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- 1 *Giuseppe Garibaldi* [Leuven, KADOC]
- 2 *Pius IX* [Leuven, KADOC]
- 3 *Wladimir Czacki* [E. Soderini, *Il Pontificato di Leone XIII*, II, Milaan, 1933]
- 4 *Otto von Bismarck* [Gent, AMSAB]
- 5 *Gustav von Blome* [Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek]
- 6 *Johann Anton Pergen* [Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek]
- 7 *Karl Marx* [Gent, AMSAB]
- 8 *Joseph de Hemptinne* [Leuven, KADOC]
- 9 *Scipione Salviati* [Migliarino-Pisa, Villa Salviati]

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The Black International L'Internationale noire

1870 • 1878

The Holy See
and Militant Catholicism
in Europe

Le Saint-Siège
et le Catholicisme militant
en Europe

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Contents

INTRODUCTION <i>Emiel Lamberts</i>	7
I. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION	
L'Internationale noire Une organisation secrète au service du Saint-Siège <i>Emiel Lamberts</i>	15
La "Correspondance de Genève", 1870-1873: un organe de presse singulier <i>Jacques Lory</i>	103
II. THE ROMAN AND VATICAN CONTEXT	
The Roman Question Catholic Mobilisation and Papal Diplomacy during the Pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878) <i>Vincent Viaene</i>	135
The Roman Question The Political and Social Transformations in the Early Years of Rome Capital of the Kingdom of Italy <i>Carlo M. Fiorentino</i>	179
The Roman Curia Alignments among the Cardinals in the Vatican after the Unification of Italy <i>Andrea Ciampani</i>	195
A Brilliant Failure Wladimir Czacki, the Legacy of the Geneva Committee and the Origins of Vatican Press Policy from Pius IX to Leo XIII <i>Vincent Viaene</i>	231
Papauté et théologie à Rome dans les années 1870-1878 <i>Philippe Chenaux</i>	257
III. INFLUENCE ON THE CATHOLIC MOVEMENT IN EUROPE	
A Catholic International of Aristocratic Conservatives The German Participants in the Geneva Committee (1870-1878) <i>Winfried Becker</i>	273

Political and Social Catholicism in Cisleithania [Austria] (1867-1889) <i>Emiel Lamberts</i>	299
Le Comité de Genève et la mobilisation des catholiques en France <i>Daniël Moulinet</i>	319
Mobilisation du mouvement catholique en Italie dans les années 1870 <i>Alfredo Canavero</i>	345
La Belgique Un élève modèle de l'école ultramontaine <i>Jan de Maeyer</i>	361
A Struggle behind the Scenes The Failure of the Black International in the Netherlands (1870-1876) <i>Hans de Valk</i>	387
L'engagement des intellectuels catholiques suisses au sein de l'Internationale noire <i>Urs Altermatt</i>	409
Le mouvement catholique en Espagne dans les années 1870 <i>Feliciano Montero et Cristobal Robles</i>	427
English Catholic Particularism in Piety and Politics <i>Mary Heimann</i>	447
CONCLUSION The Black International and its Influence on European Catholicism (1870-1878) <i>Emiel Lamberts</i>	465
ABBREVIATIONS	481
BIBLIOGRAPHY	482
INDEX	506
CONTRIBUTORS	513

Introduction

Emiel Lamberts

"Nous sommes des internationaux noirs! Nous sommes des révoltés!" This cry could be read in the *Correspondance de Genève*, an international Catholic publication, on 30 November 1871. It suggested that there were "black, Catholic internationalists", to be distinguished from the "red, socialist internationalists".¹ Conservative opinion in Europe considered the latter responsible for the Commune uprising in Paris some months before. The phrase, "Nous sommes des révoltés" made clear that the "black internationalists" had also turned against the existing order and were also striving for radical change. Another striking similarity is that both the "black" and the "red" internationalists appealed to the masses in the hope of realising their ideal societies. Moreover, both movements were opposed to aggressive nationalism which became a dominant factor in European politics after the Franco-Prussian War (1870). Both the "black" and the "red" internationalists assumed a militant, rebellious stance and they gave a significant stimulus to two movements that would exercise considerable influence on Western European politics in the 20th century: socialism and socio-political Catholicism, which would later develop into Christian Democracy.

There is already an extensive scholarly literature on the history of the Socialist International. Such is not the case however for the Black International about which little was known until recently. Bismarck and the press he inspired repeatedly referred to the existence of a Catholic Black International, but such remarks were dismissed as propaganda.² Catholics and Church leaders denounced them as an absurd phantasm. Most of them could do so with a clear conscience, as they were not aware of the existence of this Black International which operated in secret. It came into being after the capture of Rome by Italian troops (20 September 1870). It mobilised, together with the Vatican, the Catholic masses in order to protect the Pope's claims to the *Patrimonium Petri* and the legal position of the Holy See. At the same time – for the defence of social order – it dedicated itself to the restoration of the social influence of the Church.

¹ The concept of the "Black International" was put forward by Bismarck's entourage in order to denounce militant Catholicism and was adopted as an honorary title by the group studied here.

² Goyau, *Bismarck et l'Eglise*, II, 114; Becker, "Il ruolo di Bismarck", 80-83; Bled, "Les correspondants français"; Brown, "Catholic-Legitimist Militancy", 237.