

**Book review: *Trójkąt Weimarski w Europie*, Klaus-Heinrich Standke (ed.),  
Publishing House Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010, pp. 951**

*by Joanna Marszałek-Kawa*

The significance of the Weimar Triangle as a platform for cooperation and solving the most important problems of continental Europe has been changing since the day it was established. Despite a number of significant and spectacular achievements and answers given to the most crucial questions, there are still a lot of controversial issues in which the agreement could not be achieved.

No matter how politically effective the Triangle is, the very fact that a common Polish – German – French forum for exchanging views and consulting projects exists, has a historical dimension.

It is difficult to imagine contemporary Europe without overcoming the hostility between the French and the German nations, which has fundamental importance for its political and economic history. The role of the centuries-long alliance of Poland and France cannot be underestimated, either. It is also absolutely impossible to look into the future of the European Union without assuming the cooperation between two European powers and the Central European leader – Poland. That is why this publication, edited by Klaus-Heinrich Standke, is so significant to un-

derstand the way and the conditions in which not only the Weimar Triangle but the whole European Union function.

This subject has been discussed both in Polish and foreign works many times. I have also studied the issues connected with the Triangle and the Polish cooperation with Germany and France. However, the number of research papers written so far, does not diminish the value of the book under review in any way. What is more, it emphasised that such a work has not been published yet, mainly because of its unusual character, which is the result of the editor's high skills<sup>1</sup>.

“The Weimar Triangle in Europe” is a unique and cognitively valuable composition, or a synthesis, of the collection of source documents and research studies. However, this construction puts a reviewer in a serious dilemma – how to define and characterise its content?

The reason for this is the fact that the work falls outside the framework of traditional scientific publications. Although it is devoided of chaotic nature, which is the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Weimar Triangle Summit in Nancy*, I. Kozłowska, J. Marszałek-Kawa (eds.), Toruń 2005.

feature of many similar research papers, it does not match any classical typology. It is neither just a collection of speeches, statements or documents nor an elaboration or a study of them. It is not just an analysis or a monograph of a social phenomenon, either. "The Weimar Triangle in Europe" is a complex work devoted to the history, activity and prospects of the Polish – German – French forum of cooperation. It marks new quality on the Polish publishing market.

It is difficult to define a specific group to which this title may be addressed. On the one hand, because of its purely scientific character one might say it can be fully appreciated only by scholars, foreign policy researchers or students of political science. On the other hand, this book is extremely significant to understanding the essence and mechanisms of international exchange, and its language is appropriate for readers who are not expert in its subject area. It can be recommended both to those who want to gain some knowledge about the Weimar Triangle and to those politicians and officials who will have to deal with its issues.

What makes the work even more valuable is the fact that it is multilingual: it uses three "Weimar" languages at the same time. Not only does it allow the reader to get acquainted with the translation, but also, which is particularly important from the scientific point of view, to compare it

with the original version. This form gives perfect evidence of the author's scientific skills. It also justifies the statement that books published in our country can also be available for the readers who do not have a command of the Polish language, which is an optimistic conclusion.

It is worth looking into the construction of the book once again. It begins with the speeches of three foreign affairs ministers of the countries forming the Weimar Triangle: Bernard Kouchner, Radosław Sikorski and Frank-Walter Steimeier. They constitute a kind of introduction to the reality in which this forum functions, they show its significance, and, first of all, they let one understand the attitudes of particular countries' diplomacies towards their partners and the institutional structure of communication.

Furthermore, the book presents the perspectives of the politicians who have contributed to the establishment and the intensification of the cooperation within the framework of the Triangle to the greatest extent. The only reservation one may have is the fact they are shown quite selectively as the reader gets acquainted only with the viewpoints of Bronisław Geremek, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Roland Dumas and Krzysztof Skubiszewski. However, as selectivity is the indispensable condition, if a book is to be considered scientific, it would be wrong to say that the choice of these people is not right. It

would be worth selecting a few more, though.

The next part of the book includes the opinions concerning the functioning and the role of the Weimar Triangle in shaping the European policy. They were divided into separate national viewpoints, which was definitely the right thing to do. In the German part, the chapter by Kai-Olaf Lang is particularly worth recommending. In the French one, special attention should be paid to the chapter by Jerome Vaillant, and in the Polish one – to the one written by Bogdan Koszel and Roman Kuźniar (an extremely interesting study which could itself be the basis of teaching about the Weimar Triangle, although the authors' names do not require any promotion and guarantee the highest level of content-related knowledge).

The following part has been generally considered the least valuable of the whole work, although it would be unfair to call it valueless. However, the fact that the chapter about Adam Mickiewicz Prize has been included here seems to be unjustified. Although the content of the article is an additional asset of the publication, it disrupts the continuity of the work in an unacceptable way. Especially as it is followed by the analysis of the historical conditions in which the Weimar Triangle countries have cooperated (it must be mentioned that it is written in a very interesting way, characteristic of the authors

who display great writing skills and are impartial in their opinions).

The following issues are discussed in the next parts of the book: summits of the Triangle in the years 1993–2006 (together with an analytic overview of them), trilateral ministerial meetings, parliamentary cooperation and the role of particular legislatures in shaping the formula of cooperation and partnership, the significance of the Weimar Triangle to shaping the European-wide policy, solving problems with neighbours (Ukraine and Russia) and the issues of defence and security.

The ninth part includes studies of particular cases connected with the functioning of the Weimar Triangle societies and their initiatives. They were divided into a few complementary sub-chapters: partnership of cities, regional cooperation, youth exchange, culture, cooperation of universities and scientific-research centres, science and technology, mass media, economy and power industry. In the concluding chapter, Hans-Heinrich Standke tries to answer the question about the future of the Weimar Triangle, its political value and the social capital which it possesses in the new post-Lisbon Europe.

What must be emphasised is the fact that the book has been prepared in a very thorough and interesting way, which makes the text easy to work with. It is undoubtedly a credit to the authors' good

writing skills and the the editor's great ability. However, it would be unjust not to praise Adam Marszałek Publishing House from Toruń, as well. It was responsible for the technical and graphic side of the publication, and carried out this task to perfection, confirming its reputation and the highest European level.

To sum up, it must be said that it is

a very interesting work, composed in an unusual manner. Its multilingualism is an additional asset, which may help to popularise the issues of the Weimar triangle both in Poland and the whole of Europe. Such good and interesting titles, which also absorb in reader, are very rare in the Polish academic literature. The publication is worth recommending.

**Book review: Karolina J. Helnarska, *Od Europejskiej Wspólnoty Obronnej do Europejskiej Agencji Obrony*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, pp. 245**

*by Jarosław J. Piątek*

The publication is another title falling into the subject: Common European Safety and Defense Policy. However, it differs from previous depictions of European Union's activity in the second pillar. The author's aim was an analysis of a development of European identity in the field of safety and defense from its origins, that is activities taken and decisions made in the second half of the 1940s. The author has followed through the European safety and defense policy from the moment of shaping its conception (Pleven plan) and setting up the European Defence Community until setting up the European Defence

Agency. The treaty instituting the European Defence Community deserves a special attention. It is the first presentation of such important Western Europe's striving for creating the European armed forces in the literature of the subject.

In a very interesting way, the author presents the role and actions of France, not only in reference to the treaty setting up the European Defence Community but also to later initiatives of the French diplomacy for the extension of the existing economic cooperation, as a part of the European Economic Community, by introducing a common foreign policy in the