

## DONALD P. KOMMERS

### In Memoriam — 1932–2018

Donald Kommers (August 26, 1932–December 21, 2018) served as the fourth editor since the founding of the *Review of Politics*. Professor Kommers followed in the editor's chair the founding editor Waldemar Gurian (Political Science), M. A. Fitzsimons (History), and Frederick Crosson (Philosophy and Program of Liberal Studies). Thomas Stritch (Communication Arts and American Studies) had in that earlier period served a couple of brief tenures as acting editor. Kommers brought to the *Review* his characteristic energy and a vision of how Notre Dame's already widely esteemed journal might be further professionalized and contribute in new ways to the university's rising stature under Father Hesburgh's leadership.

With his typical enthusiasm and determination, Kommers instituted new policies and practices that linked the *Review* to the university's emphasis on enhancing research and graduate education. He established a largely outside advisory board to supplement an internal circle of associate editors and friends and provided for systematic manuscript review procedures, both critical steps toward making the *Review* one of the most respected journals on politics. He instituted the office of a separate book-review editor with appropriate autonomy, and worked out the arrangements for the service of graduate interns, engaging them directly in the valuable experiences of observing and participating in manuscript assessments. All of these invaluable innovations remain in place today.

Professor Kommers sought to widen the range of interest of the *Review* from one that emphasized philosophical and historical approaches to politics, to comparative political theory and constitutional studies including non-Western political thought and institutions. He used special thematic issues to draw attention to these wider horizons. Upon Kommers's appointment as editor there arose among some Arts and Letters faculty a concern that he might steer the *Review* away from its historic concerns to narrower and more conventional political science with its then regnant quantitative emphasis. Kommers reminded all concerned that he majored in philosophical and literary studies at the Catholic University of America and sought only to enrich the strong humanistic and interdisciplinary tradition of the *Review*. His appointments to the outside advisory board, to the office of book-review editor, and to graduate internships came to be compelling evidence of his commitment to this enrichment over any displacement. He successfully linked his vision for the *Review* to that larger one that sparked the leadership of Father Hesburgh, namely, making Notre Dame an even greater Catholic university, an outstanding university in every respect and one faithful to its Catholic heritage.

The leadership Kommers gave the *Review* represented but one phase of his professional life. For nearly three generations he was one of Notre Dame's distinguished scholar/teachers. After two years of service in the United States Marine Corps as the Korean War was winding down, he studied in his home state at the University of Wisconsin where he received his MA and PhD degrees. He taught in the California State College system for four years before joining the Notre Dame faculty in 1963 as assistant professor. His excellences as scholar and teacher raised him through the ranks to the point where he was placed in 1991 in an endowed chair in Political Science; in that department he had taught a number of courses in American and comparative government from his first years. He was especially revered as a teacher for his course on constitutional law taken by hosts of students over the years. He also was a presence in Notre Dame's Law School where his seminar on comparative constitutional law was a gem that attracted students across the university. He had developed into a pioneering and world-renowned specialist on comparative constitutional studies and the German constitution and constitutional tradition. Beyond his teaching and his leadership at the *Review*, he served Notre Dame as director of Western European Studies Program (1969–89) and initial director of its Center for Civil and International Human Rights (1976–81).

Especially notable among his many publications, including over one hundred major articles, is his book *The Constitutional Jurisprudence of the Federal Republic of Germany*, a highly acclaimed work now in its fourth edition. He was also the senior author of the widely used collegiate course book *American Constitutional Law: Essays, Cases, and Comparative Notes*, likewise in its fourth edition. National and international recognition of his achievement came in abundance. He received honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Heidelberg and St. Norbert's College (Wisconsin). He was granted the Silver Gavel Award from the American Bar Association, the Alexander von Humboldt Prize for Senior Scholars and the Berlin Prize from the American Academy in Berlin. In 2010, Germany's federal president awarded Kommers the Distinguished Service Cross of the Order of Merit for his three decades of scholarship on German life and law. Two years later he was honored with a symposium on his work sponsored by the Adenauer Foundation, Germany's Ministry of Justice and Berlin's Institute of Advanced Study for "his extraordinary body of work in German constitutional scholarship."

Donald Kommers is survived by Nancy, his wife of sixty-four years, three children, and five grandchildren. He is remembered at the *Review* with great fondness by his successors in the editorship, and many of his colleagues in the Political Science department recall his wonderful collegiality. May he rest in peace.

Walter Nicgorski  
Editor Emeritus