

Helmuth James von Moltke. But once the authorities got wind of his activities, they brought him before the terrible People's Court, which condemned him to death. He was executed by hanging on January 23, 1945.

Nikolaus Groß, like his fellow-conspirators, was one of the "heroes in the Church" that Karl Rahner had in mind. It is exceedingly discouraging to be reminded that Groß got no encouragement whatsoever from the church hierarchy, for which, according to the narrowest reading of St. Paul's Romans 13, the Nazis constituted the legitimate authority. According to the testimony of Groß's son Alexander, included in this book, "none of the German bishops" sent his father so much as a greeting or blessing while he was in the cell of the Gestapo jail. So much, then, for the hierarchy in times of real distress. Solitary, at the end, Groß wrote his family in one of his last letters, "My prayers never have risen to Heaven more fervently. But I am also certain that the grace of God will never be closer to us than these days." Fifty-six years later, on October 7, 2001, Nikolaus Groß was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

With this well-researched volume, Vera Brückner has moved the story of a personage hitherto neglected in the historical accounts—Nikolaus Groß—and of the circle—the Kölner Kreis—into focus. Vera Brückner could, however, have been more persuasive on two important issues, had she documented her statement (p. 241) that Groß's decision to resist was motivated by his knowledge about the NS crimes in the East and the persecution of the Jews. Unfortunately, the book does not have an index.

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Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Death of the Third Reich.
By Stephen G. Fritz. Lexington: The University Press of
Kentucky, 2004. Pp. xvii + 382. \$35.00. ISBN 0-8131
-2325-9.

Fritz's earlier volume on the mentality of the German soldier of World War II is widely considered a standard work, comparable to Omer Barrov's *Hitler's Army*. This comprehensively researched manuscript addresses a subject so timely that, were it not for the detailed research base supporting his text, Fritz might be assumed to have written it in the aftermath of the recent conquest and occupation of Iraq. *Endkampf* is a case study of the end of Nazi Germany and the establishment of the American occupation on the ruins of the Third Reich. The choice of area is significant. Franconia had been a center of support for

Nikolaus Groß. Politischer Journalist und Katholik im Widerstand des Köhler Kreises. Mit einem Essay über die Gefängnisbriefe von Alexander Groß. By Vera Bücker. Münster: LIT Verlag. 2003. Pp. 296. €17.90. ISBN 3-8258-5774-3.

Karl Rahner, S.J., once said that while there have always been heroes in the church, there has never been a heroic church. Institutions such as churches, armies, and corporations do not, in general, offer resistance, and their leaders, whatever their preferences and their view of an oppressing regime, rarely go beyond the so-called "Resistance;" namely a value-free self-assertion with the aim of coming to terms with the regime and assuring their survival. The church saw itself basically called upon to safeguard its sacred functions and to abstain from interfering in the profane, that is, the political realm. In the Germany of the Third Reich, both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Confessing Church saw themselves justified in following this course.

The role played by the Catholic Church in Germany was by no means heroic. There were no exceptions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, even though the Berlin Bishop Count Konrad von Preysing was closely connected with the *Widerstand*.

The volume under review is a biography of the Catholic labor leader Nikolaus Groß, backed by an elaborate documentation of his career and thoughts. Born in 1898 in the industrial Ruhr district, Groß was a deeply religious layman who, in 1927, became editor of a Catholic labor newspaper in which he represented the interests of the Catholic workers until the paper was finally closed by the authorities in 1938. During the Weimar years, he made himself a voice of political rationality opposing the increasing demagoguery of the political climate. To be sure, right after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, he took a pragmatic position toward National Socialism, advocating a "taming" of the movement by drawing it into a position of responsibility. After the Reichstag passed the ominous Enabling Act of March 1933, he refrained from direct opposition and even welcomed the *Reichskonkordat* of July 1933 between the Reich and the Holy See that, he figured, would enable Catholic associations to go on working.

Before long, however, he saw all his hopes for their corporate survival in the Nazi state dashed, and once he understood that he could no longer work constructively within the regime, he moved resolutely into opposition. The base of his activity was the so-called *Köhler Kreis* (Cologne Circle), in which he made plans with men like Bernhard Letterhaus for a Germany after Hitler. For Groß, unlike for many of the bishops, Resistance was not enough; in the end, he opted for outright resistance. This choice, in turn, led him to establish contacts with the Resistance group of Carl Goerdeler and with the Kreisau Circle of