

**THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS.
ARTURO ALICIA AND VICTOR BANGAYAN,
DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS.**

G.R. No. L-38176. January 22, 1980

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PER CURIAM:

Before the Circuit Criminal Court, Seventh Judicial District, the accused, Arturo Alicia and Victor Bangayan, were charged with the crimes of Murder and of Multiple Frustrated Murder (Criminal Case No. CCC-VII-1391-Rizal) committed as follows:

"That on or about the 2nd day of May, 1972, in the New Bilibid Prison, Muntinlupa, Rizal, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the aforementioned accused, while then confined at the said institution, each armed with improvised deadly weapons, conspiring, confederating and acting together and mutually helping one another, with treachery, evident premeditation and deliberate intent to kill—did then and there willfully, unlawfully and feloniously assault, attack and stab:

1. Pedro Madjos, No. 76970-P
2. Felipe Macerin, No. 53421-P
3. Victorio Sansanan, No. 58203-P
4. Sulficio Sulina, No. 79723-P

all prisoners serving final sentences in the same institution while then unarmed and unable to defend themselves from the attack launched by the accused thereby inflicting upon Pedro Madjos a stab wound which directly cause his death and simultaneously inflicting upon Felipe Macerin, Victorio Sansanan and Sulficio Sulina stab wounds in the different parts of their bodies, the accused having performed all the acts of execution which would produce the offense of murder, but which nevertheless did not produce it by reason of causes independent of their will, that is by the timely arrival of prison guards which deterred the accused from inflicting further injuries on their victims and the timely and able assistance of the NBP Hospital Staff in treating the injured.

Contrary to law."

Upon arraignment, the accused, duly assisted by counsel, pleaded guilty to the charge. The trial court ordered a mandatory presentation of the prosecution's evidence. Trial followed and on January 28, 1974, the lower court rendered judgment, the dispositive portion of which reads, thus:

"WHEREFORE, finding the accused, Victor Bangayan and Arturo Alicia, GUILTY, beyond reasonable doubt, of the crime of Murder, as defined under Article 248 of the Revised Penal Code, as charged in the information, the Court hereby sentences them to suffer the penalty of DEATH; to indemnify the heirs of the victim, the amount of P10,000.00 jointly and severally; to pay moral damages in the amount of P5,000.00 and another P5,000.00 as exemplary damages, jointly and severally; and to pay their proportionate shares of the costs.

"Likewise, finding the accused, Victor Bangayan and Arturo Alicia, GUILTY beyond reasonable doubt, of the crime of Multiple Frustrated Murder, as defined under Article 250 of the Revised Penal Code, as charged in the information, the Court hereby sentences each one of them to suffer the penalty of TEN (10) YEARS AND ONE (1) DAY of prison mayor, as minimum, to SEVENTEEN (17) YEARS AND FOUR (4) MONTHS of prison mayor as maximum, to indemnify the heirs of the offended parties in the amount of P5,000.00 as moral damages and another P5,000.00, as exemplary damages, jointly and severally; and to pay their proportionate shares of the costs.

* * * * *

The case is now before Us on automatic review pursuant to Rule 122, Section 9 of the Rules of Court.

The prosecution presented as its witnesses Dr. Argente Alejandro, Tolentino Avelina, Francisco Cometa, Jr., Sulficio Sulina, Leonida Panopio and Dr. Mariano Cueva, Jr..

Dr. Argente Alejandro, a physician employed in the Bureau of Prisons Hospital, testified that he treated Felipe Macerin who sustained two lacerated wounds (two inches right midaxillary line and one-third inch around the right elbow just above the distal portion all over the bone), both of which could have been caused by an improvised weapon usually used by prisoners in Muntinlupa; that he sutured the wounds and gave the victim an IPS anti-tetanus syrup and antibiotic five per cent dextrose and water; that Felipe Macerin had already been admitted to the hospital for treatment of siptomiasis when these injuries were inflicted upon him; and that the injuries of Macerin had been cured and he recovered, but sixteen days after the stabbing incident he died of Maxonia (the doctor's certificate of the NBP Hospital shows that the cause of his death is "Carcinoma-Liver").

