



CALL FOR PAPERS

1989, ALSO A KEY YEAR IN CENTRAL ASIA? A NEW LOOK AT THE SOCIOCULTURAL & POLITICAL CHANGES OF 1989

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 19-20 September 2014

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9th, 1989 symbolizes in the collective memory the end of communism. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of this historic event, the French Institute for Central Asian Studies and the Kyrgyz National University named after Balasagyn will organize a two-day international conference to look at the sociocultural and political changes that occurred in Central Asia during the year 1989.

Rationale of the 1989 Conference

Many analysts assert that the independence of Central Asian republics is the unexpected and unprepared consequence of the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. Yet from early 1989, several warning events took place in the region: the defeat and withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan in which a large number of Central Asians took part; the demonstrations against nuclear testing in Kazakhstan; the growing awareness of the drying of the Aral sea and its ecological and health consequences; the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts in the Ferghana Valley; the people's discontent about forced Russification and the lack of status for their languages, etc. The 1989 Conference proposes to take a new look on many of these topics.

One Conference, Three Axes

The 1989 Conference will focus on three main analytical axes:

1. Environment and natural resources: the year 1989 was marked by the cessation of Soviet nuclear tests in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, following the collective action of local and international activists. Reviewing this historical process and the emergence in Central Asia of a civic awareness in the aftermath of Chernobyl disaster (1986) and the Armenian earthquake (1988) will help understand how social mobilisations have developed over the last 25 years around such issues as environment protection, ecological risk management and the control of natural resources.
2. National identities and interethnic relations: closely related to the Soviet economic crisis of the late 1980s, a series of ethnic violence took place during the summer of 1989, particularly in the regions of Ferghana (Uzbekistan) and Batken (Kyrgyzstan). Recent conflicts in Southern Kyrgyzstan and Eastern Tajikistan echoed the year 1989, but these historical tensions remain understudied due to the impossibility, during that period, to have access to the contentious area. The 1989 Conference will review the origins and developments of the 1989 ethnic conflicts and will question in a broader perspective the relationship between nation-building and ethnicity in post-Soviet Central Asia.

3. Language and education: on the eve of 1989, linguistic demands developed in the five Central Asian republics and led to the adoption of a series of laws on State language, granting for the first time in Soviet history the status of 'State language' (*gosudarstvennyj jazyk*) to local languages. It represents both a symbolic step forward and a legal progress in the promotion of national identities. The 1989 Conference will analyse in a comparative perspective the content and forms of these linguistic demands in Central Asia. It will also assess the legacy of the Soviet legislation in today's language policies and practices of the five independent states. How did it impact education policies? What status place is granted to minority languages, in particular the Russian language, and which role do minority languages play in post-Soviet Central Asian societies?

A Gathering of Academic and Professional Experts

The 1989 Conference proposes to bring together participants from both the field of scholarly research in the social sciences and the sphere of professional organizations. This logic follows the observation that contemporary sociocultural topics are either studied by academics or addressed by professionals, but very rarely approached by the two groups in a collaborative way.

The 1989 Conference will fill this gap by gathering scholars specialized in Central Asian history, anthropology, sociology, political sciences, etc. from the region and abroad, and professionals who have worked on the same issues within governmental bodies, international organizations or non-governmental structures. All participants will contribute in a joint effort to re-examine the socio-cultural changes that took place in 1989 and understand their legacy in the recent evolution of Central Asia. Priority will be given to applied research and empirical methodologies to discuss common practical issues inherited from 1989 in the spheres of environment, minority rights and education.

Technical details

The 1989 Conference will consist of two keynote lectures and three thematic sessions (6 panels in total).

Participants will be selected by the conference programme committee through a regular call for papers. The committee will ensure a balance between scholars and professionals, Central Asian and Westerners, levels of experience and gender).

There is no fee to attend the conference. Coffee breaks and meals will be covered for all participants. Due to limited funds, travel expenses and accommodation are available only for participants from neighbouring Central Asian countries and partial expenses can be covered for international participants. If you are able to receive support from your institute, please mention it in the applicant fact sheet.

Application procedure

Send a 500-word abstract and the attached applicant fact sheet to 1989conference@gmail.com

Accepted languages: English and Russian with simultaneous translation.

Submission deadline: **May 11th, 2014**

Authors will be informed of the selection results by **May 25th, 2014**.

Selected participants will be required to send full papers (app. 5,000 words) by **September 1st, 2014**.

The best manuscripts will be published in a special issue of the French-English academic journal *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* in **spring 2015**.