

The opposition to the omnipotence of the State - as symbolised by Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) – had a significant impact on the political organization of European society. A liberal strategy sought to provide a protective legal status for individual citizens, whereas a social strategy aimed at strengthening the social fabric to counterbalance the power of the State. Gradually both strategies became interwoven.

*The Struggle with Leviathan* pays special attention to the social strategy, developed by conservative and ecclesiastical circles against the omnipotence of the State, and centres on the fascinating biography of the Austrian diplomat Gustav von Blome, a grandson of Metternich and an important opponent of Bismarck. He proved to be a transitional figure between aristocratic conservatism and Christian democracy, which had a great influence on European integration after 1945.

Besides Blome, several other dramatis personae – statesmen, prelates, politic social activists – enter and exit this compelling narrative, which at the same time offers a broadly sketched historical fresco of international politics and the gradual form; the modern State.

The original Dutch edition of this book, *Het gevecht met Leviathan*, has been highly in the Dutch and Flemish press, and was awarded the biennial international Arenberg Prize for European History and Culture.

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