He further testified that aside from Felipe Macerin, he also treated Sulficio Sulina and Victorio Sansanan for injuries resulting from the stabbing incident at Ward 3 of the NBP Hospital; that Sulficio Sulina sustained four (4) lacerated wounds (one inch subcostal left parasternal line; one inch supra clavicular region right; two inches right elbow; and two inches hyposgastrion); that he conducted an exploratory operation, suturing his urinary bladder which was penetrated in the distal part of the elum and part of the dentary column; that the injuries of the internal organs of Sulina would have been fatal without surgical intervention and that they could have been caused by an improvised weapon used by prisoners; that Sulficio Sulina recovered from his injuries and was discharged on June 24, 1972; and that Victorio Sansanan was treated by him for a superficial lacerated wound (one-half of an inch at the back lever of the dentary parasipital area) which was not fatal.

Furthermore, he testified that another prisoner, Pedro Madjos, died in the hospital and his cadaver was forwarded to the Muntinlupa Board of Investigation for autopsy; that he examined the cadaver and saw one wound which is 1.5 cms., one foot long from the axillary line, which caused his death as it penetrated the heart.

Tolentino Avelina, an investigator in the Investigation Section of the New Bilibid Prisons, declared that he investigated a stabbing incident which transpired on May 2, 1972 inside Ward 3 of the New Bilibid Prisons Hospital wherein Pedro Madjos, Felipe Macerin, Victorio Sansanan and Sulficio Sulina were attacked and stabbed by other prison inmates, and that said investigation was reduced in writing (Exhibit "B"). He declared that when he arrived at the office before 8:00 o'clock in the morning on said date, he was informed of the stabbing incident so he immediately proceeded to Ward 3 of the NBP Hospital to investigate and determine who the victims were and their assailants. In the course of his investigation he took written statements from appellant Arturo Alicia on May 2, 1972 (Exhibit "C") wherein the latter admitted before him that he (Alicia) was the one who stabbed Pedro Madjos, Victorio Sansanan and Felipe Macerin (Exhibit "C-2") with an improvised weapon (Exhibit "D"), and from Victorio Sansanan on July 1, 1972 (Exhibit "E"), one of the victims in that incident, wherein Sansanan identified his assailant as Arturo Alicia. Sulficio Sulina executed a written statement on June 19, 1972 (Exhibit "F"), pointing to Victor Bangayan (Exhibit "F-2") as his assailant.

Francisco Cometa, Jr., a prison guard in the Investigation Section of the Bureau of Prisons, testified that he investigated prisoner Victor Bangayan on May 2, 1972, in connection with the stabbing incident at the NBP Hospital and reduced the investigation in writing (Exhibit "I"); that in that statement, Bangayan admitted that he was one of those who attacked the victims (Exhibit "I-2") and that he used an improvised deadly weapon (Exhibit "I-3"); that appellants explained that they attacked and stabbed their victims because the latter were members of the rival Batang City Jail Gang, and were planning to attack them and other members of the Commando Gang.

Sulficio Sulina, one of the victims and an inmate in the New Bilibid Prisons, testified that on May 2, 1972, at about 5:00 o'clock in the morning, while confined in the hospital, he was stabbed five times by appellant Victor Bangayan.

Leonida Panopio, a resident physician, testified that on May 2, 1972, she learned about a stabbing incident where the victims were Madjos, Macerin, Sansanan and Sulina, and about the death of Madjos, and that she accordingly prepared a death report (Exhibit "A-4").

Mariano Cueva, Jr., a physician and medico-legal officer of the NBI, testified that he personally conducted an autopsy on the cadaver of Pedro Madjos, and his post-mortem findings are embodied in his Necropsy Report No. N-72-845 (Exhibit "L"); that according to his findings, the stab wound found on the left side of the abdomen of the late Pedro Madjos was 14 cms. from the center line and 17 cms. above the hipbone, 1-1/2 inches in width, penetrating the body to the left, about 15 cms., involving vital structures and causing serious or severe hemorrhage which caused his death; that the external characteristic of the wound indicates that the stabbing instrument was sharp, pointed with double edges, like a dagger, a double edged balisong, a knife or any similar stabbing instrument; that from the direction of the wounds, it appears that the assailant was in front of the victim when he attacked him; that the death could have occurred several minutes or an hour after the injury was inflicted; and that it is possible that the attack was sudden and unexpected in view of the absence of any sign that the victim attempted to parry the blow.

