

## **Hans Koch: The Turbulent Life of an Austrian Ukrainophile**

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Hans Koch (1894–1959) was one of the few scholars of Austrian origin with a lifelong commitment to Ukraine and Ukrainians. He supported the Ukrainian cause as a soldier, scholar, pastor, intelligence officer, propagandist, and politician. However, during an important period of his turbulent life Koch belonged to the National Socialist Party and served the criminal policies of Nazi Germany in Eastern Europe. On two occasions he became an actor in international politics: first on 30 June 1941 in Lviv, where Koch was the main German negotiator with the OUN(R) group that proclaimed Ukrainian independence, and then in October 1955, when he participated in Konrad Adenauer's visit to Moscow as an adviser and interpreter.

Koch was born in 1894 near Lviv in the village of Kaltwasser (today Kholodnovidka in Pustomyty raion) to a family of German colonists whose ancestors had settled in Galicia in the late eighteenth century. There he attended the Protestant primary school and the German-language Gymnasium. After graduation in 1912, Koch enrolled at the University of Vienna, where he began studying Protestant theology and philosophy. He took part in the First World War as a volunteer and won several medals for bravery. In November 1918 Koch returned to Lviv, "which was besieged by the Ukrainians in a desperate struggle against Poland. Here my postwar destiny caught up with me: mobilization into the Ukrainian [Galician A]rmy and a new war against the Poles and later against the Bolsheviks." Koch continues in his curriculum vitae (written in 1924) that he served as a captain in the Ukrainian Galician Army (UHA). "In February 1920, together with the remnants of the Ukrainian army, which had been wiped out by typhus, I was taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks and assigned by the Soviets to the Red Army, as to a Foreign Legion. In the Red Army I participated (under duress, to be sure) in the war against Poland until the Treaty of Riga, when an Austrian mission for prisoners of war came to Kyiv and managed to arrange my demobilization and return home (1921–22)." In

later biographical writings, however, Koch always concealed his participation in the Red Army.<sup>1</sup>

Koch returned to Vienna and sat “in lecture courses as a ‘happy repatriate,’ having lost seven years of official education but, despite all that, with a great gain: a relatively good knowledge of two new languages, Ukrainian and Russian, and a life experience I would not want to be without today. In Russia and Ukraine I found my field of specialization: the history of Eastern Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

From 1922 to 1924 Koch studied East European history, obtaining his doctoral degree with a dissertation on Russian church history supervised by Hans Übersberger. In 1923 he was ordained a Lutheran pastor. He took a second doctoral degree in 1927 at the University of Vienna’s Faculty of Protestant Theology, and, in 1929, the *Habilitation* at the same faculty, specializing in East European church history and theology. The three dissertations Koch wrote between 1922 and 1929 were devoted to East European church history from the tenth to the early eighteenth century. In his *Habilitationsschrift* he analyzes the Christianization of Kyivan Rus’ (partly on the basis of Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s works), arguing that its first Orthodox hierarchy came from the Bulgarian archbishopric of Ohrid. The historical dissertation is devoted to Greek influence on the Russian Orthodox Church from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. In his theological dissertation, the only one published in his lifetime, Koch explores Western influences on Russian Orthodoxy during the reign of Peter I, with special attention to Stefan Yavorsky and Teofan Propkovych. The latter’s knowledge of Protestant theology was of particular interest to Koch as a Protestant pastor. In the title of his disserta-

<sup>1</sup> “Lebenslauf des Doktoranden cand.phil. Hans Koch,” *Rigorosenakten Philosophische Fakultät der Universität Wien, Universitätsarchiv Wien*, Nr. 5901; *Personalakten Hans Koch*, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Unterricht [AVA U]. See also *Akten des Kuratoriums der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg*. Prof. Hans Koch, 1934/35 (Bundesarchiv [BA] R/76/I 50), die *Personalakten des Prof. Dr. Hans Koch*. Kurator der Universität und der Techn. Hochschule Breslau, 1.5. 1937 (BA R 76/I, 50a). For surveys of Koch’s life and scholarly activities, see Günther Stökl, “Hans Koch, 1894–1959,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, new series 7 (1959): 117–29 (with a bibliography of Koch’s publications, pp. 130–46); Karl Schwarz, “Hans Koch (1894–1959)—ein Landsknecht Gottes aus Osteuropa,” *Wartburg-Argumente* (Vienna), ed. Reinhart Waneck, Schriftenreihe Akademische Verbindung Wartburg, no. 3 (1994); and Arkadii Zhukovsky, “Koch, Hans,” in *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 577. For a longer account of Koch’s life and career, which does not, however, emphasize Koch’s engagement with Ukraine, see my article “Hans Koch (1894–1959),” in *Osteuropäische Geschichte in Wien: 100 Jahre Forschung und Lehre an der Universität*, ed. Arnold Suppan, Marija Wakounig, and Georg Kastner (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2007), 227–54.

