

**SPS. FELICIDAD M. ALVENDIA, AND JESUS F. ALVENDIA,
PETITIONERS, VS. HON. INTERMEDIATE APPELLATE COURT, HON.
ELSIE LIGOT-TELAN IN HER CAPACITY AS PRESIDING JUDGE OF
THE REGIONAL ...**

G.R. No. 72138. January 22, 1990

Ponente: FERNAN, C.J.

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FERNAN, C.J.:

In G.R. No. 72138, the spouses Felicidad M. Alvendia and Jesus F. Alvendia filed an urgent motion for extension of time to file an appeal by certiorari from the denial of their motion for reconsideration of the decision of the then Intermediate Appellate Court (IAC) dismissing their petition docketed therein as AC-G.R. No. SP-04423, entitled "Alvendia, et al. v. Telan, etc., et al."

In G.R. No. 72373, a petition for certiorari and prohibition was filed by Bonifacio Bonamy, seeking to annul and set aside: [a] Resolution II dated September 11, 1985 granting the motion filed by the spouses Alvendias to pay Bonifacio Bonamy the Amount of the judgment in cash, and [b] Resolution I dated October 8, 1985 denying Bonamy's motion for reconsideration of the aforesaid resolution both issued by the Fourth Special Cases Division in said AC-G.R. No. SP-04423.

Although no appeal was ever filed in G.R. No. 72138, the same was ordered consolidated with G.R. No. 72373 in the resolution of February 3, 1986 of the First Division of this Court.

The instant petitions trace their genesis to a simple collection suit, Civil Case No. 5182-M[1] filed on September 12, 1977, by Bonifacio Bonamy against the spouses Jesus F. Alvendia and Felicidad N. Alvendia before the then Court of First Instance (CFI) of Bulacan, 5th Judicial District, Branch VI, for the sum of P107,481.50 representing construction materials which the Alvendias had purchased on credit from Bonamy.

After the Alvendias had filed a "Motion to Dismiss" dated October 31, 1977 which was opposed by Bonamy on November 16, 1977 and an "Answer with Affirmative and Negative Defenses and Counterclaim" dated December 1, 1977, both parties submitted to the trial court on January 6, 1978 a "Compromise Agreement" providing, among other things:

"xxx xxx xxx

"(1) That defendants do hereby acknowledge the indebtedness of their family corporation, Doña Felisa Village and Housing Corporation, in the amount of P107,481.50, representing the costs of construction materials bought on credit from plaintiff from June 20 to August 12, 1975 and jointly with said family corporation, do hereby bind themselves to pay said obligation out of the first release or releases of funds from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) for housing units and lots sold by the said corporation to members of the GSIS provided, however, that the P47,000.00 previously assigned to Wells and Pu shall be first satisfied before applying such GSIS release to satisfaction of said indebtedness to the herein plaintiff;

"(2) That the plaintiff and defendant shall thereby join hands in asking the GSIS to expedite the releases of the funds due to said corporation; and

"(3) That for and in consideration of this agreement the plaintiff and defendants hereby waive any and all further claims monetary or otherwise against each other regarding the subject matter of this case.

"xxx xxx xxx."[2]

On the same date, the trial court, finding the aforesaid compromise agreement not to be contrary to laws, morals, good customs, public policy and public order, approved and adopted the same as the decision in the case.[3]

Subsequently, Bonamy moved for execution of judgment, alleging that the Alvendias "have not submitted any finished project with the GSIS, thereby preventing the full realization of the aforesaid decision."[4]

On December 6, 1979, over the objection of the Alvendias, the court ordered the issuance of the writ prayed for. The Alvendias did not move for reconsideration nor did they elevate the matter to the higher courts.[5]

In a motion dated April 23, 1980, Bonamy sought the issuance of an alias writ of execution, the first writ having been returned unsatisfied. He admitted though in the same motion that he received P20,000.00 in cash from the Alvendias sometime in January 1980 and an additional amount of P4,000.00 by way of proceeds of the sale of the Alvendias' vehicle.[6]

Pursuant to the alias writ issued by the court on May 2, 1980, the Bulacan provincial sheriff levied on the Alvendias "leasehold rights" over a fishpond (lease application no. V-1284 (EV-87) Lot 1 PSU-141243), located at Baluarte, Bulacan, Bulacan.