During the trial, the appellants testified in their behalves.

Appellant Victor Bangayan, an inmate of the New Bilibid Prisons, Muntinlupa, Rizal, testified that he is presently confined at the New Bilibid Prisons, serving sentence for the crime of robbery holdup and at the same time awaiting the outcome of his appeal from a judgment of conviction in a murder case wherein he was sentenced to suffer the penalty of death (G. R. No. L-36234, submitted for decision with this Tribunal). He declared that when the incident took place, he was confined at the NBP Hospital due to swollen jaw and recuperating from fever. He claimed that he stabbed Madjos because they quarreled in a gambling game wherein the latter cheated him. After he stabbed the victim he surrendered voluntarily to the prison authorities and voluntarily gave his statement to the investigators.

Arturo Alicia, also an inmate of the New Bilibid Prisons, testified that he is serving sentence for the crime of robbery he committed in Manila; that on May 2, 1972, he had a drinking spree with his companions, using alcohol which they bought from a hospital attendant; that after drinking he went to his "tarima"; that all he knew was that he stabbed Pedro Madjos but he had no intention of killing him; that on the date of the incident he was confined in the hospital because he was vomiting blood; that he also stabbed Victorio Sansanan and Felipe Macerin; and that after the incident he surrendered to the authorities and voluntarily gave his statement to them.

It has been sufficiently established by the evidence that in the early morning of May 2, 1972, Pedro Madjos, Felipe Macerin, Victorio Sansanan and Sulficio Sulina, all persons serving sentences for one reason or another and confined in Ward 3 of the prison hospital, were attacked and stabbed by appellants who were armed with improvised pointed instruments. This resulted in the death of Pedro Madjos and the infliction of numerous stab

wounds on the persons of Macerin, Sansanan and Sulina, injuries which could have caused their death were it not for the timely arrival of prison guards and for the medical assistance rendered to them by the prison hospital personnel. Macerin was about to plug in an electric iron when he was stabbed by prisoner Arturo Alicia. Pedro Madjos was massaging the body of Victorio Sansanan, who was then suffering from asthma, when he and Victorio were stabbed by Arturo Alicia. Sulficio Sulina was stabbed by Victor Bangayan while he was asleep on a mat laid on the cement floor of Ward 3, adjacent to the attendant's table. Appellants admitted to the investigators that they stabbed the victims because of the reported plan of the latter to attack them the following day. Hence, in the evening of May 1, 1972, appellants Alicia and Bangayan decided to attack the members of the Batang City Jail Gang early the following morning.

In her brief, counsel de officio for the appellants, Atty. Eugenia Banzon-Jose, contends that appellants acted in self-defense in view of the imminent attack upon them by the rival gang; that none of the elements which would qualify the crime as murder had been proven; that the aggravating circumstance of recidivism should not have been applied, and on the contrary, appellants should have been given the benefit of the mitigating circumstances of voluntary surrender and plea of guilty.

To begin with, a plea of guilty admits all the material allegations of the Information, including the attendant circumstances qualifying and/or aggravating the crime. Prescinding from the foregoing, self-defense is an affirmative allegation which the accused must prove with sufficient, satisfactory and convincing evidence.[1] Here, no such evidence has been presented.

To support the claim that the offense was not qualified by treachery, the counsel de officio makes capital of the testimony of Dr. Cueva to the effect that when Pedro Madjos was stabbed, his assailant was in front of him, hence the attack on the victim was face to face. But the same witness, Dr. Cueva, also testified that it was possible that the attack was sudden and unexpected because of the absence of any sign that the victim attempted to parry the stabbing thrust, and appellants admitted that to insure the success of their ploy they suddenly attacked their victims during the early dawn of May 2, 1972. As a matter of fact, Sulficio Sulina was still sleeping on the floor when he was stabbed five times by appellant Victor Bangayan.

