

Ordnungspolizei

(Order Police, ORPO), reorganized German police force formed in 1936, based on orders from SS chief Heinrich Himmler. The new Order Police was a merger of the conventional police (*Schutzpolizei*) and the *Gendarmerie*. In fact, the *Schutzpolizei* operated as the national police in urban areas, while the *Gendarmerie* functioned as such in rural areas. However, both groups were organized the same way, had the same weapons, and wore the same uniforms.

In 1938 the professional German firefighters were united into the Fire-fighting Police, and joined the ORPO as its third branch. In 1942 the civil-defense police and the urban and rural supplementary police were also put under the control of the ORPO.

From 1938 on, various police units were formed and put under the ORPO's authority. These units were supposed to perform regular police jobs, but in actuality fought Partisans and sometimes helped German military units. Collaborators in countries under Nazi domination also joined *Schutzpolizei* units. By 1944 the ORPO had 3.5 million members. Many ORPO units also helped the Security Police carry out the persecution of the Jews, including deportations to extermination camps and shooting massacres, and they were notorious for their cruel methods and behavior.