On January 15, 1981, a certificate of sale over said leasehold right was executed by the sheriff in favor of Bonamy.

More than a year later, or on February 2, 1982, the spouses moved for the quashal and annulment of the writ of execution, levy and sale.

A final deed of sale was executed on January 25, 1983 and registered with the Register of Deeds of Bulacan on April 27, 1983.

In an order dated September 10, 1984, the trial court (now RTC of Bulacan, 3rd Judicial Region, Br. VIII) denied the spouses' motion to quash and ordered instead the issuance of a writ of possession in Bonamy's favor, thus:

"Premises considered, the pending incidents are hereby resolved, as follows:

"1. The motion to quash or annul the writ of execution is hereby denied;

"2. The sale of the Toyota Land Cruiser is hereby declared null and void, consequently, let the defendants be restored in the ownership and possession thereof;

"3. The levy and sale of the defendants' rights over Foreshore Lease Application No. V-1284 (EV-87) Lot 1 PSU-141243 is hereby confirmed and declared valid, for which reason, let a writ of possession of the said premises be issued forthwith."[7]

The records show that as per sheriff's return, possession of the fishpond was delivered to Bonamy on October 8, 1984.[8]

In a petition for certiorari and prohibition with prayer for preliminary injunction and temporary restraining order filed with the Intermediate Appellate Court, (docketed as CA-G.R. No. SP-04423) the spouses Alvendias sought the annulment of the writ of execution, the levy made upon the leasehold rights and the writ of possession.

In a nutshell, the spouses argued as follows: [1] that the writ and the alias writ of execution levied upon properties not referred to in the judgment by compromise; [2] the writs made only the Alvendias liable, when under the "agreement", their family corporation was also supposed to be liable; [3] the writ was premature because the Compromise Agreement contained a condition which had not yet been fulfilled, namely, the release of a loan from the GSIS; [4] the fishpond, owned by the government though leased to the Alvendias, cannot be a proper subject of a levy on execution; and [5] the leasehold rights possessed by the Alvendias had already expired before the issuance of the Order.[9]

In its Decision dated February 27, 1985, the IAC dismissed the aforesaid petition. The pertinent portion is hereunder quoted, thus:

"xxx xxx xxx

"Firstly, we note that after the questioned writ of possession had been issued, no motion for reconsideration was filed to give the respondent judge an opportunity to correct any error that may have been committed.

"Secondly, the orders complained of and which are attached to the petition are not certified true copies, in violation of the requirements under the rules of court.

"Thirdly, the writ of execution could properly levy on the properties of the Alvendias because their debt had already matured and remained unpaid despite demands. The judgment does not have to indicate what specific properties should be levied upon.

"Fourthly, there could be no execution against the family corporation because it was not a party to the case, was not a party or signatory to the compromise agreement. Neither was it represented by the Alvendias.

"Fifthly, the issuance of the writs was not premature. There is nothing in the compromise agreement which says that the release of the GSIS loan was a condition precedent to the payment of the debt. True there was an indication by the Alvendias as to where they would obtain the needed financing, but this did not make the obtaining of the same a suspensive condition which would give rise to the creation of their obligation. The obligation to pay was admittedly there — even before any reference to the GSIS. Had they desired to make the fund release a condition sine qua non, words should be used to that effect. Indeed, it is absurd to say that if the GSIS would not release the money the Alvendias would be excused from the payment of their acknowledged indebtedness.

"Sixthly, it is not the fishpond that was levied upon but the leasehold rights of the Alvendias.

