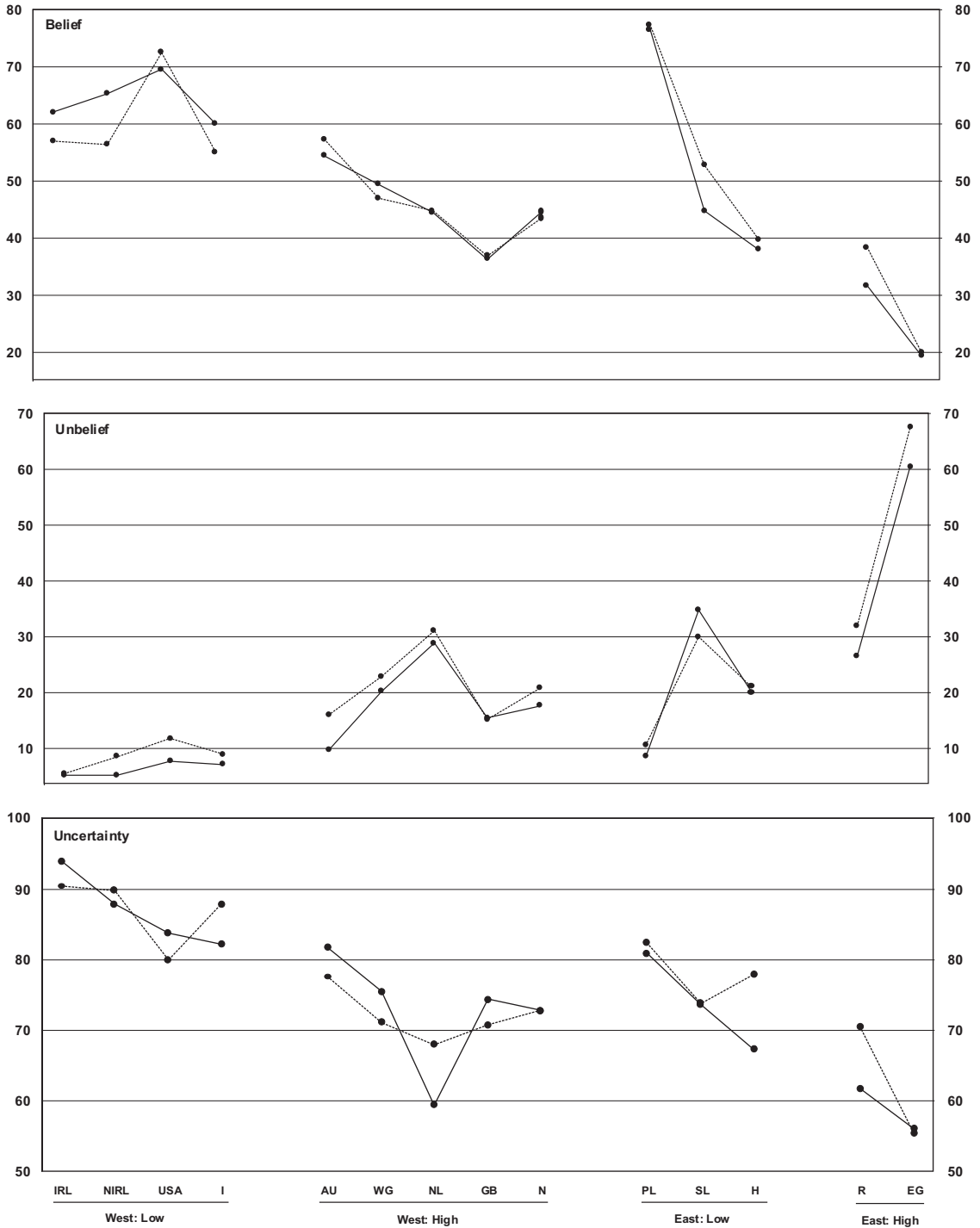


Figure 2 Belief in God in Western and Eastern countries with low and high degrees of secularization, in 1991 and 1998 (dotted lines) in per cent

The Degree of Secularization Hypothesis

Looking at the *Western* countries, belief decreases with the degree of secularization at both time points. Within the lowly secularized countries and at both time points, belief oscillates in the narrow range between 72.5 per cent in the USA in 1998 and 55.0 per cent in Italy in 1998; and within the highly secularized countries between 57.3 per cent in Austria in 1998 and 36.3 per cent in Great Britain in 1991. But the ranges of the percentage values of both groups do not overlap in 1991 and only once in 1998 (55.0 per cent for Italy below 57.3 per cent for Austria). Unbelief roughly increases with the degree of secularization at both time points. The ranges of the percentage values of lowly and highly secularized countries do not overlap in 1991 and 1998. Uncertainty roughly decreases with the degree of secularization at both time points. Again, the ranges of percentage values of lowly and highly secularized countries do not overlap.

