Koch, Erich
(1896-1986),

Nazi party functionary and governor of occupied territories. Born into a working family in Elberfeld, in the Rhineland, Koch graduated from a commercial secondary school and became a railway clerk. In World War I he served as a private, and when the war was over he fought in the ranks of the Freikorps - irregular volunteer units - against the French.

Koch was among the first to join the Nazi party (his membership card was No. 90). In 1928 he was appointed Gauleiter of East Prussia, and in 1930 was elected as one of East Prussia's Reichstag deputies. When the Nazis came to power he also became the Oberprasident (governor) of the region.

In 1941 Koch was appointed Reichskommissar of the Ukraine and governor of the Bialystok district over the objections of Alfred rosenberg, the minister of occupied territories in the east, who wanted exclusive jurisdiction in the area. Through these appointments Koch came to govern extensive territories, ranging from Konigsberg on the Baltic to the shores of the Black Sea. His treatment of the inhabitants of these territories was exceedingly harsh and cruel; his aim was to implement the ideas of Hitler and Himmler regarding the total subjugation of the Slav peoples. Koch frequently went over Rosenberg's head, although Rosenberg was nominally his superior.

After the war, Koch lived for several years in Schleswig-Holstein, under an assumed name. He was arrested by the British occupation forces and extradited to Poland in 1950. In 1959 he was put on trial in Warsaw, and on March 9 of that year was sentenced to death by hanging. Owing to his poor state of health, however, Koch was not executed. He spent the rest of his life in a Polish prison until his death in November 1986.