The existence of the qualifying circumstance of premeditation is shown by the fact that as early as the evening of May 1, 1972, appellants agreed to attack their victims, which plan they executed in the early morning of the following day. From the time they agreed on their plan until dawn of the next day when the plan was implemented, sufficient time had elapsed to allow appellants to meditate and reflect upon their plan and the possible consequences of their act. This decision on the part of appellants to attack their victims was, therefore, the result of meditation, calculation or reflection.[2]

Appellants' counsel de officio makes much ado about the fact that the trial court questioned appellants as to the fact of their previous conviction. This, she contends, violated the constitutional rights of the appellants against self-incrimination.

The trial court's question as to the nature of the offense for the commission of which appellants were serving sentence did not call for incriminating answers. The fact that appellants, at the time of the commission of the crime, were prisoners in the New Bilibid Prisons serving sentence by final judgment is not disputed. The status of appellants as such appears in their extrajudicial confessions (Exhibits "C" and "I") which were submitted in evidence. Since the Information alleges that appellants committed the afore-mentioned crime "while then confined" in the New Bilibid Prisons, and the evidence of the prosecution shows that they were inmates of the New Bilibid Prisons serving sentence by virtue of final judgment, it was proper for the trial court to inquire as to the nature of the offense for which they were serving sentence.

The lower court correctly found the existence of the special aggravating circumstance of quasirecidivism, defined under Article 160 of the Revised Penal Code. Article 160 of the Revised Penal Code provides:

"ART. 160. Commission of another crime during service of penalty imposed for another previous offense.—Penalty.—Besides the provisions of rule 5 of article 62, any person who shall commit a felony after having been convicted by final judgment, before beginning to serve such sentence, or while serving the same, shall be punished by the maximum period of the penalty prescribed by law for the new felony."

Quasi-recidivism is a special aggravating circumstance which imposes the maximum of the penalty for the new offense. It makes no difference, for the purpose of the effect of quasi-recidivism under Article 160 of the Revised Penal Code, whether the crime for which an accused is serving sentence at the time of the commission of the offense charged, falls under the said Code or under special law.[3] Quasi-recidivism is punished with more severity than recidivism proper because the aggravating circumstance of recidivism, as any other aggravating circumstance, may be offset by a mitigating circumstance present in the commission of the crime, whereas, in a case of quasi-recidivism, the maximum degree of the penalty prescribed by law for the crime committed should always be imposed irrespective of the presence of any mitigating circumstance.

In the case at bar, both appellants Arturo Alicia and Victor Bangayan were serving sentence for robbery by virtue of final judgment when they committed the new felony. The existence of quasi-recidivism renders moot the argument of appellants' counsel that the trial court failed to consider certain mitigating circumstances which should have entitled the appellants to a lower penalty. Although the counsel de officio of appellants is correct in her statement that after the commission of the crime appellants voluntarily surrendered to the authorities and executed statements admitting their criminal participation, and that both pleaded guilty to the offense, those circumstances notwithstanding, the imposition of the supreme penalty is in order.[4] However, for lack of necessary votes, the penalty to be meted the appellants must be reduced to reclusion perpetua.

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the judgment of the trial court is **AFFIRMED**, with the modification that the appellants are hereby sentenced to suffer the penalty of reclusion perpetua. The indemnity of P10,000.00 in the murder case is hereby raised to P12,000.00.

SO ORDERED.

Fernando, C.J., Antonio, Santos, Guerrero, De Castro, and Melencio-Herrera, JJ., concur.

Teehankee, J., votes for reclusion perpetua.

Aquino, J., see opinion.

Barredo and Abad Santos, JJ., concur and dissent in separate opinions.

Fernandez, J., concurs in the concurring and dissenting opinion of Mr. Justice Vicente Abad Santos.

Makasiar, J., dissents partly in a separate opinion.

[1] *People v. Berio*, No. 40602, Feb. 20, 1934, 59 Phil. 533; *People v. Ansoyon*, L-3, Jan. 29, 1946, 75 Phil. 772; *People v. Bauden*, L-270, Aug. 30, 1946, 77 Phil. 105.