Looking at the *Eastern* countries, belief consistently decreases with the degree of secularization at both time points. But it varies much more within groups than in the Western countries. Within the lowly secularized countries, Poland exceeds Slovenia and Hungary by at least 20 percentage points, and attains the highest values of Eastern and Western countries. Within the highly secularized group, East Germany has at least 10 percentage points fewer believers than Russia; but the ranges of the percentages of lowly and highly secularized countries do not overlap. Unbelief roughly increases with the degree of secularization at both time points. Yet it varies much more within both groups than in Western countries. The ranges of the percentage values of lowly and highly secularized groups overlap quite a bit in 1991, but not in 1998. Uncertainty roughly decreases with the degree of secularization. Within the lowly and the highly secularized group, there is no more variation than in Western countries. Between the lowly and the highly secularized group, ranges of percentages do not overlap.

In sum, the degree of secularization hypotheses is confirmed. But it fares less well in the Eastern than in the Western countries. In the West all three responses are very similar among the lowly secularized, and fairly similar among the highly secularized countries. In the East, however, belief and unbelief vary greatly within lowly as well as within highly secularized countries, and only uncertainty remains in a more narrow range within both degrees of secularization. Among the Eastern (as well as among all) countries, Poland and East Germany take the extreme positions. *Poland* is the least secularized Eastern country; its belief overbids even the least secularized

Western countries, its unbelief is as low and its uncertainty as high as in many lowly secularized Western countries. Obviously, Catholicism as a pledge of national identity has not only resisted the Communist attack on religion, but held the position of religion against secularism in general (Pollack, 2001: 141–143, 154–155). *East Germany* is the only country where belief has become marginal and unbelief dominant and where indifference is almost as common as uncertainty. Here, Protestantism may have paved the way for unbelief. On the one hand, it has accepted unbelief as a legitimate branch of theological thinking long before the advent of communism; on the other hand, it has willy-nilly cooperated with communism under the heading of a ‘Church in Socialism’.

The Form of Secularization Hypothesis

Looking at the *lowly secularized* countries, belief has been lowered by Eastern state suppression below the Western level at both time points, with the exception of Poland. In Slovenia and Hungary, however, belief is lower than in the lowly secularized Western countries (Prudky and Arcis, 2001: 294). Unbelief has been heightened in Eastern countries consistently above the Western level at both time points. The ranges of the values of Western and Eastern countries do not overlap in 1991 and only once in 1998 (10.6 for Poland below 11.8 for USA). Uncertainty has been lowered consistently in the Eastern countries below the Western level at both time points; the ranges do not overlap.

Looking at the *highly secularized* countries, belief has been lowered and unbelief heightened by state repression in Eastern countries at both time points so that the ranges of the percentages overlap only once (unbelief 1991: 28.9 per cent in the Netherlands higher than the 26.6 per cent in Russia). Similarly, uncertainty has been lowered almost consistently with only one overlap of ranges (1991: 59.4 per cent in the Netherlands below 61.8 per cent in Russia).

In sum, the form of secularization hypotheses is confirmed among lowly and highly secularized countries – with one exception: the high level of belief in Poland.

The Enforcement Without Resistance Hypothesis

If one compares summarily the difference between Eastern and Western countries for lowly secularized countries, with the same difference for highly secularized countries, the enforcement without resistance hypothesis is confirmed for belief and unbelief. The negative effect of enforcement on belief and its positive

effect on unbelief are stronger in the highly secularized than in the lowly secularized Eastern countries at both time points.

The Revival Hypothesis

Looking at the *lowly secularized Western* countries, belief decreases in all countries by 5 percentage points or more, except in the USA where it increases by 3 percentage points. Unbelief increases in all countries, and uncertainty decreases in Ireland and the USA, but increases in Northern Ireland and Italy. In sum, there are far more cases of a continuing secularization than of revival.

Looking at the *highly secularized Western* countries, belief remains definitely constant in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Norway; it increases by 3 percentage points in Austria and decreases by 2 percentage points in West Germany. Unbelief remains more or less constant in all countries except Austria, where it gains 6 percentage points. Uncertainty remains constant in Norway, increases by 8 percentage points in the Netherlands and by 4 percentage points in Austria, West Germany and Great Britain. The best summary of a patchwork such as this is: no change.

