

PO NASZEMU – OUR WAY

Living Together and Colloquial Relations in Eastern Silesia until 1945
in the Retrospective View of its German Inhabitants

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In contrast to the closed German settlement of Silesia, the former Duchy of Teschen (Ostschlesien, Beskidenland) shows particular tensions. The melting together with the Slavic peoples (Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, "Schlonsaken") since the fifteenth century, the fact that the region was able to resist the Counter-Reformation because of its location on the edge of the Monarchy, and its special economic position due to a blossoming cloth production led to wide-reaching cultural and linguistic intermingling. In the area of language, the result was a linguistic mixture of German, Czech/Slovak, and Polish, which has been characterized by a former German inhabitant of Eastern Silesia as "Beskidisch", "Ostrawitz gibberish", and "Olsa-Esperanto". In retrospect, there appears a curiously divided relation to the then practiced colloquial language. On the one hand, as a result, the affected appraisal clearly portrays the great degree to which the people in a particular area need the spoken language for their self-identification. On the other hand, it is appalling that as a result of political influence and national origin, actual existing linguistic and cultural commonalities are once more negated.