[2] *People v. Mostoles*, L-2880, March 31, 1950, 85 Phil. 883; *People v. Sarmiento*, L-19146, May 31, 1963, 8 SCRA 263; *People v. Diva*, L-22946, April 29, 1968, 23 SCRA 332.

[3] *People v. Peralta*, L-15959, Oct. 11, 1961, 113 Phil. 201.

[4] *People v. Perete*, L-15515, April 29, 1961, 1 SCRA 1290, 1293.

CONCURRING

AQUINO, J.:

As the two accused conspired to assault the four victims, they are guilty of four separate crimes: murder, two frustrated murders and one attempted murder (People vs. Peralta, L-19069, October 29, 1968, 25 SCRA 759, 779).

For the killing of Pedro Madjos, which was murder, the death penalty was properly imposed.

The assaults on Felipe Macerin and Sulficio Sulina were properly characterized as frustrated murders.

The assault on Victorio Sansanan, which resulted in the infliction of a superficial lacerated wound that was not fatal, was only attempted murder.

Four penalties should have been imposed on the accused. But because they did not appeal, only the death penalty is under automatic review. I concur in that part of the lower court's decision imposing the death penalty.

CONCURRING AND DISSENTING OPINION

BARREDO, J.:

I concur in the judgment finding the two appellants herein, Arturo Alicia and Victor Bangayan, guilty beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of murder committed on the person of Pedro Madjos and sentencing them to the extreme penalty of death and the payment of indemnity of P12,000 and damages, P5,000 moral and P5,000 exemplary, jointly and severally and their respective proportionate part of the costs. I am morally convinced the evidence on record justifies such judgment.

But as there were three other victims who separately or individually suffered injuries as a result of the concerted action, premeditated and treacherously perpetrated on them by both of said appellants, I find myself unable to agree with the affirmance of the trial court's sentence finding them guilty only of multiple frustrated murder, with one single penalty for each of them under Article 250 of the Revised Penal Code. I do not find it to be in conformity with the facts and the law to disregard the obvious circumstances that, as Justice Aquino points out, each of the separate assaults on each of the victims constituted a distinct offense in itself and should be penalized accordingly. Thus, there were also two frustrated murders with Felipe Macerin and Sulficio Sulina as victims and a case of attempted murder of Victorio Sansanan committed on the same occasion. In other words, in addition to the death penalty that each of the appellants should suffer for the killing of Madjos, they should also be separately sentenced each to the penalties for the frustrated murders of Macerin and Sulina also separately, and in addition, for the attempted murder of Sansanan.

In connection with the observation of Justice Aquino that this case is on review by Us only as to the death penalty, hence We cannot impose the other penalties I have discussed, it is my considered view that it is of no consequence juridically speaking that appellants did not expressly appeal from the portion of the judgment regarding the other offenses. There might have been some confusion in the minds of the defense counsel in regard to this point because of the mandatory automatic review of the death sentence that caused such omission to make the necessary appeal. It is to my mind an act of simple justice devoid of technicalities of procedure to consider this automatic review as including already the appeal of the other adverse parts of the judgment against them, regardless of whether or not they have separately appealed from them. I am persuaded that considering the circumstance that the offenses under discussion were committed on the same occasion, this procedure I have

explained is in consonance with the reasons that underlie Section 17(1) of the Judiciary Act which provides as follows:

"The Supreme Court shall have exclusive jurisdiction to review, revise, reverse, modify or affirm on appeal, as the law or rules of court may provide, final judgment decrees of inferior courts as herein provided, in --

(1) All criminal cases involving offenses for which the penalty imposed is death or life imprisonment; and those involving other offenses which, although not so punished, arose out of the same occurrence or which may have been committed by the accused on the same occasion, as that giving rise to the more serious offense, regardless of whether the accused are charged as principals, accomplices or accessories, or whether they have been tried jointly or separately;"

It would be tragic and a grave injustice if, for instance, the evidence before Us were not sufficiently convincing as to the guilt of the appellant's of the other offenses and for the reason alone that they did not separately appeal, we would leave the unappealed judgment regarding them uncorrected. Such a result would not only be unfair, it would be absurd.