Taking lowly and highly secularized countries together, then, there is – as expected – no revival of belief in the West, in any case not in Western Europe. On the contrary, where the spontaneous secularization has not yet gone very far, in the lowly secularized countries, it is – except for the USA – still on its way.

Looking at the *lowly and highly secularized Eastern* countries, belief increases by 7–8 percentage points in Slovenia and Russia, but remains constant in Poland, Hungary and East Germany. Unbelief decreases in Slovenia by 5 percentage points, but remains constant in Poland and Hungary and increases by 6–7 percentage points in East Germany and Russia. Uncertainty increases by about 10 percentage points in Hungary and Russia, but remains constant in Poland, Slovenia and East Germany. Even if one again takes Poland out of consideration, belief and uncertainty increase neither consistently nor impressively, and unbelief more often increases than decreases. Taking the three responses together, there is – as expected – *some* revival; but *how much* has still to be ascertained. To do this, the effects of the enforced secularization have to be compared with the effects of the revival; such a comparison can only be furnished by a regression analysis.

Secularization of Countries: Regression Analysis

As the dependent variable is a hierarchy of three percentages, differences between countries and time points must

be examined by three nested logistic regressions. For country groups, dummy predictor variables are constructed in the same manner for 1991 and 1998; yet for 1998, a specific dummy predictor variable must be added, together with its interaction with the country variables.

For 1991, the *lowly secularized Western countries* are taken as the base category represented by the regression intercept to prove the three effects of the secularization of countries by three dummy variables. ‘Secular’ has value 1 for the highly secularized and value 0 for the less secularized countries and examines the *degree of secularization hypothesis in Western countries*. ‘East’ has value 1 for Eastern and 0 for Western countries and examines the *form of secularization hypothesis in Eastern countries*. ‘Secular*East’ has value 1 for the highly secularized Eastern countries and 0 for the three remaining groups of countries; it examines the *enforcement without resistance hypothesis in highly secularized Eastern countries*.

For 1998, a dummy variable ‘1998’ which has value 1 for 1998 and 0 for 1991 and its three interactions with the secularization dummies are constructed to examine the *three predictions of the revival hypothesis*. The first prediction of no change in Western countries is examined by ‘1998’ in the *lowly secularized Western countries*, and by ‘1998*Secular’ in the *highly secularized Western countries*. The second and third prediction of a revival of belief in lowly secularized, and a particularly strong revival in highly secularized, Eastern countries are examined similarly: by ‘1998*East’ for *lowly secularized Eastern countries*, and by ‘1998*Secular*East’ for *highly secularized Eastern countries*.

To measure the revival, ‘East’ must be compared with ‘1998*East’ for the lowly secularized Eastern countries, and the sum of ‘East’ and ‘Secular*East’ with the sum of ‘1998*East’ and ‘1998*Secular*East’ for the highly secularized Eastern countries. More specifically, if belief or uncertainty is considered, the first, negative, effect should be more or less compensated for by the second, positive, effect in both comparisons. If there is a particularly strong enforced secularization, and if there is a particularly strong revival in the highly secularized countries, ‘Secular*East’ should have a significantly negative, and ‘1998*Secular*East’ a significantly positive effect. If unbelief is considered, the same reasoning applies with reversed signs.

Furthermore, as the dependent variable is nested within groups of the independent variables, the effects of the degree and form of secularization on the three aspects of belief would be estimated too easily as significant by a conventional regression, which considers each individual within a country as an independent measurement,

although all individuals of a given country may have been influenced in the same way by their country membership. Therefore, hierarchical regressions have to be applied which test country variables on the higher level of samples, and person variables on the lower level of individuals sampled (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). To this purpose, the HLM program (Raudenbush *et al.*, 2000) has been used.

The regressions of the three steps of the belief in God on these predictors are presented in Table 1. As the variable 'Secular' shows, the *degree of secularization* hypothesis is confirmed in 1991: in the highly secularized Western countries people less often believe in God. If they do not, they more often subscribe to unbelief. If they subscribe neither to belief nor unbelief, they are less often uncertain than indifferent. As the variable 'East' shows, the *form of secularization* hypothesis is confirmed in 1991 without significance for belief, but significantly for unbelief and uncertainty. As the variable 'Secular*East' shows, the *enforcement without resistance* hypothesis is confirmed in 1991 without significance, but not for unbelief and uncertainty.

As for 1998, no change was expected in the West, but a *revival* was expected in the East. As the variables '1998' and '1998*Secular' show, there are only small and insignificant changes in the West, as expected. However, as the variable '1998*East' shows, there is the expected revival in the lowly secularized Eastern countries, but it does not reach significance. Furthermore, as the variable '1998*Secular*East' shows, not even the signs come consistently out as expected.