"Seventhly, if it is really true that the lease had already expired before the writs were issued, this is a matter that can be raised by the government, not the Alvendias who have already ceased to become real parties in interest regarding the property. x x x x x x x x

"WHEREFORE, the instant petition is denied due course, and is hereby DISMISSED. The restraining order previously issued is hereby lifted."[10]

The Alvendias filed an urgent motion for reconsideration. Pending action thereon, the spouses manifested to the court, thru motion, their willingness to immediately pay to Bonamy the remaining balance of the Judgment sought to be enforced, which they place at P37,481.50, plus interests due and/or any such amount as the court may determine to be due (the said amount was reached by deducting from the total sum of P107,481.50: P20,000.00, P4,000.00 representing the value of the Toyota Land Cruiser and the further amount of P46,000.00 representing the actual value of the Toyota Land Cruiser minus the amount of P4,000.00 allegedly realized from the execution sale thereof).[11]

On September 11, 1985, the IAC issued two resolutions, denominated Resolutions I and II.

Resolution I denied the Alvendias' motion for reconsideration for lack of merit, without prejudice to what was stated in Resolution II hereunder.

Resolution II granted their motion to satisfy the judgment sought to be enforced in cash thereby directing the parties to submit to the court an agreement duly signed by both parties regarding full satisfaction of the judgment but only after the total amount involved in said judgment had been tendered and delivered to Bonamy.[12]

The Alvendias then tendered payment to Bonamy in the form of a cashier's check in the amount of P100,000.00.[13] Bonamy refused said tender of payment, and instead moved for a reconsideration of Resolution II.

In the meantime, the spouses moved for the issuance of a temporary restraining order to prevent or stop the allegedly unjust enforcement of the questioned writ of execution/possession and to prevent the sheriff and Bonamy and all persons acting under them from entering and encroaching on the fishpond area.

On October 2, 1985, the IAC restrained Bonamy and his co-respondents therein from enforcing the questioned Writ of Execution/Possession issued in Civil Case No. 5182-M, as well as from entering and encroaching further into the subject fishpond.[14]

Bonamy moved for the lifting of that order on the averment, among others, that the acts sought to be restrained had already been executed, Bonamy having been placed in possession on October 8, 1984 by Deputy Sheriff Rufino I. Santiago of Bulacan by virtue of the Writ of Possession issued in Civil Case No. 5182-M.[15]

In an urgent motion for extension of time to file appeal by certiorari (from respondent court's order denying their motion for reconsideration) spouses Alvendias elevated their case to this Tribunal, docketed as G.R. No. 72138. Such motion was granted by the court. A second motion was, however, denied. Hence, no petition was filed in G.R. No. 72138.

On October 8, 1985, the IAC issued three resolutions embodied in a single document: Resolution I — denying Bonamy's motion for reconsideration; II — ordering him to comment on the motion for Deposit filed by the Alvendias; III — ordering the spouses to comment on the Manifestation and Motion to lift restraining order filed by Bonamy.

Hence, this petition for certiorari and prohibition, praying for the annulment of respondent court's Resolution II of September 11, 1985 and its Resolution I of October 8, 1985, filed with this Court on October 21, 1985 by Bonamy and docketed as G. R. No. 72373.

As earlier stated, on February 3, 1986, notwithstanding the Alvendias' failure to file a petition in G.R. No. 72138, the Court resolved to consolidate the two cases, namely, G.R. Nos. 72138 and 72373, in the resolution of February 3, 1986, of the First Division of this Court.[16]

On February 24, 1986, Bonamy, as private respondent in G.R. No. 72138, filed a manifestation that since the Alvendias did not file their petition in said case, the proceeding should be ordered dismissed and that entry of the IAC judgment be ordered.

Upon the Alvendias' failure to comply with the court's order to comment on the aforementioned manifestation, this Court issued a 'show cause' resolution to the spouses.

Pleading absolute good faith and honesty and attributing failure to file the required comment to the confusing circumstances engendered by the issued resolutions (denying respondents' motion for reconsideration but granting their motion to satisfy judgment in cash) the Alvendias prayed the Court to consider instead their urgent petition (to extend time to file appeal) as their sufficient appeal, anchoring their entreaty on Bonamy's petition

which is also pending in this Court and which has, anyway, opened the entire case for review. This explanation and manifestation of counsel for private respondents was noted in the resolution of October 15, 1986 of the Second Division of this Court where this case was eventually referred.[*]

The petition in G.R. No. 72373 is impressed with merit. The pivotal issue in this case is whether or not the judgment debtors may successfully ask that they be allowed to pay the judgment debt in cash long after they have failed to pay or redeem their properties which have been sold in execution.

