

Man of the Year

by Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Time magazine is one of the great harlots of the print media. For the last year or so it has done more to promote Gorbachev as a world statesman than any other American publication I can think of. It has also printed lavish photo spreads of life in the Soviet Union, replete with hammers and sickles, smiling children, and pictures of Lenin. One gets the impression that either the Soviet government owns stock in Time or the management has simply succumbed to Gorbamania.

Naturally they chose Gorbachev as their "Man of the Year" -- a decision probably made months ago. It's hard to believe that they actually considered anyone else for the honor. The choice, of course, is a reflection of the total moral depravity of the publication's management. To have chosen the head of the "evil empire," chief warden of the gulag archipelago, overseer of the KGB, commander-in-chief of the genocidal Soviet army in Afghanistan, supporter of the Ethiopian communists who are starving their people to death, arms suppliers to the Sandinistas, persecutor of Christians and Jews, enslaver of Eastern Europe, leader of the most evil, brutal, inhuman group of political conspirators in history -- the Communist Party -- is to have chosen to honor Satan. Morally, intellectually, spiritually, you can't get lower than that.

They could have chosen someone else. They could have chosen Armando Valladares, the Christian Cuban who spent 22 years in Castro's

prisons suffering torture and degradation for the crime of being philosophically opposed to communism. Imprisoned at the age of 23, he saw the communist hell as it really is -- a system designed to destroy the human spirit. In 1982 Valladares was finally released as the result of an international campaign of protest. Once free, ~~he~~ ~~Valladares~~ decided to put down on paper all that he and his fellow prisoners had suffered at the hands of <sup>the</sup> communists. The book, Against All Hope, was published in 1986 and is, by far, the most eloquent, devastating testimony of a prisoner of communism ever written. The dedication reads: "To the memory of my companions tortured and murdered in Fidel Castro's jails, and to the thousands of prisoners still suffering in them."

Since the publication of that book I have not seen a single interview of Valladares in any of the print media, no television interview or coverage, no stories about the man or his life since his release. Yet the book received excellent reviews. Time's Paul Gray wrote: "Valladares's book is an event of considerable cultural and political significance: the most detailed and irrefutable description yet published of the suffering engendered in Cuba by Communism and Fidel Castro."

Even when the Cuban prisoners in American jails rebelled, no one cited Valladares's book to explain why these Cubans preferred to die in American jails than live in Castro's prisons.

Had Time chosen Valladares as Man of the Year, what a difference it would have made! Instead of the stench of evil floating off the cover, there would have been the fresh air of human dignity and heroism. Time could have honored the triumph of good over evil. Instead it

chose to honor the leader of a political system that has produced more human suffering, more human corpses than any other in history.

They say that there are no heroes anymore. There are, but most of them have vanished in the black night of 20th century statism. Fortunately, a few have survived: Vladimir Bukovsky, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Armando Valladares. These are the men our youngsters should be reading about in school -- men of courage, conviction, and honor.