In sum, only the degree of secularization hypothesis is confirmed unequivocally in 1991 and 1998; the form

of secularization hypothesis is confirmed only partly and only in 1991. Yet the effect of the degree of secularization was primarily ascertained in order to measure the effects of the form of secularization and their possible reversal. Controlling for the degree, then, the enforced form has reduced belief only insignificantly, and the end of force restores belief only insignificantly. The enforced form *has*, however, increased unbelief and decreased uncertainty, but the end of force leads neither to a retreat of unbelief nor to a recovery of uncertainty.

In conclusion, the effects of the enforced form of secularization are at once less and more disturbing than expected. On the first level of the religious question, belief has only minimally been pushed backwards and forwards. But on the second and third level, unbelief has been persistently strengthened, and uncertainty persistently weakened (and correspondingly indifference strengthened). The deeper effects of the enforced secularization seem to remain: it did not so much affect religious belief as the concern with the religious question.

Yet this conclusion may be due to the fact, visible already in Figure 2, that the *lowly secularized* Eastern countries are not very similar as to the belief in God because of Poland's extreme position. Therefore, Eastern countries will no longer be divided according to the degree of secularization, and the variable for the enforcement without resistance hypotheses will be dropped together with the variables for the corresponding revival. Instead, Poland will be compared to all other Eastern countries by a dummy variable; because of the extraordinarily high belief in Poland no revival is expected and a variable '1998*Poland' need not be

Table 1 Belief in God: logistic regression on the secularization of countries

	Predictions			Regression coefficients		
	B	UB	UC	B	UB	UC
Intercept				0.591	-2.705	1.942
Secular	-	+	-	-0.761*	1.164**	-0.933***
East	-	+	-	-0.431	1.284**	-0.891**
Secular*East	-	+	-	-0.492	-0.038	0.249
1998	0	0	0	-0.164	0.345	-0.001
1998*Secular	0	0	0	0.167	-0.126	-0.057
1998*East	+	-	+	0.312	-0.317	0.223
1998*Secular*East	+	-	+	0.148	0.399	0.024
Log-likelihood				50,122	26,027	19,414
Valid <i>n</i> of 35,840				35,290	18,333	13,681

B, belief; *UB*, unbelief; *UC*, uncertainty.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

constructed. In this way, the *enforcement without resistance* (in all *highly* secularized Eastern countries) hypothesis is reformulated as the *resistance to enforcement* hypothesis (in a single *lowly* secularized Eastern country) and the sign of the prediction switches accordingly. Finally, as '1998*Secular' had no effect, which means that the development does not differ between lowly and highly secularized Western countries, this variable will be dropped as well.

The results of the revised regression models are presented in Table 2. As the log-likelihoods show, the revised model fares better with less predictors than the original one. The *degree of secularization hypothesis* is now examined by the variable 'Secular' for both time points and for Eastern and Western countries; it is again confirmed. The *form of secularization hypothesis* is now examined by the variable 'East' which compares all Eastern countries except Poland against all Western countries in 1991; it is now clearly confirmed for each response. The *resistance to enforcement hypothesis* is examined by 'Poland' for both time points; it is confirmed strongly for belief and unbelief and without significance for uncertainty.

For 1998, the prediction of no change in the West now is examined by '1998', and the prediction of a revival in the East is examined by '1998*East'. The first prediction is confirmed, but not the second: There is no significant change in the West, but also no significant revival in the East. In Eastern countries, belief and uncertainty regain only about a quarter of the lost ground ($-0.912 + 0.226$; $-0.826 + 0.240$), and unbelief increases contrary to expectation ($1.447 + 0.125$).

In sum, taking Poland as a singular case and eliminating the effect for different developments between lowly and highly secularized Western countries, clears the picture. The *degree* of secularization retains its

effects, while the *form* of secularization and the *resistance to enforcement* now show their effects as expected. The enforced form decreases belief, increases unbelief, and decreases uncertainty – except in Poland. However, the expected *revival* of belief and uncertainty in Eastern countries does not show up significantly and is only weak as measured by the coefficients, while unbelief increases contrary to expectation.

In conclusion, the results are, at the same time, more and less disturbing than expected. On the one hand, *all* levels of the religious question are now affected by the enforced secularization and remain so until 1998. On the other hand, this pessimistic view results from taking out of consideration a fact disposing for optimism: Poland with its national-Catholic tradition was able to resist the enforced secularization. In general, however, the enforced secularization had its genuine and – in spite of signs of revival – persistent effects.

