

This special issue of “Przegląd Zachodni” in the English language (**Germany and Europe – History and the Present**) is an invitation extended to foreign readers who wish to acquaint themselves with a selection of essays published in the journal of the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznań. “Przegląd Zachodni”, an interdisciplinary journal whose catchphrase for decades has been Poland-Germany-Europe, publishes papers by authors representing a variety of research institutions.

The studies presented in this anthology, initially published in Polish in four issues of the journal for the year 2015, are linked by the theme of the history of the last century, its memory, the persistence of the consequences of its crucial events and the lessons that can be learned from it. For the often ignored teacher of life – *historia magistra vitae* – continues to be the foundation for understanding the dynamic processes underway in contemporary states, the problems and dilemmas of the Polish-German neighbourhood and the dialogue that to this day defines the European transformations. From attempts undertaken by the European powers to deal with the consequences of the First World War and the forms of international cooperation in those times, through initiatives relevant to state borders and ownership rights after the next great war, up to the issues of restitution and (re)construction of cultural resources and transformations of identity adequate to the degree of advancement of contemporary integration processes – in all of the undertaken topics one notices the undeniable influence of the past.

The articles collected in this volume lead us through the conundrums of the 20th century as well as the currently valid dilemmas pertaining to political systems, politics and international relations. Today’s Europe expects and demands a bold new outlook on each of these spheres, their goals and methods of realization; it also needs to define the basic concepts in its vocabulary of dialogue, controversy and regrettably also conflict. Insofar as history remains the key to the understanding of contemporary attitudes, awareness, culture and memory, it must be complemented by a careful observation of the ongoing changes.

Inviting you to read the present issue I already announce the next one, which will appear this year and will contain the English language versions of selected articles from the issues of “Przegląd Zachodni” published in 2016.

*Natalia Jackowska*