Abstract  
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Following the establishment of the post revolutionary Prussian government, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior and the Army Ministry discussed plans to rebuild the Prussian police, and it quickly became clear that a militarised police model would be favoured and the faint attempts of the late Kaiserreich to civilize the police forces were to be abandoned.

Beginning in May 1919 and with the support of the army, a militarily organised, uniformed and equipped police force, which encompassed 23,500 men by February 1920, was placed alongside the 37,000 constables taken over from the old police forces of the former Empire. In order to set up the formations of this 'Security Police', in some cases companies and battalions from the army, in the process of being reduced in size according to the terms of the Versailles Treaty, were taken over in their entirety. The same was true for Freikorps and volunteer formations.

The Sicherheitspolizei changed its name to Schutzpolizei in November 1920 and the organizational frame of the new police-corps was elaborated.

The Schutzpolizei-career started for the recruit with the age of 18 up to 23. With a high school diploma, he could start the police-officer career, having passed the elementary school; he could finish his police career in the low ranks up to the rank of sergeant. After one year of training in a police-school (one for each province in Prussia) and an exam, the “Polizeiwachtmeister” were transferred to one of the 200 “Bereitschaften”, which were with their usual number of 125 policemen very similar to an infantry company. The following six years of their twelve years in total in the police service, the Polizeiwachtmeister were housed in barracks, mostly former military “Kasernen”. Drill, formal training including the possibility to reach higher regular school degrees and service in one of the 640 police precincts, the “Polizeireviere”, prepared the Polizeiwachtmeister for their exam to be promoted to Polizeioberwachtmeister in the seventh year of their service. With that exam successfully passed, they left the Bereitschaften and served their last five years in the “Polizeireviere”.

In the early years of the Weimar Republic, the Wachtmeister-corps of the Prussian Schutzpolizei was nearly exclusively built by ex-servicemen from the wilhelmine army with various and not easily to distinguish social background. In the years of inflation until 1923, there was a lot of fluctuation in the corps. Many men used the police service, which at that time offered only limited contracts and an insecure future, as a kind of intermediate station before taking jobs in the industry were higher wages could be earned.

Official statistics from 1927 until 1930 indicate that former artisans, young clerks and office staff and farm workers made up the three biggest groups what concerns the professional origin of the police-recruits.

The men who became officers with a lifelong tenure as “Beamte”, and thus leaders of police formations, as well as supervisors and instructors at the police training schools, were mainly those who previously had served as officers in the army and the Freikorps and had been part of the special group of ‘front officers’.

These officers tended towards a conspiratorial allegiance to their own group and oriented themselves politically in black and white categories; one thinks of the stab-in-the-back legend eagerly soaked up in these circles and the demagogic condemnation of the Social Democratic ‘November Criminals’.

The disquieting and damaging developments within the police officer corps were not fundamentally opposed by the Prussian government. Admittedly its hands would have been tied by civil-service law and its regulation of the police officer’s career, had he attempted energetically to achieve the speedy dismissal of some police officers through the disciplinary procedures. However, it appears much more likely that here, as in other areas of policy, the decisive role was played by the authoritarian bent of the leading Social Democrats in Prussia (Severing, Braun, Grzesinski) as opposed to the prominent Social Democrats at Reich level; they had an inclination to behave as representatives of the state and took pleasure in military pageantry.