

BEYOND NATIONALITY? COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE IN  
THE BOHEMIAN LANDS, 1914-1918

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This contribution deals with spontaneous outbreaks of violence which happened with increasing frequency in the Bohemian lands during the two final years of World War I. The author interprets this type of violence as a special form of communication meant by those people who suffered from the breaking down of supplies of any kind, even in regions far from military operations, to express their increasing remoteness from the order in effect at the time. These were not hysterical outbreaks of anger and frustration, but surprisingly structured statements expressing a general change of mood during the final war years. Basing his arguments on comprehensive

archive work, the author focuses on the composition of the respective protestor collectives, on their notions of just and unjust, and on forms and scale of the violent acts committed. He argues that the protests reflected an increasing degree of the state losing legitimacy in the opinion of the protestors, while those protestors lacked any distinct idea of a possible new order. They wanted their problems solved, on the spot and at once. Taking this into account, it is no surprise, according to the author, that the protestors' ethnic affiliation had only minor, if any, effects on this home front violence. In this situation of all-around shortages the importance of macro communities – nation, empire – was greatly surpassed by an almost corporal sense of local belonging.