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The image of Germans on their Romanians neighbours

Summary

This paper describes the inter-ethnic relations between populations of different language groups in Eastern Europe. The transition from the initial separation to understanding and coexistence is shown by the example of the Swabian colonists in the 18th century. Economic and social needs led to multilingualism, which is a prerequisite for productive cooperation between ethnic groups, leading to the use of terms like "Landsmann" (fellow-countryman; compatriot) and "prieten" (friend), by both partners. Noteworthy are the adoption of the custom of the "Klack" from the Romanians, the dissemination of economic innovations and linguistic interferences by traveling craftsmen and through regional trade relations.

The external image of the Germans seen by their Romanians neighbours was most often a friendly image, in which positive character traits were presented objectively, and were accepted as such by the partner. This is shown by Hans Diplich (in a fully quoted essay) for the Romanians.

The virtues of the colonists (industriousness, reliability and thriftiness) dominated the image of the Germans seen by the Romanians in the 18th century, before the effects of nationalism created and nurtured new hostile images. This is illustrated by the positive meaning of the words borrowed from German, such as pauă, mair or molar in Romanian (simultaneously also paor in Serbian).

It is only after the Second World War that ideologically-driven hostile images are created throughout the world, by false reports and accusations, and through often-repeated half-truths. These continue to affect the Germans even today, after sixty years of lived democracy, and should be corrected in the common house of Europe. History proves that friendly images are more durable than hostile images.

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