<sup>2</sup> “Lebenslauf.”

tion Koch does not speak, as most Western Europeans did, of “Russian thought,” but rather of “East Slavic thought.”<sup>3</sup>

Koch acted as a mediator between Ukraine and the German-speaking world not only in this important book but also in several articles. One of them, a well-informed analysis of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) in Soviet Ukraine, was based on a thorough reading of the UAOC journal *Tserkva i zhyttia*. In it Koch concludes that the UAOC is “a purely national church” seeking to develop a Ukrainian national consciousness on the basis of Ukrainian history and the Ukrainian language.<sup>4</sup> In another article he offers a survey of the Ukrainian people and their history for a general audience, presenting the Ukrainians as the second-largest of the Slavic nations, and Ukrainian history as a series of attempts to establish a nation-state. Koch mentions German-Ukrainian efforts to attain that goal during World War I and advocates closer cooperation between Germany and Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Another topic of his articles of the 1920s, to which he returned in the 1950s, was Ukrainian Protestantism.<sup>6</sup>

In 1932 Koch became a member of the Austrian NSDAP and supported its (illegal) activities in his lectures and writings. In late 1933 Hans-Joachim Beyer, an official of Nazi Germany, confirmed Koch’s “absolute political reliability.”<sup>7</sup> Factors that predisposed Koch to make a commitment to the Nazi Party were his origins as a member of the *Volksdeutsche* minority in a Polish environment, his early collaboration in all-German nationalist organizations, and his activities as a Protestant diaspora pastor in Catholic Austria and an advocate of *völkisch* ideas.

In the spring of 1934 Koch was appointed full professor of church history at the Theological Faculty of the University of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad). At the same time, his teacher Hans Übersberger, also a

<sup>3</sup> Hans Koch, *Die russische Orthodoxie im Petrinischen Zeitalter: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte westlicher Einflüsse auf das ostslavische Denken* (Breslau and Oppeln: Priebatsch, 1929); idem, “Die Slavisierung der griechischen Kirche im Moskauer Staate als bodenständige Voraussetzung des russischen Raskol” (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna), in Hans Koch, *Kleine Schriften zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte Osteuropas* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962), 42–107.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Koch, “Die orthodox-autokephale Kirche der Ukraine,” *Osteuropa: Zeitschrift für die gesamten Fragen des europäischen Ostens* 3 (1927–28): 833–46.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Koch, “Die Ukraine,” *Zeitwende: Monatsschrift* (Munich), 1929, no. 5: 60–71.

<sup>6</sup> “Über ukrainischen Protestantismus,” *Die evangelische Diaspora. Zeitschrift des Gustav-Adolf-Vereins* (Leipzig) 8, no. 1 (1926): 17–30; 13, no. 2 (1931): 102–10.

<sup>7</sup> Bundesarchiv (BA) Berlin-Lichterfelde, PK/Parteikorrespondenz, vorl. Signatur 1060018440 (Lesefilm G 87, Bild Nr. 2993–2998, 3020). BA (ehem BDC) NSDAP-Gaukartei.

member of the NSDAP, left the University of Vienna for the University of Breslau (now Wrocław), where he was appointed professor of East European history. Thus two politically reliable Austrians filled the gap created by the Nazi authorities' dismissal of most German academic specialists in East European history. In Königsberg Koch met the young Theodor Oberländer, who headed the Institute of the East European Economy.<sup>8</sup>

While in Königsberg, Koch became involved in a political incident. In February 1937 the Polish newspaper *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* published an article alleging his involvement in spreading German Nazi propaganda among Ukrainian political elites in Eastern Galicia. The newspaper made critical mention of his service as a captain in the UHA and his ability to speak Ukrainian. The German minister of education and science, on being informed about the article, asked the University of Königsberg's rector for his opinion. Koch accused the Polish newspaper of Germanophobia, explaining that while he had been in Little Poland on an official visit, he had given a scholarly lecture in Lviv and had also visited his mother there. More embarrassing to Koch was the mention of his participation in the Ukrainian-Polish War of 1918–19, which he had concealed in his C.V. of 1934. He made the excuse that “he had been drafted by the government, together with all other Germans of Eastern Galicia (Ukraine), and had fulfilled his duty of military service in the army of the ‘tiny Austrian successor state.’ ... Since then Ukrainian society has had a natural sympathy for all German participants in the war, including me.”<sup>9</sup>