Secularization of Countries and Education, Age and Religious Practice of Individuals

The regressions of the last section merely summarize and test the results of Figure 2. Is there still an effect of the form of secularization if individual level variables are controlled for? Two regression models of the belief in God on the secularization of countries as in Table 2 and on individual level variables are presented in Table 3.

The first model contains only demographic predictors which indirectly affect religion. Indeed, education and age affect the three aspects of belief in God as predicted. Yet they do not reduce the effects of the two secularization variables – 'Secular' and 'East' – as expected; also, the effects of the two time variables – '1998' and '1998*East' –

Table 2 Belief in God: logistic regression on the secularization of countries, revised model (valid *n* as in Table 1)

	Predictions			Raw regression coefficients		
	B	UB	UC	B	UB	UC
Intercept				0.558	-2.623	1.877
Secular	-	+	-	-0.702***	1.031***	-0.827***
East	-	+	-	-0.912***	1.447***	-0.826***
Poland	+	-	+	1.485***	-1.138***	0.341
1998	0	0	0	-0.070	0.250	-0.033
1998*East	+	-	+	0.225	0.125	0.240
Log-likelihood				50,110	26,021	19,407

B, belief; UB, unbelief; UC, uncertainty.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

remain insignificant. In sum, demographic differences between countries cannot account for the differences in the belief in God. If secularization effects can be at all traced back to qualities of persons, they must rest on a behaviour directly affecting religious belief, namely on religious practice.

The second model additionally includes frequency of prayer, which was the only variable of religious practice measured in every country at both time points, and refers to the *public as well as the private* practice.⁴ Indeed, frequency of prayer strongly affects the three aspects of belief as expected. Moreover, its inclusion in the model reduces the effects of age and education. Furthermore, it considerably reduces the effects of the two secularization variables as expected, but the pattern of their effects is retained. In particular, the enforced form still significantly reduces belief and increases unbelief independently of the degree of secularization. Finally, the revival effect remains as small and insignificant as in the earlier models. In sum, differences of religious practice between countries account for quite a bit, but not all, of the differences of religious belief. In particular, the suppression of belief in the East is only partly due to the suppression of religious practice; some of the suppression of belief remains even when religious practice has regained its freedom.

Instead of the frequency of prayer, the frequency of church attendance, which refers to the *public* practice of religion, has only been additionally introduced into a third model. As the state can suppress the public practice

of religion only, church attendance is preferable to prayer as an indicator of religious practice.⁵ Yet, unfortunately, it was not surveyed in Slovenia in 1991. In spite of this, this third model led to the same conclusions as the second so that the results need not be presented.

Looking back on the development of the belief in God between 1991 and 1998 under the control of individual level variables, the conclusion remains more and less disturbing than expected. On the one hand, if demographic predictors of religious belief are controlled for, the effects of the enforced secularization remain as strong and as persistent as without these controls. If, in addition, religious practice is controlled for, these effects are reduced, but remain significant. In brief, the liberation of religious practice does not show up as a significant increase of the belief in God in Eastern countries between 1991 and 1998. On the other hand, this conclusion takes Poland out of consideration, where belief was already stronger in 1991 than even in the lowly secularized Western countries and remained so until 1998.

In Poland, as in the remaining Eastern European countries, therefore, there is more persistence than change between 1991 and 1998, yet on different levels. Where the enforced secularization did not meet resistance it not only reduced belief, but also uncertainty, and furthered unbelief and indifference. It affected not only religion, but the concern for the religious question. Yet where the enforced secularization met resistance, it left belief and uncertainty, unbelief and indifference similarly unaffected – it might even have strengthened

Table 3 Belief in God: logistic regression on the secularization of countries, education, age and frequency of prayer (fixed slopes models)

	Predictions			Age and education			Age, education, religious practice		
	B	UB	UC	B	UB	UC	B	UB	UC
Intercept				0.064	-2.853	2.197	-1.370	-1.109	0.619
Secular	-	+	-	-0.711***	1.068***	-0.871***	-0.201	0.525**	-0.366*
East	-	+	-	-0.918***	1.471***	-0.875***	-0.395*	0.900**	-0.341
Poland	+	-	+	0.272***	-1.148*	0.372	0.949**	-0.256	-0.538
1998	0	0	0	-0.099	0.258	-0.044	-0.018	0.263	-0.058
1998*East	+	-	+	0.190	-0.110	0.234	0.104	-0.110	0.271
Education (7)	-	+	-	-0.047***	0.110***	-0.137***	-0.010	0.084***	-0.136***
Age (years*10)	+	-	+	0.160***	-0.072***	0.080***	0.070***	0.011	0.016
Prayer (11)	+	-	+				0.228***	-0.561***	0.482***
Log-likelihood				49,853	25,935	19,318	48,590	41,249	22,288
Valid <i>n</i>				35,105	18,228	13,609	34,343	17,823	13,247

Number of levels of individual variables in parentheses.

