

Lech Wałęsa

Is my assessment correct? let's talk

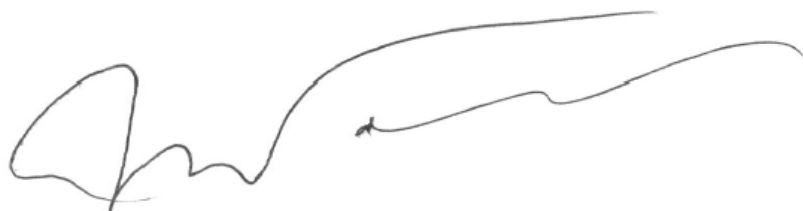
The breakthrough of 1989, besides the obvious explosion of hope for a better tomorrow, faith and enthusiasm, soon brought in Poland the conviction that we have a long and arduous road ahead of us in building a stable democracy and market economy. At that time, the conviction of the need to join European structures and NATO became widespread. On this road, foreign investment proved to be helpful, bringing capital and becoming a sure guarantee of the irreversibility of the reform process. They also brought, as it soon turned out, decent returns for investors who dared to take risks.

We have achieved success. First and foremost, people's welfare has increased, the economy has grown uninterrupted for 30 years. We were able to build in a short period of time legal and economic institutions suitable for democracy, such as courts, banks, independent media, supervisory and regulatory institutions. An open market economy linked to rapidly changing European and global markets gave us a great framework for development. It turned out that democracy linked to market institutions produced the best results for us, and good returns for those who dared to invest in Poland.

In recent years, these foundations for building trust in the state and the market have been gradually eroded, and political corruption has flourished. The risk of the country sliding toward an authoritarian regime was staring us in the face. The October 15, 2023 elections turned us from this path. Once again, the will of the people to trust in democratic principles and values proved decisive. And the seized public media, the secret service and the prosecutor's office used to make politics were unable to break this will.

Thirty-five years after the first breakthrough, and 20 years after joining the European Union, and returning to the path of democracy, the rule of law and economic development, we need a new impulse. Technological change, demographic change, social inequality, climate change, migration or war abroad can strengthen populist and illiberal movements. Here in Gdansk, where resistance against the old regime was born and Solidarity was born, we do not want such a scenario. Because democracy is worth investing in. And this strong message we want to send from our Gdansk once again in June 2024.

Gdańsk, February 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'L' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that ends in a small upward tick.

Lech Wałęsa
President of the Republic of Poland
in the years 1990 - 1995