Further evidence of Koch's Ukrainophile commitment is to be found in his obituary of Mykhailo Hrushevsky published in 1935 in the leading German journal of East European history. In it Koch presents Hrushevsky as a symbol of the Ukrainian people, who embodied the union of Cossack tradition with the new national intelligentsia. He gives a well-informed survey of Hrushevsky's *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, “which for decades to come will be *the* historical account of his people, even of East European and world history.” Koch concludes that Hrushevsky's “new schema” of East Slavic history, which attacked the thesis of continuity between Kyivan Rus' and Muscovy, now represented “the consensus of

<sup>8</sup> For the context, see my “Ukraine in German-Language Historiography,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 29 (2004): 245–64; and Gerd Voigt, *Rußland in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung, 1843–1945* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Akten des Kuratoriums der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg. Prof. Hans Koch, 1934/35 (Bundesarchiv [BA] R/76/I 50). See also Nachlass Hans Koch. Osteuropa-Institut München, Karton 7, 7a; and Ryszard Torzecki, *Kwestia ukraińska w polityce III Rzeczy (1933–1945)* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1972), 150, 165.

most living German historians of Eastern Europe”—a dubious assertion not only in the 1930s but also after the Second World War.<sup>10</sup>

In 1937 Koch took over the chair of East European history at the University of Breslau from Übersberger, who had been appointed to the University of Berlin. In Breslau, where Koch now became director of the prestigious Osteuropa-Institut, he had to teach the history of Eastern Europe for the first time in his career, focusing on Polish and Ukrainian history.<sup>11</sup> In the 1930s he published some articles on church history, but on the whole his scholarly achievements were rather modest. Nevertheless Koch was acknowledged as a leading German specialist on his subject, a status underlined by the fact that he wrote the short contribution on East European history that appeared in the *Festschrift* for Hitler on his fiftieth birthday.<sup>12</sup>

In 1940 Koch was appointed to the prestigious chair of East European History at the University of Vienna but did not take it up because of his service in the German army. Since 1939 he had been an intelligence officer in Admiral Wilhelm Canaris's *Abwehr* II. As director of the *Osteuropa-Institut* in Breslau, Koch had already given active support to German aggression against Poland by writing several memoranda and collecting information about Poland's infrastructure and leading Polish personalities. He participated in the war against Poland. From the autumn of 1939 Koch and Oberländer served in Cracow as *Abwehr* officers responsible for Ukrainian affairs. Koch tried to help Ukrainian refugees and prisoners of war: as Volodymyr Kubijovyč mentions, Koch's office was known among Ukrainians as the *Kochstelle*.<sup>13</sup> In 1939–40 Koch was among the organizers of the resettlement of Galician Germans, helping many Ukrainians gain a place on the lists of those who were to be transported.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Hans Koch, "Dem Andenken Mychajlo Hruševskyj's (29. September 1866–25. November 1934)," *Jahrbücher für Kultur und Geschichte der Slaven*, new series 11 (1935): 3–10.

<sup>11</sup> Publikationsstelle, 153/1083, fol. 1; Parteikorrespondenz; Einzelblätter in: Nachlass, Karton 1, I, 1a; Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, "Das Osteuropa-Institut in Breslau 1930–1940: Wissenschaft, Propaganda und nationale Feindbilder in der Arbeit eines interdisziplinären Zentrums der Osteuropa-Forschung in Deutschland," in *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiss: Oldenburger Symposium "Interethnische Beziehungen in Ostmitteleuropa als historiographisches Problem der 1930/1940er Jahre"*, ed. Michael Garleff (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1995), 47–72.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Koch, "Osteuropäische Geschichte," in *Deutsche Wissenschaft: Arbeit und Aufgabe. Festschrift zum 50. Geburtstag Adolf Hitlers* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1939), 24–25.

<sup>13</sup> Volodymyr Kubiiiovych, *Ukrainci v Heneralnii hubernii, 1929–1941* (Chicago: Vydavnytstvo Mykoly Denysiuka, 1975), 59–60, 67.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Koch, "Tagebuchaufzeichnungen über die Umsiedlung der Deutschen aus

After a stay in Sofia, Koch served as a Ukrainian-affairs specialist in the Wehrmacht, in Alfred Rosenberg's foreign-policy office, and in the Abwehr II. Koch and Oberländer organized the military training of the battalions Nachtigall and Roland, composed of recruits who were members of the Bandera faction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. After Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, Koch was sent to Lviv to contact Ukrainian politicians in the city. On 30 June 1941, after the proclamation of Ukrainian sovereignty by a Ukrainian national assembly headed by Yaroslav Stetsko, Koch tried unsuccessfully to convince the Ukrainian leaders to retract the proclamation. During the following days and weeks, he served as an intermediary between Ukrainian politicians and the Germans, advocating the creation of a Ukrainian vassal state after the war. In one memorandum Koch protested brutal German actions against the Ukrainian population, making no mention of the anti-Jewish pogroms the Germans and Ukrainians carried out in the first days of the occupation. But the die was already cast: many Ukrainian nationalists were arrested by the Germans, and on 1 September Ukraine was split into three administrative units. Dreams of a Ukrainian state under German protection vanished.<sup>15</sup>

