Dear Delegates and Moderators,

Welcome to the Polish Round Table Talks! This February, you will convene with other members of the talks to negotiate the future of Communism in Poland.

The document included here is a ‘topic abstract’ for the Polish Round Table Talks at NAIMUN LII. Here, you will find information and avenues for further research on the topics we will be discussing during the conference.

The intent of this abstract is so that you may begin research and have an understanding of the material that will be discussed in these committees before a full background guide is released. Use these abstracts to help you focus on understanding the issues at play in each topic and the ways in which they may interact with the programs and goals of the parties to the talks.

We hope to assist you in any way possible in the lead-up to NAIMUN, so if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact either the Chair or Crisis Manager of the Polish Round Table Talks – Andrea Cohen and Michael Sliwinski – directly at aac74@georgetown.edu and mws67@georgetown.edu respectively.

Best,
Andrew and Matthew

Andrew Lyu
Secretary General

Matthew Quallen
Director General
The Topics

In the Polish Round Table Talks of 1989 representatives of the communist government of Poland and a determined opposition came together to negotiate the future of communism. The rise of an opposition has pushed to the fore decades of unresolved social issues, each now on the table in unprecedented negotiations. After fifty years of single-party rule, each of you as delegates is charged with the discussion and resolution of many important challenges facing Poland at the time of the Round Table Talks.

**Domestic Reforms:** Political reforms will occupy the focus of the negotiators’ attentions. Poland has been under the rule of the Polish United Worker’s Party (PZPR) since 1948. This government, led under Communist principles, has close ties to the Soviet Union stretching back to its formation. Yet, many in the Solidarity party seek to revisit the nature of Poland’s government, including the introduction of radical democratic reforms. Delegates on both sides of the Talks must work together to face the challenges of a modernizing Poland. They will determine to what extent Communism remains a central ideology of Poland’s government and how that government incorporates new ideas and people. Undoubtedly, the resolution of these questions will require both compromise and challenge.

Economic challenges too face Poland. For centuries, Poland has been among the most agriculturally productive nations in Europe. Since the beginning of the 20th century, industrialization has also brought a great deal of production capacity to the nation’s burgeoning industrial sector. But the Soviet economic bloc is languishing. Communism lies at the heart of Poland’s economic identity in this era; how and where will liberal reforms be made to Poland’s economy? What will the impact of these reforms be, in the short and long term?

More than material reform, Poland requires social reform. Just as official changes are being proposed and discussed at the Round Table Talks, Polish society must also face a series of new choices as its political, economic, and individual opportunities develop. Social reform may touch on a wide range of issues, including the media, education, women’s rights, and civil liberties, and will have a profound impact on the day-to-day life of Polish citizens. Used to liberal ideational underpinnings despite its oppressive political environment, Poland will be forced to balance the occasionally socially conservative convictions of its political reformers with their fundamental liberalism. These talks will determine the direction of Polish Society.

**The Soviet Bloc:** Across the Soviet bloc, rumblings or reform can be heard. Under Gorbachev’s auspices, the opening of Soviet political life and the removal of Janos Kadar in Hungary have signaled Soviet willingness to acquiesce to reform. In this environment, the Polish Communist Party is without the hard-line of its key historical backer – the Soviet Union – to make moot any talk of reform. Meanwhile, the United States has trained its attention on Eastern Europe and the increasingly unstable Soviet Bloc. The opposition may find the international context unusually permissive to reform.
Poland’s geopolitical location situates it at the nexus of Eastern and Western Europe. Its membership in the Soviet bloc has long made discussions of independent foreign policy moot. How will Poland respond internationally to its domestic changes? Will it retain ties with its close political and economic partners in the Soviet bloc, or will it court Western diplomatic interests? The balance of these forces holds the promise for Poland to benefit greatly or to be caught in the crosshairs.
Resources for Further Research

Here, you’ll find sources dealing with topics discussed in the topics abstracts, organized by topic. Use these as a starting off point for your research. They will allow you to get a strong grounding in these topics prior to the release of a full background guide.

For works focusing on Solidarity (Worker’s Union) and civil society conditions in the buildup to the Round Table Talks, see:

For general background on Poland under Communist Rule, see:

For works focusing on the role of international powers in the Round Table Talks, see: