

**REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, PETITIONER, JOSE D. CAMPOS, JR.,
PETITIONER-INTERVENOR, VS. THE HONORABLE SANDIGANBAYAN,
FIRST DIVISION, TEODORO Q. PENA, GORGONIO MACARIOLA,
ORLAND...**

G.R. No. 84895. May 04, 1989

Ponente: GUTIERREZ, JR., J.

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GUTIERREZ, JR., J.:

The petitioner charges the Sandiganbayan with grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction in denying its motion to drop Jose D. Campos, Jr. as defendant in its complaint for reconveyance, reversion, accounting, restitution and damages filed against Jose D. Campos, Jr. and the other defendants in Civil Case No. 0010.

The antecedent facts are stated by the Solicitor General as follows:

"1. On July 22, 1987, petitioner filed with respondent Court a complaint for reconveyance, reversion, accounting, restitution and damages against Alfredo (Bejo) T. Romualdez, Ferdinand E. Marcos, Imelda R. Marcos, Jose D. Campos, Jr. and forty five (45) other defendants including the above-named private respondents, docketed thereat as Civil Case No. 0010 (PCGG 11), seeking to 'recover from them ill-gotten wealth consisting of funds and other property which they [acting singly or collectively and] in unlawful concert with one another, had acquired and accumulated in flagrant breach of trust and of their fiduciary obligations as public officers, with grave abuse of right and power and in brazen violation of the Constitution and laws of the Republic of the Philippines', including the misappropriation and theft of public funds, plunder of the nation's wealth, extortion, blackmail, bribery, embezzlement and other acts of corruption, betrayal of public trust and brazen abuse of power, as more fully described in the Complaint thus 'resulting in their unjust enrichment during defendant Ferdinand E. Marcos' 20 years of rule from December 30, 1965 to February 25, 1986, first as President of the Republic of the Philippines under the 1935 Constitution and, thereafter, as one-man ruler under martial law and Dictator under the 1978 Marcos-promulgated Constitution x x x at the expense and to the grave and irreparable damage of Plaintiff and the Filipino people'. (pp. 2-3, complaint).

"2. Summonses were subsequently issued in due time by the respondent Court against defendants therein.

"3. Sometime in the later part of August 1987, defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr., having been served with summons on August 5, 1987, filed with the respondent Court an undated 'Manifestation and Motion to Dismiss Complaint with Respect to Jose D. Campos' praying that he be removed as party defendant from the complaint on the grounds that he had 'voluntarily surrender(ed) or turn(ed) over [any share in his name on any of the corporations referred to, aside from disclaiming any interest, ownership or right thereon] to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines', and that he was 'entitled to the immunity granted by the Presidential Commission on Good Government pursuant to Executive Order No. 14, under the Commission's Resolution dated May 28, 1986 x x x to Mr. Jose Y. Campos (and) his family' he 'being a member of the immediate family of Jose Y. Campos.' Xerox copy of said Manifestation and Motion, etc., is hereto attached as Annex "C" hereof.

"4. On September 23, 1987, petitioner filed with the respondent Court a 'Motion' seeking to drop defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr. from the Complaint on the ground that the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG for short) had, in a Resolution dated May 28, 1986, granted immunity to Mr. Jose Y. Campos and his family, which immunity necessarily extends to defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr. who is the son of said Mr. Jose Y. Campos. Xerox copy of said Motion is hereto attached as Annex 'D' hereof.

"5. The private respondents opposed petitioner's motion. Defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr. filed his reply.

"6. Meanwhile, on January 28, 1988, petitioner filed with the respondent Court an Amended/Expanded Complaint, xerox copy of which is hereto attached as Annex 'E' hereof.

"7. On February 8, 1988, respondent Court issued a Resolution (Annex 'A' hereof) which, as abovestated, denied petitioner's and Jose D. Campos, Jr.'s motions to drop him from the complaint.

"8. On March 7, 1988, defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr. filed a 'Motion for Reconsideration of the Resolution Dated February 8, 1988', xerox copy of which is hereto attached as Annex 'F' hereof.

"9. On March 10, 1988, petitioner also filed its separate 'Motion for Reconsideration' of the Resolution of February 8, 1988, xerox copy of which is hereto attached as Annex 'G' hereof.