This outcome was a defeat for Koch and other German Ukrainophiles. He was sent to the Reichskommissariat Ukraine to serve as a Wehrmacht adviser. Little is known about Koch's wartime activities there. He sent several reports about the situation in Ukraine to Berlin and tried to help Ukrainian prisoners of war in Poltava. On one occasion Koch was sent to Rivne, where he negotiated with leaders of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. From the summer of 1943 on, he participated in the Stalingrad campaign but avoided its debacle because of illness, which led to his evacuation.<sup>16</sup> Koch did not fall into disgrace after July 1941, as he contended

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Ostgalizien," in *Aufbruch und Neubeginn: Heimatbuch der Galiziendeutschen*, pt. 2 (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Hilfskomitee der Galiziendeutschen, 1977), 181–96.

<sup>15</sup> Roman Ilnytskyj, *Deutschland und die Ukraine, 1934–1945: Tatsachen europäischer Ostpolitik. Ein Vorbericht*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Munich: Osteuropa-Institut, 1958), 2: 95–97, 139–42, 173–79, and passim; Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study in Occupation Policies* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1957), 119–22; Philipp-Christian Wachs, *Der Fall Theodor Oberländer (1905–1998): Ein Lehrstück deutscher Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, Campus, 2000), 63–83; Torzecki, *Kwestia*, 234–37; idem., *Polacy i Ukraińcy: Sprawa ukraińska w czasie II wojny światowej na terenie II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: PWN, 1993), 241–72; Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941–1944: Organisation und Durchführung eines staatlichen Massenverbrechens*, 2d ed. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1997), 44–49, 51–62.

<sup>16</sup> Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 32, 76, 50, 110, 115–17, 209; Otto Bräutigam, *So hat es sich zugetragen ... Ein Leben als Soldat und Diplomat* (Würzburg:

later. In fact, he participated in several conferences of German specialists on Eastern Europe in 1943 and 1944, and in 1943 he was ordered to transport important Kyivan archival materials to Germany.<sup>17</sup>

After the war Koch was dismissed from the University of Vienna because of his political activities in Nazi Germany, and for six years he worked as a pastor in Styria. During this period Koch translated a selection of Ukrainian poetry into German and published an article on Taras Shevchenko, pointing out the motifs of death, love, rebellion, and religiosity in his poetry. In 1949 he was elected a full member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Philosophy and History Section) in Western Europe. Koch maintained close relations with Ukrainian émigrés in West Germany, especially with the Ukrainian Free University in Munich.<sup>18</sup>

In 1952 Koch was appointed the first director of the Osteuropa-Institut in Munich. In the years that followed he wrote articles mostly about the USSR and Bolshevism, but only a few short scholarly texts. In 1953 he revived the journal *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, which had been founded in 1936 by his teacher Übersberger. Finally, in 1958, Koch obtained a chair at the University of Munich, in the Faculty of Politics and Law. His attempt to return to the University of Vienna as a full professor failed in 1958. Soon after, in April 1959, Koch died of a heart attack.

Throughout his turbulent life in Ukraine, Austria, and Germany, Hans Koch was one of the rare non-Ukrainian Ukrainophiles active in the first half of the twentieth century. In his scholarly and publicistic writings, he advocated a revision of the dominant Russocentric view of Eastern Europe and its history. Koch's political orientation was typical of a group of German and Austrian (and Ukrainian émigré) scholars who collaborated with the Nazi regime in order to support Ukrainian political and cultural aspirations during the German occupation. But their hopes proved illusory. The Nazi regime did not take their plans seriously: for the most part, it regarded Ukrainians as *Untermenschen* and Ukraine as a land whose people and economy were to be exploited. By the time some of them reappeared in Germany as scholars and publicists during the 1950s, interest in Ukrainian affairs had already declined significantly.

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Holzner, 1968), 311, 326; Hans Koch, *Kyr Theodor und andere Geschichten*, afterword by Georg Traar (Vienna: Evangelischer Pressverbindung in Österreich, 1967), 249–80.

<sup>17</sup> Schwarz, "Hans Koch," 15–16 (Herbert Krimm's not always reliable reminiscences of Koch's accounts, recorded after 1952).

<sup>18</sup> *Die ukrainische Lyrik 1840–1940*, selected and trans. by Hans Koch (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1955); "Die Gegensätzlichkeit der Gefühle bei Taras Ševčenko," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, new series, 1 (1953): 301–20.

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