

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Thirteenth CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 1956



Introduced by Anakpawis Representatives Crispin B. Beltran, Rafael V. Mariano

EXPLANATORY NOTE

On March 28, 1993, President Fidel V. Ramos issued Executive Order No. 75 entitled "Creating the National Heroes Committee under the Office of the President. In compliance with this, the National Heroes Committee through its Technical Committee submitted its findings and recommendations after a series of meetings from June 1993 to November 1995 and made the following criteria for national heroes:

1. Heroes are those who have a concept of nation and thereafter aspire and struggle for the nation's freedom;
2. Heroes are those who define and contribute to a system or life of freedom and order for a nation;
3. Heroes are those who contribute to the quality of life and destiny of a nation.

The technical committee was composed of Drs. Onofre D. Corpuz; Samuel K. Tan; Marcelino Foronda; Alfredo Lagmay; Bernardita R. Churchill; Serafin Quiason; Ambeth Ocampo, then known as Dom Ignacio Maria, Prof. Minerva Gonzales; and Mrs. Carmen Guerrero Nakpil.

Additional criteria for heroes were also drafted and adopted:

1. A hero is part of the people's expression. But the process of a people's internalization of a hero's life and works takes time, with the youth forming a part of the internalization;
2. A hero thinks of the future, especially the future generations;

The choice of a hero involves not only the recounting of an episode or events in history, but of the entire process that made this particular person a hero.

These criteria have been more than satisfied in the case of Crisanto Evangelista, the recognized Father of Militant Filipino Unionism. His life and deeds were completely devoted to serving the Filipino worker and the people, as well as the cause of genuine national liberation and democracy.

Crisanto Evangelista was born on November 1, 1888 in the small, provincial town of Malhacan, Meycauayan, Bulacan. His father was an hacienda farmer and his mother was a housewife. Crisanto's life was witness to two major social upheavals in Philippine history: the Philippine revolution against Spanish colonization and the Filipino-American war.

He finished elementary schooling in Meycauyan, and continued his education in Manila. By taking on various part-time jobs, he managed to finance his education and finish the intermediate level. He was able to reach only the first year of the collegiate level, however, because of severe economic hardship and the death of his father.

Forced to drop out of school, he took a job in a printing press. Because of unusual industry, he was easily promoted to linotypist. His work consisted of putting together the materials and documents and proofreading the final drafts prior to printing. The nature of his job and his own strong individual inclination towards learning became factors not only in his intellectual growth, but also in his development as a politically aware Filipino. He read the various political treatises, newsletters and other reading materials that he helped proofread and print; and these helped shape his views and then budding nationalist ideology.

In 1913, on the second year anniversary of the urban poor association Damayang Mahihirap, Crisanto, then 25 years old, recited a poem he had written "Ang Sigaw ng Dukha." In five stanzas, Crisanto raged against the government (Pamahalaan), the capitalist (Mamumuhunan) and the law (Lagdang batas) and called on the workers and other poor sectors to unite and fight against exploitation and bring about a new society based on genuine democracy and justice.

He also joined various labor organizations such as the Union Impresores de Filipinas (UIF), and the Congreso de Obrero de Filipinas (COF).

Crisanto provided strength and direction to the then developing trade union movement. Under his leadership, the UIF flourished. On March 1, 1918, the union came out with an investigation detailing the conditions in the printing office. It released a petition paper stating the workers' demands, and called for a general strike of all printing workers. The strike was a massive success, as workers received 100-500% increase in wages. Crisanto's name became known and his reputation as a labor leader began to grow. He was firm in his conviction that unions should grow beyond being organizations of mutual aid; look beyond the issues of wages, work hours, health and working conditions; and take a leading role in the patriotic struggle for the country's freedom.

In an effort to cool down the steadily growing fires of the militant labor movement, then President Manuel Luis Quezon appointed Crisanto to be part of the Philippine Independence Mission to the United States in 1919. This gave Crisanto the opportunity to establish contact with other labor leaders and unions in the US. He expressed criticism for the reactionary and racist tendencies and rulings of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) which was then headed by Samuel Gompers. He also gathered reading materials on socialism, and talked with socialist unions. All this also came at a time when the socialist revolution of 1918 had just succeeded under the proletarian leadership of V.I. Lenin. Marxism and revolutionary socialist theory spread like wildfire among workers of the world.