B, belief; UB, unbelief; UC, uncertainty.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

the former and weakened the latter. Altogether, however, the end of political suppression of the societies is at best partly reflected in a religious revival.

Results: Belief in Bible

Percentage Point Differences

As to the belief in the Bible, responses in Western and Eastern countries with a low and high degree of secularization in 1991 and 1998 are presented in Figure 3.

The degree of secularization hypothesis

Looking at *Western* countries, the degree of secularization lowers belief so that there is no overlap; yet unbelief and uncertainty are roughly equally common. Looking at *Eastern* countries, the degree of secularization again lowers belief so that there is no overlap; for unbelief and uncertainty no clear tendencies are visible. In brief: the degree of secularization hypothesis is confirmed for belief only.

That the degree of secularization hypothesis is not confirmed for unbelief and uncertainty may be explained by the generally high level of unbelief in the Bible. Unbelief in the Bible is shared by two thirds in most of the samples; and it is much more common than unbelief in God – as a look back at Figure 2 reveals. Many of those who do not believe in the Bible express unbelief straight away – but only a few of those who do not believe in God confess to be unbelievers. For non-believers in God, unbelief is a minority response so that the last decision between uncertainty and indifference becomes highly significant for the remaining majority. For non-believers in the Bible, unbelief is a majority response so that the decision over attitudes to the Bible loses significance. To believe in God or not is a permanent challenge in a person's life, difficult to respond to once and forever. Yet if the Bible 'really tells the truth' is an almost secular and scientific question that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'.

The form of secularization and the enforcement without resistance hypothesis

Looking at *lowly* as well as at *highly secularized countries*, belief is consistently and with no overlap higher in the West than in the East at both time points; yet again no clear tendencies appear for unbelief and uncertainty. The form of secularization hypothesis is confirmed for belief only. Furthermore, the negative effects of the enforced secularization on belief are not stronger in the highly than in the lowly secularized

Eastern countries. The enforcement of secularization hypothesis is not confirmed for belief – let alone for unbelief or uncertainty.

The revival hypothesis

Looking at the *Western* countries, belief decreases in every country (except the Netherlands). But so does unbelief (with the exception of West Germany). Uncertainty decreases in most countries; it remains constant in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Norway and increases in Italy. Looking at the *Eastern* countries, belief increases only in Russia (by 16 percentage points) and remains more or less constant in the remaining countries. Unbelief, decreases by 34 percentage points in Russia and by 20 percentage points in Hungary; it remains constant in Poland and Slovenia and it increases by 11 percentage points in East Germany. Uncertainty remains constant except in Slovenia where it increases by 5 percentage points and Hungary where it decreases by 28 percentage points.

If one considers only belief, there is some evidence of a revival in the East. How strong it is must again be gauged by a comparison of its effect with the effect of the enforced secularization in a regression analysis.

Regression Analyses

The regression of *belief* in the Bible, that is the first response of Figure 1 only, on the dummy variables representing the secularization of countries are represented in column 1 of Table 4. As the enforcement to resistance hypotheses was not confirmed in the table analysis, the differentiation between lowly and highly secularized Eastern countries is not held up so that – otherwise as in Table 1 – '1998*secular' refers to Eastern and Western secularized countries and '1998*East' refers to highly and lowly secularized Eastern countries.

In 1991, the degree and the form of secularization hypothesis ('Secular' and 'East') are confirmed: in comparison to lowly secularized Western countries, less people believe in the Bible in highly secularized as well as in Eastern countries. Up to 1998, belief significantly decreases in the lowly secularized Western countries ('1998'), and insignificantly increases in the highly secularized countries ('1998*Secular'). In the Eastern countries ('1998*East'), belief increases, as expected by the revival hypothesis, but narrowly fails to reach significance. In brief, the belief in the Bible has been reduced not only with the degree but also with the form of secularization. But it recovers somewhat, yet insignificantly between 1991 and 1998.