Bonamy puts forward the averment that respondent court committed grave abuse of discretion in granting the Alvendias' motion that they be allowed to pay the judgment debt in cash.

He anchors his contention on the fact that there having been a valid levy and sale on execution of the Alvendias' leasehold rights over the fishpond in question, there is no longer any money judgment to be satisfied.

He maintains the position that all the questioned writs herein as well as the questioned orders have already been found by respondent IAC to be proper and legal and had in fact dismissed the petition of the Alvendias in its decision of February 27, 1985. Since then, he has been in ownership and possession of the disputed fishpond in Baluarte, Bulacan and has been exercising all acts of possession with respect to the same.[17]

Hence, petitioner claims that the assailed resolutions are in effect [a] an annulment of the assailed Orders and Writs of the Bulacan Regional Trial Court, the Certificate of Sale and the Final Deed of Sale of the Leasehold Rights over the Foreshore Lands; [b] an extension of the Alvendias' period to redeem the leasehold rights over said land; and [c] orders directing Bonamy and the Alvendias to enter into a contract of sale over said leasehold rights for the price of the judgment debt embodied in the Compromise Agreement.[18]

Verily, it is unrefuted that the writs and orders of the lower court sought to be annulled or at least reopened are already final and executory and in fact already executed.

The judgment which was executed was a compromise judgment, duly approved by the court and therefore, final and immediately executory.[19] Bonamy was clearly entitled to execution since the Alvendias failed to pay on time the judgment. Hence, the Bulacan Court ordered the execution thereof on December 9, 1979.[20]

The compromise judgment against the Alvendias had been duly and legally executed and fully satisfied as of January 15, 1981 in accordance with Section 15 of Rule 39 of the Rules of Court when the Bulacan Sheriff levied on the Alvendias' foreshore leasehold rights by selling the same and paying the judgment creditor Bonamy. The Alvendias had one year within which to redeem said property rights but they failed to do so. Hence, the Sheriff issued the Final Deed of Sale on January 25, 1983.

As above stated, on certiorari and prohibition in CA-G.R. No. SP-04423, all these orders and writs, taken up one by one by the Intermediate Appellate Court were found to be legal and proper for which reason, the petition was dismissed in the decision of February 27, 1985.

In this Court, private respondents moved for extension of time to file a petition for review in G.R. No. 72138 but failed to file the same, thereby foreclosing their right to appeal.

In any event, it is axiomatic that there is no justification in law and in fact for the reopening of a case which has long become final and which has in fact been executed.[21] Time and again this Court has said that the doctrine of finality of judgments is grounded on fundamental consideration of public policy and sound practice that at the risk of occasional error the judgments of courts must become final at some definite date fixed by law.[22]

On the other hand, the Alvendias invoke equity and aver that the IAC acted correctly in granting their motion to pay the balance of the judgment indebtedness in view of highly exceptional circumstances such as the supposedly

grossly fraudulent irregularities committed by Bonamy and the Special Sheriff of Bulacan.

It is a settled rule, however, that said Special Sheriff is under the control and supervision of the trial court which issued the assailed writ of execution to the exclusion of other courts. Accordingly, the court which rendered the judgment has a general supervisory control over its process of execution and this power carries with it the right to determine every question of fact and law which may be involved in the execution.[23] But as earlier stated, private respondents neither moved for reconsideration of the December 6, 1979 order of the trial court directing the issuance of the writ of execution, nor appealed the same to the higher courts.

