

ABSTRACTS

RESEARCH ON THE HISTORY OF CRIME IN CENTRAL EUROPE. AN INTRODUCTION

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Since the turn of the millennium, more and more studies have been undertaken on the history of the nineteenth and twentieth century that are based entirely or in part on questions and research approaches from the history of crime. While this was initially primarily the case in Western Europe and the USA, it now also applies to Central Europe, thereby providing the regional focus for this special issue presenting studies on the Habsburg Monarchy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, and the German Empire between the late nineteenth century and the end of the 1930s. Among the key topics are the political and societal externalisation of criminality, which was often ethnically connoted in Central Europe with its diverse national configurations, as well as the phenomenon of borders and border regions, which could generate very specific forms of criminality and its interpretation at various times and in different regions. The studies in this issue thus offer contributions not only to the specific field of history of crime but also to a more general social history of the respective states and regions.

“WHAT IS DECISIVE IS THE AFFILIATION TO A PEOPLE’S TRIBE”

Ethnic Diversity and Criminality Discourses in the German Empire
and the Habsburg Monarchy

Volker Zimmermann

Ethnicised criminalisation was a widespread phenomenon in the German Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Using criminological studies, police and judicial reports, and press articles, this contribution analyses ascriptions turning Polish and Czech people as well as other non-German groups into putatively criminal foreigners. At the same time, however, it becomes clear that not only German actors engaged in such criminalisation: In the German-Czech nationality conflict in particular, the opposing sides regularly attributed a proclivity for crime or violence to each other. The inclusion of different regions of each empire as well as labour migration in the analysis also reveals a multiplicity of further criminalisation tendencies.