II Asian Congress took place on 21st and 22nd of May, 2015. It was the largest event of its kind in Europe. Once again, it was a great opportunity to meet representatives of science, business and politics who deal with Asian affairs daily. The event appeared to be so spectacular that it was impossible to organize it in one place. Therefore, many panels were held simultaneously in the Kuiavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshall’s Office building, Torun City Council’s building and the Modern Art Centre „Signs of Time”.

The event management of this magnitude would not be possible if not for the professional and efficient coordination led by Professor Joanna Marszałek-Kawa and a number of cooperating institutions, such as Asia-Pacific Society, Kuiavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshall’s Office, Torun City Council, and Professor Czesław Mojsiewicz Fund for International Cooperation Support, Eastern Studies Center, Political Science and International Studies Division of NCU.

The congress began at 10 o’clock. At the outset, guests were welcomed by Adam Marszałek, PhD, head of the Asia-Pacific Society, while Professor Joanna Marszałek-Kawa officially opened the event. Then invited guests gave their speeches. Among them were Jerzy Bayer, Ambassador of Poland to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Burma; Piotr Calbecki, Kuiavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshall and Roman Bäcker, head of ZG PTNP.

After the opening, speeches were held by the high-level representatives, including Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, His Excellence Yerik Utembayev; Ambassador of the Republic of India, His Excellence Ajay Bisaria;
Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellence Peter F. Gontha; Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Excellence Manasvi Srisodapol; Charge d’Affaires of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellence Ikrom Nazarov; First Secretary of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Sir Ahmad Khan; First Secretary of the Embassy of the Japan, Daisuke Yamashita and Charge d’Affaires of the People’s Republic of China, Lin Jian.

The participant was unable to take part in all points of schedule he was interested with. This multiplicity shows, however, the importance of Asian issues and proves that this research area still requires intensive research. Therefore, the Congress was attended by many outstanding researchers – it would be impossible to mention the names of all of them. The inaugural lecture „Poland-Azerbaijan form the bilateral relations” was given by Professor Andrzej Chodubski from the University of Gdansk. Special guests were also Professor Tadeusz Wallas from Adam Mickiewicz University and Professor Tadeusz Bodio from the University of Warsaw. Scientists from many countries arrived to Torun to present the results of their research and debate on them. More than 400 participants of the Congress gave their speeches within the 42 thematic panels, which covered issues such as legal aspects, international affairs, the Asia-Europe relations, religions, culture, problems of sub-regions of Asia, economy and business, security issues, Asian political thought and many others. Because of the international character of the event, many panels were held in English and Russian.

Some of the panels had particular significance. One of them concerned the international relations in Asia, with Professor Maciej Szczurowski as a chairperson. Participants discussed the bilateral relations between Asia and other regions, such as North America or Africa with conclusion, that many Asian countries will strengthen their cooperation with partners from other continents. The second one concerned the social and political changes in Post-Soviet Area, with Professor Iwona Massaka and Professor Tadeusz Dmochowski as chairpersons. The speeches were related to events in Crimea, human rights violations and politics conducted by Russian Federation along with an arms trade in the Post-Soviet Area. Those who were interested in art could take part in a panel “Means of expression in Asian art” with PhD Agnieszka Kamrowska as a chairperson. The topics covered music in China, propaganda in the anime in the 30s and 40s and Asian cinematography. Also extremely interesting was a panel about religions and their influence on social and political changes in Asia, which is, after all, a religious mosaic on an unprecedented scale. Scientists raised the problem of an Islamic
State in the Middle East and a number of other issues such as religious freedom in China or the presence of the Church of Scientology in Israel.

The II Asian Congress was accompanied by a number of side events, where participants could learn about different aspects of Asian culture and politics. The most significant events were related to Thailand: there was a demonstration of traditional Thai dance, secrets of the massage and traditional Thai cuisine. There were also local attractions, such as making original gingerbread or visiting Torun’s castle.

Noteworthy is the care organizers took of their guests. At their disposal were six hotels located in the area of Torun’s Old Town, so all events were in hand’s Reach. Guests were also provided with breakfast and dinner and in the evening they could participate in the ceremonial banquet.

To conclude, the II Asian Congress was a special event. It was an opportunity to share experience and observations between representatives of science, politics and business. The success of this particular event proves that a study of contemporary Asia, due to its vastness, is a huge challenge.