When he returned to the country, Crisanto immediately immersed in the practical struggles of Filipino workers.

In April 1919, the workers of Manila Electric and Railway Company (Meralco) sought the help of the COF in demanding the reinstatement of workers unjustly laid-off, and a wage increase. On May 22, 1919, they submitted a petition to Meralco manager James Rockwell; but Rockwell refused.

The following day, Meralco's 600 workers staged a walk-out. They called on the public to boycott the Meralco-operated tranvias or trains and to support the strike. Sympathy strikes and rallies were held all over Manila - in market places, plaza, cockpits. Fiery debates erupted in the newspapers on the supposed abuses of Meralco and the situation faced by workers in the firm.

In the investigations conducted by the Bureau of Labor, the accusations against Meralco were substantiated and proven; but the BLR could not enforce any punishment. The management hardened its position, and ordered attacks against the strikers. Some 200 policemen were made to accompany scabs who were instructed to break the picketlines.

On May 20, 1919, the public was startled by news that a bomb had exploded in one of the Meralco-run tranvias. A civilian was killed, and many others were wounded. Evangelista was one of the leaders implicated and arrested. No evidence could be presented against him, however, and he was immediately released.

In 1920, Crisanto was voted president of the COF, while Jacinto Manahan was elected vice-president. Manahan was a peasant organizer, and his involvement in the COF signaled the beginning of the strong political alliance between workers and farmers. Evangelista then spoke of the ideals of fighting for 'complete and immediate freedom; the establishment of a popular government; the end of the kasama-system, government confiscation of haciendas and the implementation of genuine agrarian reform.'

Crisanto also became known in the international workers movement. In 1924, he was invited to join in the delegation to the First Congress of the Oriental Transportation Workers in Canton, China which was called by the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat or PPTS. The PPTS served as the secretariat or the Far Eastern Bureau of the Communist International (Comintern) which was based in Hankow, China.

Crisanto also established ties with leaders of the following labor organizations with socialist leanings: the All China Labor Federation; Australian Council of Trade Unions; Trade Union Educational League of the USA; Indonesian Labor Federation; Confederation Generale du travail Unitaire France; Nippon Redokumai Hyogikai Titsu Domei; National Minority Movement of England; Korean Workers and Peasants Federation; and the All Russian Council of Trade Unions.

On November 30, 1925, on the birth anniversary of the Supremo of the Katipunan Gat Andres Bonifacio, Crisanto helped establish the Lapiang Manggagawa sa Pilipinas. In a manifesto that caused a stir, the new organization attacked American imperialism and its agents in the country. It lambasted local politicians and government leaders for betraying the historic struggle for national liberation which was begun by the Katipunan and Bonifacio. The Lapiang also exposed the partido Nacionalista and Democrata of self-serving interests, saying that the two parties were mostly interested not in pushing forward genuine reforms for the Filipino people and demanding freedom for the nation but in assisting the American colonialists run the country .

As leader of the COF, Crisanto drafted a plan to help strengthen the federation, and among his recommendations was that workers be armed with theoretical, class-based knowledge and tools of theoretical analysis. Upon his prodding, the COF also decided to publish its own newsletter - the Tinig ng Manggagawa (Voice of the worker). The COF also formalized its membership in the PPTUS.

Crisanto's leadership in the COF made the COF gain a reputation for being the center of militant trade unionism in the country. The COF also formally established links with the

Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern) and sent representatives including Crisanto to conferences in Shanghai, Moscow, Berlin and Belgium. The COF also joined the League Against Colonial Oppression in the Far East in its conference in China; and the League Against Imperialism which held its own conference in Belgium. Crisanto was very active in forging internationalist ties, and strengthened the theoretical foundations of the COF through continued study of socialist readings and documents.

By 1927, the COF had a membership of 81,000 ; and in 1928, it led massive strike of 8,000 workers in 14 tobacco factories in the country in protest of a labor leader who was unjustly imprisoned. That same year, the COF launched sympathy strikes with Chinese workers in sawmills, candle factories, shoes and steel mills.

Crisanto's class fervour and patriotism reached a new height when he helped established the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas in 1930. The new party was formed within the socialist and revolutionary alliance of workers and peasants and guided by Marxism-Leninism. Crisanto was joined by other labor and peasant leaders and organizers, and intellectuals in launching the PKP on August 26, 1930 in Templo del Trabajo. The public launch was made in a rally in Tondo the same year on November 7, on the anniversary of Soviet revolution.

