

Title:

People of the Philippines vs. Court of Appeals and Wilfred N. Chiok

Facts:

In 1989, Rufina Chua met Wilfred N. Chiok, who identified himself as a stockbroker. He convinced Chua to invest in stocks through him. Trusting his advice, Chua made successful investments over years. In June 1995, encouraged by Chiok, she entrusted him P9,563,900.00 to purchase stocks in bulk. Chiok acknowledged receiving this amount but later failed to execute the purchase, admitting he spent the money instead. Chua's demand for repayment was ignored, and subsequent checks issued by Chiok were dishonored due to insufficient funds. Discovering Chiok was not a licensed stockbroker, Chua pressed estafa charges against him. Chiok, denying employment with Bernard Securities and asserting an unregistered partnership with Chua, was found guilty of estafa by the Regional Trial Court, Branch 165, Pasig City in 1999. His failure to appear at the judgment promulgation led to the cancellation of his bail and an order for his arrest. Chiok appealed the decision and also filed a Special Civil Action for Certiorari with the Court of Appeals, which issued a writ of preliminary injunction against his arrest.

Issues:

1. Was the Court of Appeals correct in enjoining the arrest of Chiok by issuing a writ of preliminary injunction?
2. Does Chiok's failure to appear during the promulgation of judgment justify the cancellation of his bail and order for his arrest following the conviction for estafa?

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court reversed the Court of Appeals' resolution that enjoined Chiok's arrest, reinstating the trial court's order. The Supreme Court found that:

- Chiok violated the conditions of his bail by not appearing at the promulgation of judgment, thus warranting the cancellation of his bail and subsequent order for arrest.
- The issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction by the Court of Appeals was deemed an error, as Chiok had already demonstrated a capacity to evade justice, rendering the concern of him fleeing or committing other crimes valid rather than conjectural.

Doctrine:

The case reiterated the doctrine that not appearing for a judgment promulgation, especially after being convicted, constitutes a violation of bail conditions, justifying arrest and cancellation of bail as per Section 6, Rule 120 of the Revised Rules on Criminal Procedure.

Class Notes:

- **Estafa**: Misrepresentation leading to financial loss of another.
- **Bail Conditions**: Accused must appear before the court as required, failing which can result in bail cancellation and arrest.
- **Promulgation in Absentia**: Allowed if the accused unjustifiably fails to appear during promulgation, cementing the conviction and penalties.
- **Injunction Against Arrest**: An appellate court's power but should be exercised with prudence, particularly in criminal convictions.

Statutory Provision: Section 6, Rule 120 of the Revised Rules on Criminal Procedure outlines promulgation of judgment and consequences for an accused's failure to appear.

Historical Background:

This case underscores the complexities involved in the Philippine legal system regarding financial crimes, bail conditions, and the appellate process. It demonstrates the judiciary's stance on ensuring that a conviction stands enforced, especially in cases of financial fraud, and highlights the procedural nuances in the appeal and post-conviction processes within the Philippine Criminal Justice System.