In any event, the Alvendias cannot invoke equity as a ground for reopening the case and making the payment of the judgment in cash possible. The records show that they had all the opportunity to make such payments on four occasions but failed. These are: [1] from the time they got the building and construction materials worth P107,461.50 from the petitioner (from June 26 to August 12, 1975) up to the time they agreed to a compromise agreement on January 6, 1978; [2] from the compromise judgment to the time execution was ordered by the respondent court (Order dated December 6, 1979); [3] from the Execution Order to the Execution Sale (on January 15, 1981); and [4] from the Execution Sale up to the end of the redemption period, finally ending in the Final Deed of Sale.[24]

There is no question therefore, that the Alvendias failed to pay on time the judgment of which the execution sale was a necessary consequence. They also failed to redeem the property within the required period despite the fact that the Final Deed of Sale was issued only on January 25, 1983, long past the aforesaid period; undeniably showing a lack of intention or capability to pay the same.

Instead the offer to pay the judgment in cash was first made by private respondents Alvendias on April 23, 1985 or two months after the decision of respondent Appellate Court on February 27, 1985 and more than two years after the redemption period had elapsed. More importantly, the offer was made after Bonamy had introduced improvements on the property worth one million pesos (P1,000,000.00) as evidenced by irrefutable proof. Of course, the Alvendias claim the same amount as the value of the fishpond presumably before execution but such claim besides having been raised only on appeal, specifically after the promulgation of the decision of the Intermediate Appellate Court on February 27, 1985, is unsupported by evidence on record. On the contrary, petitioner Bonamy's pictures of the leased premises before and after he took possession of the same belie said claim of private respondents.[25]

As insisted upon by petitioner, the money judgment against the Alvendias has already been satisfied and there is no more need to pay, in cash or otherwise. Hence, as ruled by this Court, when judgment has been satisfied, the same passes beyond review, for satisfaction thereof is the last act and end of the proceedings. Payment produces permanent and irrevocable discharge.[26]

On the other hand, equity has been aptly described as "a justice outside legality"; which is applied only in the absence of and never against statutory law or as in this case, judicial rules of procedure.[27] The rule is "equity follows the law" but where a particular remedy is given by the law and that remedy is bounded and circumscribed by particular rules, it would be very improper for the court to take it up where the law leaves it and to extend it further than the law allows.[28] There may be a moral obligation but if there is no enforceable legal duty, the action for reconveyance must fail.[29] Courts exercising equity jurisdiction are bound by rules of law and have no arbitrary discretion to disregard them. Equitable reasons will not control against any well-settled rule of law or public policy.[30]

Moreover, it is oft repeated that "He who comes into Equity must come with clean hands." [31] At this stage, to allow private respondents to pay in cash the balance of the judgment account for which they offered P100,000.00

to redeem the property on which petitioner has spent one million pesos (P1,000,000.00) in terms of improvements introduced would be less than fair. If equity is to be applied at all, it should be applied for the benefit of the petitioner. Thus, this Court in applying equity jurisprudence in a partition case, ruled that improvements introduced on the property by one who necessarily and in good faith improved the same and enhanced its value at his own cost, should be taken into account under the familiar principle that "one who seeks equity must do equity." [32]

In resume, the Alvendias, after having allowed the period of redemption to lapse without availing themselves of the same, and after petitioner had introduced improvements on the property at the latter's expense, cannot now be allowed to redeem the property sold to the latter thru the expediency of a motion or manifestation.

As to other matters, there appears to be no cogent reason to disturb the findings and conclusions of the Intermediate Appellate Court in its decision of February 27, 1985 which has become final and executory when the Alvendias failed to file their contemplated petition for review on certiorari in G.R. No. 72138. It has been held that failure to perfect an appeal renders the lower court's judgment final and executory and a modification of such judgment by the appellate court cannot be allowed. Furthermore, an appellee who is not also an appellant may also assign errors in his brief where his purpose is to maintain the judgment on other grounds, but he may not do so if his purpose is to have the judgment modified or reversed, for, in such case, he must appeal. [33]

However, where there is an ambiguity caused by an omission or mistake in the dispositive portion of the decision, in this case in the questioned "Writ of Possession" issued by the trial court, where the twenty-three (23) hectare foreshore land (23.467 hec.) described in the Sheriff's Certificate of Sale and Final Deed of Sale [34] became a forty-hectare foreshore land (40.63 hec.), [35] it has been held that this Court may clarify such ambiguity by an amendment even after the judgment had become final. [36]

WHEREFORE, the assailed resolutions are hereby SET ASIDE and the decision dismissing the Alvendias' petition is AFFIRMED save that portion upholding the validity of the writ of possession which contained an error in property description. Hence, the writ of possession is hereby AMENDED to conform to the description appearing in the Certificate of Sale and the Final Deed of Sale. Let the restraining order issued by the Intermediate Appellate Court on October 2, 1985 relative to the enforcement of said writ be lifted accordingly.

