

MARCH 4, 1919  
TOWARD THE FORMATION OF A SUDETEN GERMAN  
IDENTITY

*Karl Braun*

The events of March 4, 1919, the Bohemian German general strike called by the Social Democrats and its bloody suppression (with almost sixty dead) have received almost no research from scholars. The present essay attempts to provide the first survey of the historical circumstances and to represent their differing significance for Czechs and Germans: the German reaction to the foundation of the Czechoslovak state, the occupation of the German regions and the introduction of Czechoslovak currency as well as the events of March 4 in individual towns (Eger, Karlsbad, Kaaden and Sternberg). March 4 has had a particularly strong psychological and historical impact on the Germans: on the one hand, it drove home to the Bohemian Germans, who before 1918 had simply seen themselves as Germans in the cisleithan part of the

Habsburg Monarchy, the shocking realization that they now belonged to a minority within a Czech-dominated state; on the other hand, the events strengthened their inner sense of solidarity. Around the mythology of March 4, 1919, the identity of the Bohemian Germans was crystallized for the first time as *Sudetengerman* and even today it has continued to exercise – albeit on a unconscious level – an important influence on the Sudetengermans' understanding of themselves.