



Language Purification Attempts During the German Empire: The Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein

Silja Ruebsamen

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Essay from the year 2007 in the subject German Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1, University of Heidelberg (Anglistisches Seminar), language: English, abstract: The year 1871 brought Germany a victory over France, concluding the Franco- Prussian War, and ended with the founding of the "Deutsches Reich", the German Empire. As a result of the nationalistic elation felt all through society Herman Riegel, museum curator and art historian in Mannheim, published his Ein Hauptstück von unserer Mutterprache, a text that established him as the foremost agitator in a widespread campaign against the adoption of foreign words into the German language. Riegel then called for the formation of a German language association responsible for the purification of the German dictionary from words borrowed from other languages, most notably French, and occasionally English. In 1885, supported by similar-minded academics and politicians nationwide such als gymnasium professor Hermann Dunger, Riegel presided over the establishment of the "Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein," the universal German Language Association (ADSV). It's objectives were laid down as follows: 1. Projects advancing the purification of the German language, cleansing it from „unnecessary foreign particles", 2. Preservation and renovation of „the real spirit und unique character" of the German language, 3. Strengthening the „general and overall national awareness" of all Germans, not only concerning language, but also concerning „German-ness" in general. The following essay will concentrate on the main ADSV projects from 1885 until the start of the First World War in 1914, on its project successes and failures, especially concerning the incorporation of foreign words via translation, and on the inevitability of massive problems during the transferral of general linguistic principles into the language actually used outside academic circles.

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