



Editorial

The legacy built by generations of Central and Eastern Europeans, along with their cultural, religious and national diversity, might be scattered or erased by the turmoil of war. We seem to know this very well, but it is still difficult to imagine this. Or rather, it was difficult for our generation to imagine it until recently... It is frightening how very relevant today is the topic covered by Marek Buika of Vilnius in his article about the removal of works of art, not just individual pieces, but entire collections, by the military and the Russian administration during World War I. Not long ago, it seemed that such studies would serve only as a memento reminding us of the darkness of the past, or as information for contemporary researchers looking for traces of old collections. Today, the research of many years by the Vilnius researcher takes on a new meaning and reminds us how pertinent the issue is in times of historical upheaval in our part of Europe: something we should be aware of beforehand.

One way to avoid such a state of affairs is through far-reaching cooperation, the creation of such a model for the functioning of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe based on mutual understanding so as to at least mitigate threats that individual states cannot overcome. The ideas of Central European unity, as pointed out by the authors of the historical section of this issue, were highly diverse. Some involved the development of principles for the functioning of the state which were tested

in practice over the centuries. Those that proved successful attracted partners wishing to apply them as well. Other ideas were underpinned by a belief that it was necessary to protect the national substance of communities too small to withstand the onslaught of larger political entities on their own. The idea of preserving national identity, or even strengthening or expanding it, did not conflict with ideas for close regional cooperation, and was not shattered by plans to establish some kind of confederation or common state.

Milan Hodža, a Czechoslovak politician of the pre-war period and, most notably, the originator of the concept of Central European federalization, stands out in particular. It is difficult to imagine a man more rooted in the region than Hodža, who was fluent in almost all the languages spoken here. Active during the Austro-Hungarian period, he advocated national autonomy for the constituent parts of the empire, and as soon as the opportunity to build nation-states arose, he opted for close, politically and economically inclusive cooperation between smaller partners. This was a combination of ideology and pragmatism: Hodža had no illusions that the Central European states would be subjected to pressures that they would be unable to resist separately. The Munich Conference and the fate of the region during World War II corroborated the predictions of the Czechoslovak prime minister. When he was in exile, he never abandoned the thought of a federal rebirth of the region's free nations. We believe that recalling his ideas is important in contemplating the emerging concepts of the development of the region, hence his image on the cover of the issue.

Many ideas for the integration of the region – not only those we present in this issue of the journal – share the appeal to respect the autonomy and history of the partner. This is also a principle that guides us in the creation of *Trimarium*. Editors in each country are responsible for inviting authors and accepting contributions, as well as for appointing national reviewers who first evaluate the text and recommend it for publication. It is their responsibility to represent their own country in editorial work. The editor-in-chief interferes only in special cases,

sometimes at the request of the national editor. Reconciling different working styles, habits – not only personal, but also cultural – proves to be a challenge, and work on the journal represents the concept of integration on a micro level where respect for autonomy meets the need to develop or achieve common standards. At this practical, organic level, one can understand that the more complicated the task (and the integration of state organisms is among the most demanding of these), the more patience and attention is required. And that such tasks span decades and generations, not months or even years.

Meanwhile, the outlook on the present is changing, as is the historical perspective. Although saying this is a cliché, it is necessary, nevertheless, to account for this fact in mutual communication. Whether its mere awareness is enough to avoid miscommunication is debatable. The example of Zagajewski's and Herbert's clashing generational poetics, which failed precisely because they are incomprehensible to modern audiences, can inspire skepticism. And, after all, we have an even more difficult task: we communicate not only between generations, but also between nations. Moreover, we want this voice of ours to be heard outside, also outside Central and Eastern Europe. In the process, we cannot afford not to take up such a challenge in every area, including science and culture. Those on whose shoulders we stand have long warned that we will be lost without such efforts. The plow of history is a terrible thing.