"10. On August 18, 1988, respondent Court issued a Resolution (Annex 'B' hereof) denying petitioner's and defendant Jose D. Campos, Jr.'s motions for reconsideration. A copy of the Resolution was received by the Office of the Solicitor General on August 24, 1988." (pp. 4-8, Rollo)

The original petition was against the Sandiganbayan and six private respondents who opposed the motion to drop Campos, Jr. from the complaint.

Upon motion, we allowed Jose D. Campos, Jr. to file a petition-in-intervention.

In a resolution dated March 29, 1988, we issued a temporary restraining order ordering the Sandiganbayan to cease and desist from proceeding with Civil Case No. 0010.

The main issue in the instant petition hinges on whether or not the petitioner can validly drop Jose D. Campos, Jr. as party-defendant in Civil Case No. 0010 by virtue of the PCGG's grant of immunity in favor of his father Jose Y. Campos and the latter's family.

The Sandiganbayan ruled in the negative. It denied the Republic's and petitioner Jose D. Campos, Jr.'s motions for reconsideration on the following grounds.

"1) The PCGG did not then and does not now have the power to grant civil immunity;

"2) Even if it did, the grant of immunity itself rendered in the PCGG's resolution dated May 28, 1986 has not been shown to cover the transactions involving the corporations and or properties for which Jose D. Campos, Jr., is now sought to be held accountable, i.e., Metroport Services, Inc.;

"3) The fact is that nowhere, either in the original motions or in the Motion for Reconsideration before this Court has it been shown that, save for the alleged unqualified immunity, there no longer exists any demandable claim against Jose D. Campos, Jr., arising from the transactions resulting in his being impleaded thereon. In other words, were it not for the supposed grant of immunity, Jose D. Campos, Jr., would remain liable in the matter of Metroport Services, Inc., and for the 60% which Alfredo (Bejo) Romualdez acquired therein according to paragraph 14(c) of the Complaint (supra) which does not appear to have been restored or compensated for." (p. 54, Rollo)

The petitioner contends otherwise. The Solicitor General asserts that the name of Jose D. Campos, Jr. was included as defendant in the complaint through mistake or oversight and that pursuant to section 11, Rule 3 of the

Revised Rules of Court it has a right to drop him as defendant without prior consent of any party. The Solicitor General also maintains that although the defendants in the case were charged solidarily, Campos, Jr. was not an indispensable party since Article 1216 of the Civil Code allows the petitioner as solidary creditor to choose among the solidary debtors against whom it will enforce collection.

Jose Campos, Jr. adds that the petitioner's motion to drop him as defendant should be considered as one filed under section 1, Rule 17 of the Revised Rules of Court thus giving it the absolute right to dismiss the action by mere notice of dismissal.

Above all these technicalities, the petitioner maintains that the resolutions of the Sandiganbayan which ruled that the PCGG does not have the power to grant civil immunity frustrated the earnest efforts at recovery of ill-gotten wealth recognized in the Constitution, and Executive Orders Numbers 1, 2, 14 and 14-A. The petitioner contends that the non-observance of the immunity provision granted by the PCGG will hinder the voluntary cooperation of known Marcos cronies to enter into amicable settlements or compromises with respect to the recovery of ill-gotten wealth. The petitioner also argues that the PCGG's power to grant criminal immunity under Section 5 of Executive Order No. 14 carries with it the implied power to enter into compromises and amicable settlements in line with its duty to recover ill-gotten wealth expeditiously, efficiently and effectively.

Given these considerations, the petitioner insists that the May 28, 1986 resolution of the PCGG which granted immunity from both civil and criminal prosecution to Jose Y. Campos and his family is a valid official act of the PCGG and since Jose Campos, Jr. is a legitimate son of Jose Y. Campos, he must be deemed covered by the grant of immunity.

Furthermore, petitioner-intervenor Campos, Jr. states that the Sandiganbayan has no jurisdiction to determine the validity of the grant of immunity and release from civil liability to the intervenor as there is no dispute between him and the PCGG. Thus, Campos, Jr. argues that "Except in a litigation arising from a disagreement between the one claiming to be a beneficiary and the PCGG/Republic, the Sandiganbayan is without competence to review the validity or extent of the PCGG granted and the Republic supported grant of immunity from criminal prosecution and release from civil liability." (p. 216, Rollo)

We first ascertain whether or not the Sandiganbayan has jurisdiction to look into the validity of the immunity granted by the PCGG to Jose Y. Campos which was extended to his son, petitioner-intervenor herein, Jose Campos, Jr.