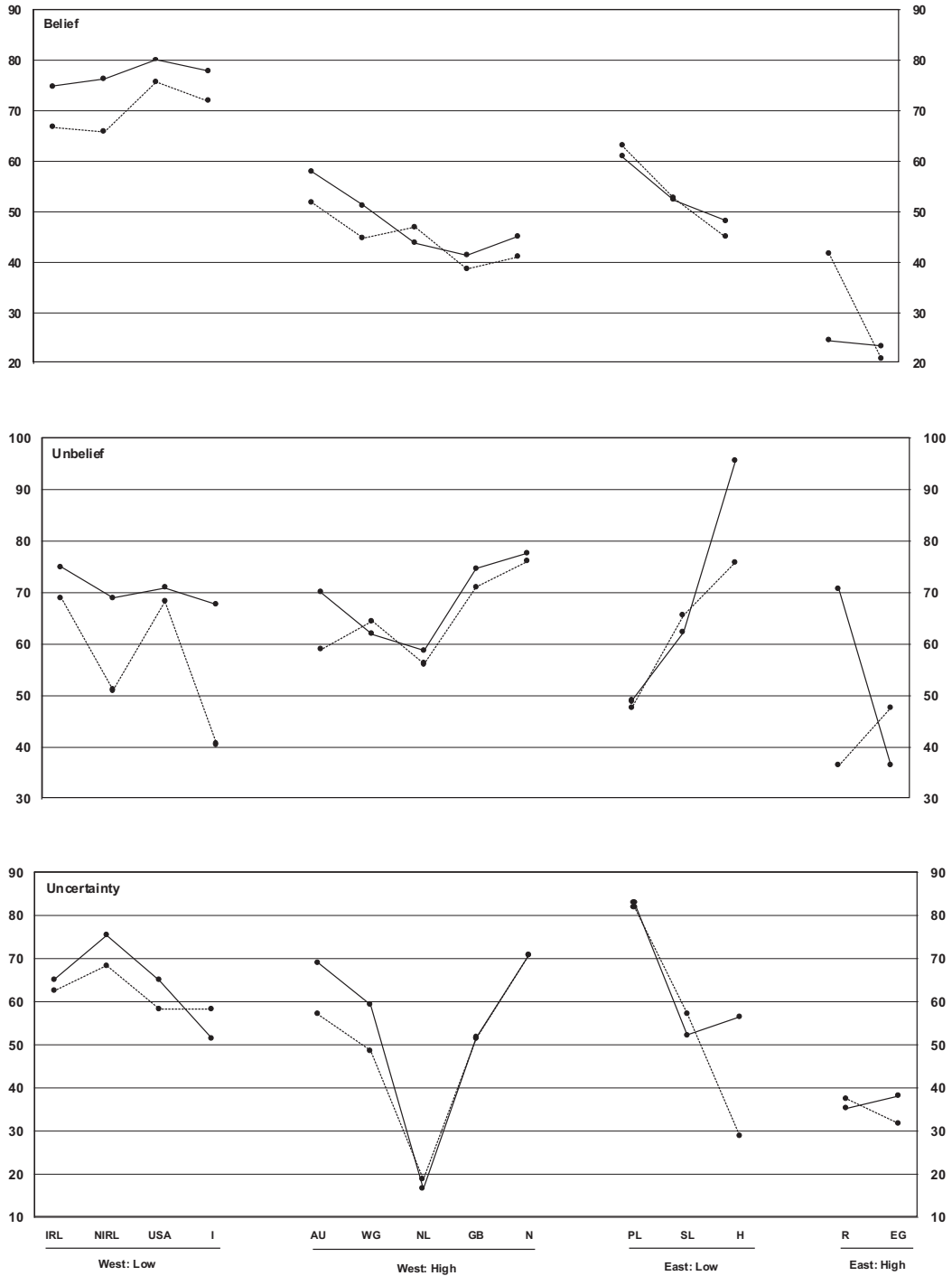


Figure 3 Belief in Bible in Western and Eastern countries with low and high degrees of secularization, in 1991 and 1998 (dotted lines) in per cent

Table 4 Belief in Bible, belief only: regression on the secularization of countries, education, age, and religious practice (fixed slope models)

	Prediction	(1)	(2)	(3)
Intercept		1.229	1.190	-0.575
Secular	-	-1.312***	-1.332***	-0.568**
East	-	-1.072***	-1.079***	-0.600**
1998	0	-0.393*	-0.410*	-0.299
1998*Secular	0	0.279	0.290	0.215
1998*East	+	0.412	0.394	0.323
Education (7)	-		-0.081***	-0.037***
Age (years*10)	+		0.092***	-0.055***
Prayer (11)	+			0.323***
Log-likelihood		50,301	50,058	49,035
Valid <i>n</i>		35,426	35,243	34,460

For notes see Table 3.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Does the enforced form still reduce belief in Eastern countries when education and age are controlled for? As the regression in column 2 of Table 4 shows, education decreases and age increases the belief in the Bible. However, controlling for education and age does not reduce the effects of the degree and form of secularization. Additionally controlling for the frequency of prayer, however, strongly reduces these effects, as the regression in column 3 of Table 4 shows. Moreover, it reduces the effects of education and age – in the latter case even the sign is reversed, which is difficult to explain. In sum, not only the degree, but also the form of secularization retains a strong effect on belief even under the control of practice.

