

Who Weeps For Emiliana?

LAST JANUARY 9 an anniversary slipped by unnoticed. No coffins were carried through the streets, no red paint was daubed on walls to recall the event. On this day in 1971 "three unidentified men" poured gasoline on a Marikina bus on Epifanio de los Santos Ave. and set it on fire. One of the passengers, Emiliana Bejares, 20 years old, was so badly burned that she died three days later in the Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital, a victim of what was far and away the most savage act of brutality perpetrated in the disturbances of that time.

A strange silence surrounds the death of this poor inoffensive girl, incinerated by "three unidentified men." We wonder if these men are able to sleep nights. If they are not able to sleep, they must be kept awake by their consciences, for they are not being badgered by newspaper columnists or radio commentators or activist leaders.

During the days immediately following the tragedy, we listened to radio commentators, watched television programs and read the newspapers. The death was mentioned, of course, but nothing like the mileage was gotten out of it that the atrocious savagery of the event demanded.

No Word for Emiliana

We wonder why this is. A security guard who threw a pill box was sentenced to death with what seemed almost indecent speed. We cannot hear enough of the "martyrs of Mendiola". But no one weeps for Emiliana. We have heard Mr. Lupino Lazaro explain how his heart not only bleeds for jeepney drivers but for all the customers of the oil companies. We heard television commentators like Jose Maria Velez tell how the "police brutally charged on unarmed students with truncheons swinking." (Emphasis theirs) We heard Soc Rodrigo plead for the revolutionaries at UP who "are our boys". But no word for Emiliana. She was certainly unarmed. She was not even indulging dangerous

curiosity on the fringe of activist violence. She was just a victim of a cold blooded act of savagery. She is somebody's daughter. Somebody's sister. But who weeps for her? Poor Emiliana. Like Thomas Hood's girl pulled out of the Thames:

Take her up tenderly
Lift her with care
Fashioned so slenderly
So young and so fair
Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Oh it was pitiful
Near a whole city full
Cold inhumanity
Burning insanity . . .

We have been wondering about the strange silence that surrounds Emiliana. No banners. No coffins. No letters to the press from college professors. No groups of nuns expressing solidarity with her. No university head voicing indignation. No T-shirts carrying the message "Strikers burn girls to death don't they?" No Chronicle reminding us that it is 400 days since the murder. Just silence. Poor Emiliana.

Communist Thought Processes

We should like to suggest that a partial explanation of this silence is to be found in Communist mental processes. We are far from suggesting that all activists are Communists. But it seems to be a fact that they have accepted Communist attitudes and thought processes. After the Mendiola misfortune a priest activist gently opined that the seven victims were a small price to pay. He meant for progress towards some distant Utopia. He was callous to the misfortunes of men in his concern for humanity.

It is this activist thinking which explains in part the pall of silence which settled upon the burning of Emiliana. The Communist mind is Utopian not humanitarian. It is concerned with the human race not with human beings. It aims at a distant earthly paradise for the future human race but is cold to the sufferings of contemporary man. Marx the ancestor of all Utopians was absolutely savage with

anyone who crossed him in his march toward the promised land. He had no compassion for those who were really down and out — the Lumpenproletariat. His disciples outdid him in callous disregard to human suffering in the concrete. Lenin had his loyal Kronstadt sailors exterminated. Stalin liquidated the kulaks. Khrushchev brutally crushed Hungary. Breshnev smashed the aspirations of Czechoslovakia. Mao in his agrarian reform executed 1-1/2 million landlords. These were measures necessary for the Utopia of the future; humanitarian considerations should not stand in the way. That each victim was a man with a family, and loves and ambitions, was not a consideration in the reformer's dedication to Utopia. These leaders were men with an apocalyptic vision.

A strange silence surrounds the death of Emiliana. No letters to the press from college professors. No T-shirts carrying the message, "Strikers burn girls to death, don't they?"

One of them put it callously, Lenin or Stalin, you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs. The cooks of the Utopian omelet are not the ones to stint on eggs. Men. Other men. Emilianas.

"Use Every Trick"

Not only are they willing courageously to accept such sacrifices but they rejoice in them on occasion. If these tragedies promote the cause, far from being reason for lament, they are reason for rejoicing. Does any serious person think that the activists are genuinely sorry over the death of the students on Mendiola street? Such incidents are too useful to be real causes of lament. The Communist attitude is wonderfully brought out by what happened years ago in the Bonus March in Washington in 1932. This was or-



ganized by veterans of World War I demanding a cash bonus. The march was warmly supported by Communists who at that time still cherished hopes of spreading their gospel to the United States. In handling the disturbances, the Washington D.C. police killed one marcher. Let us hear John T. Pace, an acknowledged Communist, who later testified concerning the March before a Congressional Committee:

I led the left-wing or Communist section of the Bonus March. I was ordered by Red superiors to provoke riots. I was told to use every trick to bring about bloodshed. . . The Communists did not care how many veterans were killed. I was told that Moscow had ordered riots and bloodshed in the hope that this might set off a revolution. My Communist bosses were jumping with joy on July 28 when the Washington police killed one veteran.

This is something to remember when you hear activist indignation over police "brutality". They are not against it. Rather they want it. They are glad of it. In fact it

would be entirely within Communist ethics to produce deaths provided they could be saddled on the establishment. As in Washington.

Shocking Brutality

Provided they could be saddled on the establishment. There is the key to Emiliana's oblivion. And this is the key to the attitude of those too, who, while not Communist in any sense, are so bitterly anti-administration that they have become insensitive to every other issue. Not by the wildest stretch of the imagination (though it is dangerous to put limits on activist extravagances!) could blame for Emiliana's death be laid at the door of President Marcos and the "establishment." If the principle of command responsibility is to be invoked, blame must fall on Lupino Lazaro or the people who were supporting the jeepney strikers and stirring them and their collaborators to violence. But not on President Marcos. And so Emiliana is treated with silence because she cannot be blamed on him or on police "brutality". In her case the brutality, the immeasurably more

shocking brutality, was in another quarter. Better keep silent about Emiliana. She is embarrassing. Poor Emiliana. If she had only been caught in the maelstrom of Mendiola and been mowed down by alleged police bullets or blown to pieces by activist pill boxes and Molotov cocktails! Then she would have been another Joan of Arc. But none of these things happened to her. She committed the crime of minding her own business. She was guilty of the heinous offense of riding in a bus when the demagogues had decreed that all transportations must cease, to bring the oil companies to terms and the country to the brink of anarchy.

So Emiliana remains unwept, unhonored and unsung. The champions of humanity do not care how many Emilianas are burned to death. Just an egg for the omelet. A useless one too, since she contributes nothing to the cause. On the contrary let her name be hushed up, she might even reflect discredit on it. Let the "three unidentified men" remain unidentified! —Rev. LEO A. CUL-LUM, S.J.