Petitioner is hereby ordered to return to private respondents, the amount of P12,518.50 pesos, which amount represents the difference between the execution price of P100,000.00 and P87,481.50, the latter amount having been arrived at by deducting P20,000.00 from the total amount of indebtedness which is P107,481.50. [37]

In G.R. No. 72138, the petition for review on certiorari of Resolution I of the Intermediate Appellate Court denying private respondents' motion for reconsideration of its decision of February 27, 1985, not having been filed, entry of judgment of aforesaid decision may now be made by said Appellate Court.

SO ORDERED.

Gutierrez, Jr., Feliciano, Bidin, and Cortes, JJ., concur.

[1] Entitled "Bonifacio Bonamy, doing business under the tradename Bonamy Enterprises v. Sps. Felicidad and Jesus Alvendia."

[2] Annex "E" of Annex "A" to Petition, Rollo, p. 99.

[3] Annex "F" of Annex "A" to Petition, Rollo, p. 102.

- [4] Rollo, p. 6.
- [5] Rollo, p. 92.
- [6] Annex "I" of Annex "A" to Petition, Rollo, p. 104. The auction sale of said vehicle was later on declared null and void by the trial court.
- [7] Annex "C" of Annex "A", Rollo, p. 96.
- [8] Annex "1" of Annex "C", Rollo, p. 154.
- [9] Decision of IAC in AC G.R. No. SP-04423, Rollo, p. 253.
- [10] Rollo, pp. 253-255. (Underscoring supplied)
- [11] Records, p. 275.
- [12] Rollo, p. 366.
- [13] Annex 1 of Annex "T", Rollo, pp. 373-374.
- [14] Annex "Y", Rollo, p. 424.
- [15] Annex "C" of Annex "A".
- [16] Rollo, p. 525.
- [17] Rollo, pp. 617-618.
- [*] The Second Division became the present Third Division.
- [18] Rollo, pp. 626-627.
- [19] P.B. Com. v. Hon. Echevarri, L-41795, 99 SCRA 508 (1980); Zagala v. Jimenez, 152 SCRA 198 (1987).
- [20] Annex "A" of Annex A to the Petition.
- [21] Turqueza v. Hernando, 97 SCRA 483 [1980].
- [22] Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Inc. v. Arciaga, 148 SCRA 484 [1987].
- [23] Vda. de Paman v. Seneris, 115 SCRA 709 (1982); Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines v. Intermediate Appellate Court, 151 SCRA 162 (1987).
- [24] Annex "B-1" of Annex "A" of the Petition, Rollo, p. 639.
- [25] Rollo, p. 648.
- [26] Paper Industries Corp. of the Philippines v. IAC, supra.
- [27] Zabat, Jr. v. Court of Appeals, 142 SCRA 588 (1986).
- [28] Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Inc. v. Arciaga, 148 SCRA 439-440 (1987).
- [29] Rural Bank of Paranaque, Inc. v. Remolado, 135 SCRA 409 (1985).
- [30] Arsenal v. IAC, 143 SCRA 41 (1986).
- [31] Chemplex v. Pamatian, 57 SCRA 414 (1974).

[32] Arcenas v. Cinco, 74 SCRA 126 (1976).

[33] Carbonel v. Court of Appeals, 147 SCRA 566 (1987).

[34] Annexes "B" and "B-1" of Annex "A" of the petition.

[35] Annex "D" of Annex "A" of the same petition.

[36] Filipino Legion Corp. v. Court of Appeals, et al., 56 SCRA 674 (1974); Republic Surety and Insurance Co., Inc. v. IAC, 152 SCRA 316 (1987).

[37] Sec. 15, Rule 39, Rules of Court.

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