The PKP pushed forward a program of action which called for an end to US intervention in the country's political and economic affairs. It sought the establishment of a genuine nationalist, patriotic and democratic system of government free from foreign intervention. It advocated the nationalization of enterprises, the confiscation of lands owned by big corporations and landowners, and the implementation of genuine, through-going land reform.

Because of the massive support the PKP received from the Filipino public, the government with the aid of the United States launched brutal attacks against the PKP leaders. There were arrests and killings, and Crisanto was among those arrested and then forced into exile in the Mountain Province until 1937 .

Crisanto's exile and enforced physical disappearance from the day-to-day political struggles of the labor movement did not, however, cause a demoralization in the ranks of the workers; and in fact generate strong outrage in the labor and mass movement. There are documents stating that the number of economic and political struggles - rallies and strikes - grew greater in number during the period of Crisanto's exile. This can also be directly attributed to Crisanto's insistence that workers and unions be empowered with theoretical and ideological knowledge which helped enable them to gauge, plan, and launch concerted actions that shook the government to its very foundations. While in exile, meanwhile, Crisanto continued to write and make plans for the labor movement, and to study more socialist and communist writings.

In October 1937, Crisanto was allowed to return to Manila. He was accompanied by Hermenegildo Cruz in a visit to Pres. Quezon in Malacanang. Cruz made a plea on Crisanto's behalf that Crisanto be allowed to go to Russia to seek medical attention for his worsening tuberculosis.

The labor movement warmly welcomed Crisanto's return, and voted him in absentia as president of the combined Partido Komunista and the Partido Sosyalista which was then largely based in the provinces and whose mass membership was composed of farmers and rural poor.

Around that that time, the Partido Komunista had already released a manifesto, "Ang Mobilisasyon ng Pilipinas Laban sa Pananalakay ng Hapon," and called on all PKP members,

other political parties and organizations and the entire Filipino people to unite against the impending attack of the Japanese imperial army.

By 1939, Crisanto had returned to health and immersed himself fully in the workers movement and the anti-fascist front composed of militant unions, peasant associations, and organizations of the peti-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. From December 7-10, 1941, the Komite Sentral (Central Committee) of the PKP declared its stand that it will launch an armed resistance against the Japanese invaders. On December 23, PKP leaders sought a dialogue with the government, urging it to unite with the PKP in fighting the Japanese army, but the government refused.

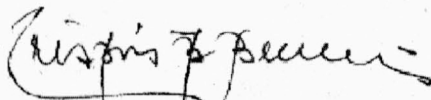
Crisanto was among those who were arrested, tortured and killed during the first days of the Japanese occupation.

Past and present Philippine history books fail to mention the heroism of Crisanto Evangelista, and his great contribution to the national struggle for genuine freedom, justice and democracy. No Philippine government has ever given tribute to him and his legacy which survives to this day as seen in the militant labor movement in the country which continues to gain in strength and number.

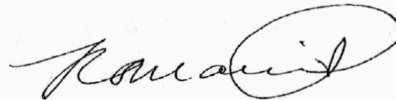
It is important that the Filipino people be made aware of Crisanto's life and how he lived it in service of the oppressed sectors and in furtherance of the goals of national liberation. It is long overdue that Crisanto be given the recognition that he deserves.

This bills seeks to rectify the neglect by proposing the declaration of Crisanto Evangelista as a national hero, and in the process, also give recognition and tribute to the Philippine militant labor movement and its historic role in the struggle for workers' and people's democratic rights, and in bringing out genuine freedom and national independence.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is highly and earnestly sought.



Rep. Crispin B. Beltran
Anakpawis



Rep. Rafael V. Mariano
Anakpawis

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Introduced by Anakpawis Representatives Crispin B. Beltran, Rafael V. Mariano

AN ACT
PROCLAIMING CRISANTO EVANGELISTA, THE FATHER OF PHILIPPINE MILITANT
LABOR MOVEMENT, AS A NATIONAL HERO OF THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

SECTION 1. Crisanto Evangelista, the Father of Philippine Militant Labor Movement, is hereby declared as a national hero of the Philippines.

SEC. 2. The National Historical Institute (NHI), National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 3. The amount needed to implement this Act shall be charged in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 4. If any portion or provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions thereof, which are not affected thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 5. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,