

Biographical Notes

Gerald de Cruz (20 February 1920 – 9 December 1991)¹ – Journalist/political observer

Gerald de Cruz (Gerald Evelyn de Cruz) was born the eldest of five children to a Roman Catholic, Eurasian family in Singapore.² His family lived in Katong, and de Cruz attended St Andrew's School where he attained his Higher School Certificate.

In 1940, de Cruz joined the *Straits Times* as a journalist.³ During the Japanese Occupation, de Cruz secured a news editing job in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City).⁴

After the war, de Cruz became an outspoken nationalist. He was drawn to communism as he believed, at the time, that the communists were "true nationalists".⁵ De Cruz help found the Eurasian Progressive movement, and became organising secretary of Singapore's first political party, the Malayan Democratic Union (MDU) which was then dominated by communists.⁶ His involvement with the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) increased when he became editor of their weekly newspaper, the *Democrat*, and de Cruz was formally admitted into the party.⁷ But by the late 1940s, de Cruz became disillusioned with communism largely because of the party's decision to engage in armed struggle.⁸

In 1949, de Cruz married Coral Phipps in Karachi, and the couple planned to visit the Soviet Union. They never reached the Soviet Union and after being twice deported, retreated to Britain.⁹ Between 1949 to 1956, de Cruz trained and worked with intellectually disabled children at the Osborne House in Hastings.¹⁰

In 1955, Singapore held its first Legislative Assembly elections, and David Marshall, became Chief Minister of Singapore. Marshall was a family friend, and he wrote to de Cruz to invite him to return to Singapore to help build a "free and democratic" Malaya.¹¹ Upon his return, de Cruz became secretary-organiser for the Labour Front.¹²

When the People's Action Party (PAP) came into power in 1959, de Cruz was recruited to help with the Political Study Centre set up by the government. Headed by G.G. Thompson, the aim of the Centre was to educate civil servants on the communist threat as well as social and economic problems issues of the day. Besides civil servants, de Cruz also gave lectures to schools and businesses.

Even as he worked at the Political Study Centre, de Cruz became involved in trade Unionism through C.V. Devan Nair who then headed the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC). De Cruz edited the

¹ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif, *The life and times of Gerald de Cruz* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2005), p. xi; "Ex-communist Gerald de Cruz dies in KL", *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1991.

² Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p. 9.

³ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p. 15.

⁴ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p. 26.

⁵ "I became a communist because I believed them to be nationalists", *New Nation*, 31 Aug 1971; *Colliding worlds*, p. 255.

⁶ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p. 45.

⁷ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p. 35-37.

⁸ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*pp. 61-62

⁹ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*p.79; De Cruz, Gerald. *Colliding worlds*, p. 22

¹⁰ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...*pp. 87-90.

¹¹ "Mr De Cruz starts with pep talk", *The Straits Times*, 21 Mar 1956.

¹² "De Cruz cables 'I'll take the job'", *The Straits Times*, 25 Jan 1956.

NTUC newspaper *Perjuangan* as well as its monthly journal.¹³ In the early 1970s, de Cruz also edited and ran a regular column in the *New Nation* where he wrote on domestic and international affairs.¹⁴

De Cruz continued his interest in the education and welfare of special needs children. He was chairman of the Singapore Association for Retarded Children (the predecessor of the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled, MINDS) and helped public education and fundraising for the cause.¹⁵

De Cruz's beloved wife, Coral passed away in 1965. The couple had two children, Judith and Simon.¹⁶ De Cruz converted to Islam in 1968 and married Maimunah Mohammad in 1970 with whom he had a son, Adam.¹⁷

De Cruz suffered two strokes in 1982 and 1983 which left him paralysed. He passed away in 1991 in Kuala Lumpur.¹⁸

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¹³ De Cruz, Gerald, *Colliding worlds: Memoirs of a Singapore maverick* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish editions, 2009) p. 211.

¹⁴ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...* p. 181.

¹⁵ "No room for 800 children in need of care", *The Straits Times*, 4 April 1964, p. 11.

¹⁶ Asad-ul Iqbal Latif. *The life...* p. 194.

¹⁷ De Cruz, *Colliding worlds*, p. 24.

¹⁸ "Ex-communist Gerald de Cruz dies in KL", *Straits Times*, 12 Dec 1991.