

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/digital-resources/articles/7829,Cracow-spring-of-1989.html>

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Cracow spring of 1989

The “round table” is one of the most important symbols of the Third Republic of Poland, for part of the society a dignified example of political dialogue which began the process of democratising Poland, for others a symbol of betrayal and conspiracy of groups hostile towards Poland. During the talks, a wave of youth protests came through Cracow, demonstrating against the “round table” talks and demanding power to be taken away from the communists.



Words are thrown around in Warsaw, stones are thrown in Cracow

Eleven days after the “round table” talks began, street riots took place in Cracow. On February 17th 1989, on the 8th anniversary of the

registration of the Independent Students' Association, a rally of the academic youth took place in the Main Square. At the end of the manifestation, the gathered masses went to the Board of Education where they intended to present their postulates to the minister of national education, who was in Cracow at the time, regarding, among other things, the re-registration of the Independent Students' Association. However, the minister was not at the Board, since at the time he was participating in a meeting at the 5th High School. The protesters decided to end the demonstration, yet the Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia, or ZOMO, attacked the already dispersing crowds. In response, the students went to the building of the 5th High School, broke inside, blocked all the exits and "took the minister hostage", demanding all their friends arrested at the Board of Education to be freed. The youth's demand was fulfilled following the intervention of the rectors of the Jagiellonian University.

Around two thousand people took part in the manifestation, including five hundred students. In the official statements, the government media ironically summarised these events by saying that "words are thrown around in Warsaw, while stones are thrown in Cracow".

The next rally was organised by members of the Polish Independent Confederation in the Main Square on February 21st. It was a protest against the trial of Václav Havel which was beginning in Prague.

"The Red Army will defeat the bourgeois"

Two days later, on February 23rd, activists of the Independent Students'

Association, Fighting Youth Federation, Confederation of Independent Poland and Freedom and Peace Movement organised a happening on the 71st anniversary of the creation of the Red Army. Students, dressed as Red Army soldiers, shouting the slogan “The Red Army will defeat the bourgeois”, marched from the Collegium Novum to the Main Square. The happening ended at the Freedom square, where the demonstrators threw cups with yoghurt and kefir at the statue of gratitude towards the Red Army.

Read the [full text](#) on the IPN's NextStopHistory website.

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