

**\*\*Title:** People of the Philippines vs. Rosendo Velasco, Federico Relucio, et al.\*\*

**\*\*Facts:\*\***

The case stems from the murder of Gonzalo Talastas, also known as “Along,” on June 23, 1971, in Cabanatuan City, Philippines. Federico Relucio, Rosendo Velasco, and several others were accused of conspiring to kill Talastas with treachery, evident premeditation, and cruelty. The murder occurred in the vicinity of the Capital Theater and involved multiple gunshot wounds inflicted on Talastas. The Circuit Criminal Court of the Fourth Judicial District convicted Velasco and Relucio, sentencing them to reclusion perpetua. Relucio’s appeal was withdrawn after a failed escape attempt from jail, leaving Velasco as the sole appellant.

The procedural journey to the Supreme Court involved a conviction in the lower court based on testimonies from both the prosecution and the defense, numbering over 24 sessions. Key witnesses against Velasco were Crispin Angeles and the state witness, Miguel Padrones, whose testimonies presented inconsistencies and conflicting narratives. Angeles’s account during the trial sharply contrasted with his prior sworn statement to authorities. Meanwhile, Miguel Padrones was discharged to become a state witness, delivering testimonies that implicated Velasco and Relucio in the murder.

**\*\*Issues:\*\***

1. **\*\*Credibility and consistency of witness testimonies:\*\*** The Supreme Court scrutinized the reliability of the testimonies provided by Crispin Angeles and Miguel Padrones, especially regarding their accounts of the events leading to Talastas’s murder.
2. **\*\*Discrepancies in procedural handling:\*\*** The Court examined procedural errors, including the discharge of Padrones as a state witness, the handling of his confession, and the failure to consider his contradictory statements.
3. **\*\*Validity of the conviction:\*\*** The Supreme Court evaluated whether the evidence presented at trial was sufficient to uphold Velasco’s conviction for murder.

**\*\*Court’s Decision:\*\***

The Supreme Court unanimously reversed the conviction of Rosendo Velasco. The decision was influenced significantly by the inconsistencies and contradictions in the testimonies of key witnesses, particularly the discredited testimony of Miguel Padrones and the discrepancies in his statements regarding the events of the murder. The court also criticized

the prosecution's and the trial court's handling of Padrones's testimony and statements, highlighting procedural and ethical concerns.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\***

The Supreme Court reiterated the importance of witness credibility and consistency in the evaluation of evidence. It also upheld the principle that any doubt in criminal cases should be resolved in favor of the accused.

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

- **\*\*Witness Credibility:\*\*** The reliability of witness testimonies is crucial in criminal proceedings. Inconsistencies and contradictions can significantly affect their credibility and the outcomes of cases.
- **\*\*Doctrine of Reasonable Doubt:\*\*** In criminal cases, guilt must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Any ambiguity or inconsistency in the evidence or testimony should lead to acquittal.
- **\*\*Rights of the Accused:\*\*** The case underscores the procedural rights of the accused, including the right to a fair trial and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

**\*\*Historical Background:\*\***

This case reflects the intricate judicial processes involved in criminal proceedings within the Philippine legal system. It demonstrates the Supreme Court's role in ensuring that lower court proceedings adhere to the principles of justice, fairness, and adherence to procedural and substantive law, as well as its commitment to protect the rights of individuals against wrongful conviction.