I believe the world needs such advocates of philosophy today.

Anna Głąb
Catholic University of Lublin, Poland


The Ninth Annual Session of Warsaw East European Conference was organized by the University of Warsaw’s Center for East European Studies. Based on recent trends, Eastern Studies is becoming more common for academic discourse, especially after the last EU enlargement and discussion about its future.

What is Central and Eastern Europe? In what way does its past involve its present and future? The conference participants focused on these and other questions.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formerly communist world began to transform from one-party systems with planned economies into Western political and economic systems, albeit on different trajectories. This was the main focus of the event with special attention paid to the memory, identity, as well as the political and economic transformation of nations.

The conference was organized according to the classical American conference system and English was the official language. 400 participants from Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Central Asia, and North America discussed and confronted the past, present, and even future of region. The majority of the guests hailed from Poland, Belorussia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Russia. 150 speakers on 37 panels presented different points of view and regional concepts of what the post-communist world has become.

The keynote guests this year were Helene Carrere d’Encausse (France), Richard Pipes (USA), Alexander Rondeli (Georgia), Asim Mollazade (Azerbaijan), and Borys Tarasiuk (Ukraine).

Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, the permanent secretary of the Académie Française and a historian specializing in Russian history, opened the Conference and started discussion about effects of collapse of the USSR.

During the first day, participants were focused on the socio-political transformation in Central Asia, the activity of the International Visegrad Fund, Jerzy Giedroyc’s ideas, media in the post-communist world, and regional changes in CEE. After six discussion panels, the first day concluded with a roundtable discussion on the “The Conflict of Historical Memories in the Region”. Participants discussed the forms of historical memories in the region, their conflicts, and development scenarios.

The second day of the event was dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe, and the post-communist world in general. Participants could attend panels and discuss the EU and its neighbors’ problems, energy
security of the region, human rights, democracy problems, socio-cultural and financial development, memories in region, and the situation in the South Caucasus.

The roundtable entitled “Present: The Impact of the Economic Crisis for the Political Situation in the Post-Soviet World” framed the conclusions for the second day. The participants and audience tried to determine the effects of the global crisis on the region and possible scenarios for the future. The different approaches to the problem by scientists, politicians, diplomats, as well as others made the discussion fruitful.

The third day of the conference was a continuation of the discussions from the two previous days. The regional economic transformation; educational problems in Ukraine; security policies; democratization in Russia; ecological cooperation; role of civil society and ideologies in post-communist countries; as well as the role of the US, EU, Russia, and China for regional development were the topics of discussion.

During the third roundtable, which was entitled “Future: Will the Progress of Information Technology Overcome Post-Sovietism”, anyone could offer solutions to the post-Soviet heritage problem. The main hypothesis of the discussion was that cyber technologies would help to improve and intensify the information exchange process and overcome the Soviet past.

Without a doubt, the key event on the fourth day of the conference was Richard Pipe’s lecture (an American academic, born in Poland, who specializes in Russian history, particularly with respect to the Soviet Union).

The four days spent at Warsaw University was a great opportunity, especially for young scientists, who made up the majority of participants. A high level of academic and democratic discussions characterized the event. Anyone could approach and have a discussion with the conference’s honored guests, as well as speak with scientists with similar field of interests. The informal portions of the conference provided constructive opportunities for the participants.

Some guests wished there would have been more official languages of conference, including Russian. Nonetheless, during the breaks, participants could converse in Polish or Russian.

Over the course of the conference, several key topics discussed very intensively and emotionally. The first was the renaissance of the “Russian empire” and its policy in the formerly communist region. The second topic was the political situation in Belarus and its impact on the future enlargement of the European Union. The first president of Belarus, A. Shushkevich, on the present situation in his country remarked: “communism did not die. Communism is raised from the dead and it became in Belarus”.

After three days of round tables and discussions, the participants, all from different countries and continents, with different political beliefs and life experiences, created
some very valuable approaches for the exploration of the political process. In my opinion, the organization of meeting was successful. But, considering the theme of the event, it would have been more productive if more participants from Russia had attended.

Lyubomyr Boyakivskyy
Rivne State Humanitarian University, Ukraine