Conclusion: Genuine and Persistent Effects of the Form of Secularization

As the regressions on the *secularization of countries only* showed, the *degree* of the secularization in 1991 had the expected effects on all three responses as to the belief in God, and on belief as to the belief in the Bible. Up to 1998, this effect has been reduced slightly or not at all for belief in God as well as in the Bible.

Even when these effects of the degree of secularization had been taken account of, the enforced *form* of secularization had the expected effects on all three decisions on the belief in God, and on belief and uncertainty as to the belief in the Bible. That is, the state suppression of religion in the former communist countries reduced not only positive beliefs in religious dogma but also

positive attitudes to the religious question; it had manifest and subtle effects on religious belief. And these effects of the form of secularization could be ascertained independently of the effects of the degree of secularization. The enforced form decreased religious belief over and beyond what a merely spontaneous process of plausibility loss would have produced. One cannot contend – as some do (Höllinger, 1995: 114) – that the communist regimes just attained with political force what would have happened as an autonomous social process anyway. They did more.

And what they did more survived their demise up to 1998 to an astonishingly high degree. While the enforced secularization in Eastern countries had its genuine effect on belief, only slight traces of a spontaneous revival of belief after the demise of the Communist regime show up by 1998. As to the belief in God, belief and uncertainty recover only by a quarter while unbelief increases. However, this holds only for Slovenia, Hungary, Russia and East Germany, while in Poland belief was the strongest of Eastern and Western countries and did not decline. In Poland as well as in the remaining Eastern states, then, there is more stability than change. As to belief in the Bible, belief – the only decision worth a closer examination here – recovers somewhat but insignificantly.

As the regressions on the *secularization of countries and individual level variables* showed, neither the *degree* nor the *form* of secularization loses impact on the belief in God or the belief in the Bible if education and age are controlled for. However, both lose impact but retain significance if religious practice – either frequency of prayer or frequency of church attendance – is additionally

controlled for. If secularization differences between countries are mediated by individual level variables at all, then they are mediated by religious practice – but only in part. In particular, considerable effects of the enforced *form* of secularization persist even when religious practice is controlled for.

Whichever kind of analysis is considered, the answer to the two questions posed in the beginning is: there are genuine effects of the enforced form of secularization, and they persist up to 1998. The political suppression of religion under communism reduced Christian belief and concern with the religious question over and beyond what would have arisen from a spontaneous loss of faith; but the end of suppression does not automatically mean the revival of faith or of concern with the religious question.

The persistence of the effects must stem from other sources than political coercion. One such source may have been the comparatively low trust of Eastern European people in the churches (Pollack, 2001: 151). People prefer to remain without belief than re-acknowledge the teaching of the churches. Institutions can be changed instantly. But people must forget *and* re-learn; they may instantly do the former, but hesitate to do the latter. In any case, people seem to change less quickly than institutions.

Notes

1. For Eastern European countries and one time point only, a similar question has been treated by Need and Evans (2001) with reference to religious *practice*.
2. The data utilized were documented and made available by the 'Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung, Köln' (ZA). The data were collected by independent institutions in each country; the ZA kindly provided an integrated data set of the questions concerning religion for 1991 and 1998 (Study codebook 3390). Neither the original collectors nor the ZA bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.
3. This statement does not express a subjective state of uncertainty, but a conviction that the religious question cannot be answered objectively (or scientifically) and, therefore, is meaningless. It expresses indifference as defined above: negating not only the answers, but abandoning the question. The distribution of the original codes in Britain, as well as the development of an index constructed from this and two similar questions in the ISSP-countries in 1991 and 1998 are shown in de Graaf and Need (2000, 125, 129).
4. The question wording: 'About how often do you pray?' lacked a reference to the home and allowed prayer in the church to be included. In Ireland in 1998, the two highest responses 'once a day' and 'several times a day' were not in the data, but the two next highest categories have been chosen more often. There was no way to correct this.
5. Frequency of church attendance was measured on six levels. It correlates strongly in each country at both time points with frequency of prayer (about $r=0.60$). It does not increase between 1991 and 1998 in the Eastern European countries.

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