

# Solidarity Summer camp 2016 Gdansk, Poland



**Jaco Marais, Creative Director, GGI**

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The doctrine for a small, white, Christian boy growing up under the National Party in Apartheid

South Africa was that communists like the African National Congress (ANC) were dangerous and evil and capitalism was fair and godly.

It was a sort of battle of minds perfectly illustrated by the movie Rocky IV. Rocky IV is a 1985 American sports drama film written, directed by, and starring Sylvester Stallone. The film co-stars Dolph Lundgren, Burt Young, Talia Shire, Carl Weathers, Tony Burton, Brigitte Nielsen and Michael Pataki. Rocky IV was the highest grossing sports movie for 24 years. It was one of the few films released by South African censors the same year it was released.

In the film, the Soviet Union and its top boxer make an entrance into professional boxing with their best athlete Ivan Drago, who initially wants to take on

World champion Rocky Balboa. Rocky's best friend Apollo Creed decides to fight him instead but is fatally beaten in the ring. Enraged, Rocky decides to fight Drago in the Soviet Union to avenge the death of his friend and defend the honor of his country.

At the end of the film Rocky gives a victory speech, acknowledging that the local crowd's disdain of him had turned to respect during the fight. He compares it to the animosity between the U.S. and the Soviets, and says that seeing him and Drago fight was "better than 20 million", alluding to a possible war between the U.S. and the Soviets. Rocky finally declares, "If I can change, and you can change, then everybody can change!" The Soviet General Secretary stands up and reluctantly applauds Rocky, and his aides follow suit. Rocky ends his speech by wishing his son watching the match on TV a Merry Christmas, and raises his arms into the air in victory as the crowd applauds.

I also remember work parties, where we would volunteer to hide mini-bibles in matchboxes to be airdropped over Eastern Bloc countries.

Of course this was all a big distraction from South Africa's own impending 'fall of walls' as 'revolutionaries' and 'terrorists' were united under the slogan of: "One man one vote".

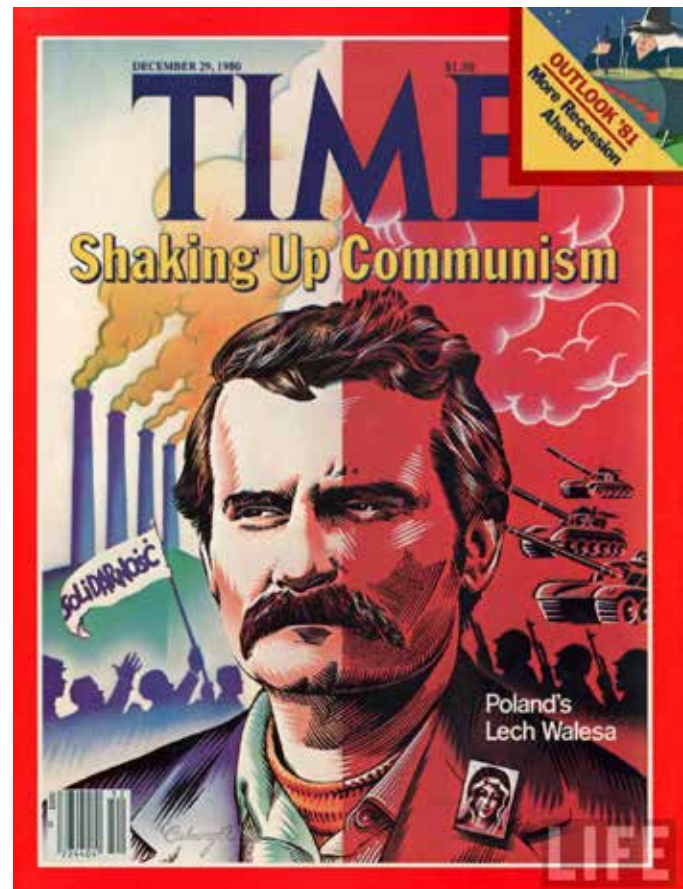
You can imagine how confusing it was for the government censors when Lech Wałęsa lead the Solidarity movement of factory workers to a revolution over communism that spread through Eastern Europe and lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

**Thirty years wiser, I had experience of: reconciliation, immigration, poverty, success, coming out as gay, transcendental meditation and world travel. And, I was sitting in the Dockyards of Gdansk in the Solidarity museum, opposite Lech Wałęsa!**

I asked the first democratically elected president of Poland: What are your wishes were for the future of the Solidarity Movement and the Solidarity Museum?

His answer was refreshing: " I wish for the flags of the past to be laid down and for people to collectivise around new issues that need changing in new ways appropriate for the time."

I will never forget Solidarity Summer Camp for as long as I live.



Reflecting back on it, 'Solidarity' movements have been and still are a part of my every day life. We have changed South Africa, gay rights; our minds and we are busy changing international gay rights and immigration policies. I was now more than ever committed to my life-purpose of connecting people around these and other causes.