CONCURRING AND DISSENTING OPINION

ABAD SANTOS, J.:

I concur in the finding of guilt but not in the imposition of the death penalty on Arturo Alicia and Victor Bangayan. My vote is for reclusion perpetua on compassionate grounds which I shall shortly explain. But before I do so and at the risk of appearing immodest I should like to state some of my credentials which are relevant to this opinion.

I became a member of the Board of Pardons and Parole in January, 1962 and its chairman in August, 1970 when I was appointed Secretary of Justice until I assumed my present position in January, 1979. As Secretary, later Minister of Justice, I had supervision and control over the Bureau of Prisons.

It is the practice of the Board of Pardons and Parole to interview prisoners eligible or applying for pardon or parole. For this purpose the Board goes to the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa every week and on occasions to the penal colonies, namely: Iwahig, San Ramon, Davao and Sablayan. So the members of the Board are thoroughly familiar with the conditions in the prisons system.

The crime committed by Arturo and Victor in May, 1972, was only one of a series of gang fights in the National Penitentiary. They were spawned by the miserable and inhuman conditions which obtained at the New Bilibid Prison before and during that time. There was then over-crowding resulting in a filthy environment. Neglect of the prisons system was the rule under the Old Society for the financial priorities were the over-staffing of offices and the pork barrel. Since human beings were made to live like animals, it was not surprising that they behaved like animals. Hence, the crime committed by Arturo and Victor can be said to be the result of the conditions of their confinement due to the lack of affirmative action on the part of their government. For compassionate reasons I consider their living conditions as an analogous mitigating circumstance. Hence my vote for life imprisonment.

DISSENTING IN PART

MAKASIAR, J.:

1. No treachery - The attack on the victims was committed in the early morning while the victims were lying and confined in Ward 3 of the prison hospital floor together with the accused. Considering that there were four (4) victims and the presence of the guard in the said ward, treachery could not qualify the crime as the circumstances indicate that the four victims could not easily be overpowered by the two assailants and that the guards could frustrate their criminal design as in fact the timely arrival of the prison guards, in the language of the information, "deterred the accused from inflicting further injuries on the victims."

2. No evident premeditation, because only a few hours transpired between the decision to commit the crime in the evening of May 1, 1972, and the actual commission of the same at about 5:00 o'clock the following morning. There was no time for reflection and persistence in the decision to commit the act since between the previous night and 5:00 o'clock the following morning, certainly the accused were sleeping, during which time they could not possibly have deliberated on the consequences of their intended crime.

3. Lack of intent to kill the victims, mitigates the offense. This was affirmed by the accused Arturo Alicia, who stated that on May 2, 1972, he had a drinking spree with his companions using the alcohol he bought from the hospital attendant; that he had no intention to kill the deceased and that on the date of the incident, he was confined in the hospital because he was vomiting blood, which testimony has not been rebutted by the State. If both appellants were also confined in the hospital, their ailment must have sapped them of the required strength to successfully assault the victims.

The dehumanizing prison conditions mentioned by Justice Abad Santos in his concurring and dissenting opinion might have also provoked the appellants to act the way they did.

4. Consequently, for the death of prisoner Pedro Madjos, appellants should be convicted only of simple homicide, aggravated by quasi-recidivism but mitigated by damage exceeding intent, voluntary surrender and voluntary plea of guilty.

From the evidence, the injuries inflicted on prisoner Felipe Macerin and Sulficio Sulina were cured after ten (10) days but before the expiration of thirty (30) days. Hence, appellants should only be convicted of less serious physical injuries under paragraph 1, Article 265 of the Revised Penal Code, likewise aggravated by quasi-recidivism but mitigated by voluntary surrender and voluntary plea of guilty.

For the superficial wound inflicted on prisoner Victorio Sansanan, appellants could be convicted only of slight physical injuries under paragraph 1 of Article 266 of the Revised Penal Code, also qualified by quasi-recidivism but mitigated by voluntary surrender and voluntary plea of guilty.

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