German Police History Since 1990. A Participant Observers's Report

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Until the beginning of the 1990s, only few German-speaking historians and social scientists took an interest in police development and history. Before that time, police history in Germany had taken place more or less in the writings of scholars from law history and in the memoirs of former policemen only. In 1990, Alf Lüdtke convinced the German Historical Association to include a session on police history in the program of the Associations Annual Meeting, which took place that year at the University of Bochum. This session had a significant effect: It became the starting point for a loosely woven network of German-speaking historians, sociologists, political scientists, and criminologists, interested in police development and history, and it became the first meeting of an - since then – ongoing series of workshops and conferences on police history, which – since 1991 – under the title Kolloquium zur Polizeigeschichte were carried out annually at the first weekend of July. This year (2001), the police history workshop took place at the University of Erfurt, organized and directed by Alf Lüdtke and Herbert Reinke. The police history conference will probably go abroad next year: The University of Twente (Enschede, The Netherlands), where a major Dutch police history project is located, will probably host the Kolloquium zur Polizeigeschichte in 2002.

The following list gives the themes/headlines, the names of the respective organizers and the locations of the conference since 1990.

3. 1992: Polizei und Formwandel von Herrschaft in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft – Police and Bourgeois Class Society (Köln, Herbert Reinke)
4. 1993: Polizei als bürokratische Organisation – Police as Bureaucratic Organization (Berlin, Ralph Jessen)
5. 1994: Polizeigeschichte in zwei Diktaturen – Police History under two Dictatorships (Hamburg, Michael Wildt)
6. 1995: (Selbst-) Bilder der Polizei – (Self-) Images of the Police (Augsburg, Gerhard Fürmetz)


10. 1999: Polizei und Technik – Police and Technique (Hamburg, Klaus Weinhauer)


The 13th Kolloquium für Polizeigeschichte will be organised in cooperation with the University of Twente (Enschede, The Netherlands). The conference will be prepared and directed by Guus Meershoek, Cyrille Fijnaut and other Dutch colleagues, involved in a major project on the Dutch police in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For further information on the colloquia nos. 1-12 (titles of the papers given etc.) and for a selective bibliography of the members of the police history group, please contact: www.uni-wuppertal.de/FB 1/reinke.