Executive Order No. 14 defines "the jurisdiction over cases involving the ill-gotten wealth of former President Ferdinand E. Marcos, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, members of their immediate family, close relatives, subordinates, close and/or business associates, dummies, agents and nominees." Section 2 thereof provides that the PCGG shall file all such cases, whether civil or criminal, with the Sandiganbayan, which shall have exclusive and original jurisdiction thereof." In the case of *Presidential Commission on Good Government v. Pena* (159 SCRA 556 [1988]), the court interpreted the Sandiganbayan's jurisdiction under this statute to extend to "all cases of the commission x x x, and all incidents arising from, incidental to, or related to (them), such cases necessarily fall likewise under the Sandiganbayan's exclusive and original jurisdiction subject to review on certiorari exclusively by the Supreme Court." (pp. 561-562; Underlining supplied). Likewise, in the case of *Bataan Shipyard & Engineering Co., Inc. v. Presidential Commission on Good Government*, (150 SCRA 181 [1987]) we said:

"It should also by now be reasonably evident from what has thus far been said that the PCGG is not, and was never intended to act as, a judge. Its general function is to conduct investigations in order to collect evidence establishing instances of 'ill-gotten wealth;' issue sequestration, and such orders as may be warranted by the evidence thus collected and as may be necessary to preserve and conserve the assets of which it takes custody

and control and prevent their disappearance, loss or dissipation; and eventually file and prosecute in the proper court of competent jurisdiction all cases investigated by it as may be warranted by its findings. It does not try and decide, or hear and determine, or adjudicate with any character of finality or compulsion, cases involving the essential issue of whether or not property should be forfeited and transferred to the State because 'ill-gotten' within the meaning of the Constitution and the executive orders. This function is reserved to the designated court, in this case, the Sandiganbayan. (Ex. Ord. No. 14)"

The powers of the PCGG are not unlimited. Its jurisdiction over cases involving ill-gotten wealth must be within the parameters stated in Executive Order No. 14. Necessarily, the jurisdiction of the Sandiganbayan which is tasked to handle the ill-gotten wealth cases must include the jurisdiction to determine whether or not the PCGG exceeded its power to grant immunity pursuant to the provisions of Executive Order No. 14.

We now decide the pivotal issue which is the extent, if any, of the PCGG's power to grant civil immunity.

Section 5 of Executive Order No. 14 provides:

"SECTION 5. The Presidential Commission on Good Government is authorized to grant immunity from criminal prosecution to any person who testifies to the unlawful manner in which any respondent, defendant or accused has acquired or accumulated the property or properties in question in cases where such testimony is necessary to prove violation of existing laws."

Since the aforecited provision mentions the grant of immunity only in criminal prosecutions and under certain circumstances, the Sandiganbayan concluded that the PCGG does not have the power to grant civil immunity much less extend the civil immunity granted to Jose Y. Campos to his son Jose Campos, Jr.

The conclusion is erroneous.

A cursory reading of Executive Order No. 14 shows that the PCGG is authorized to file both criminal and civil cases against persons suspected of having acquired ill-gotten wealth. Section 3 thereof provides:

"SECTION 3. Civil suits for restitution, reparation of damages, or indemnification for consequential damages, forfeiture proceedings provided for under Republic Act No. 1379, or any other civil actions under the Civil Code or other existing laws, in connection with Executive Order No. 1 dated February 28, 1986 and Executive Order No. 2 dated March 12, 1986, may be filed separately from and proceed independently of any criminal proceedings and may be proved by a preponderance of evidence."

This provision, together with section 5 of the law in relation to the purposes for which the PCGG was created must be taken into consideration in determining whether or not the PCGG has authority to grant civil immunity.

"x x x Legislative intent must be ascertained from a consideration of the statute as a whole. The particular words, clauses and phrases should not be studied as detached and isolated expressions, but the whole and every part of the statute must be considered in fixing the meaning of any of its parts and in order to produce a harmonious whole (*Araneta v. Concepcion*, 99 Phil. 709; *Tamayo v. Gsell*, 35 Phil. 953; *Lopez v. El Hogar Filipino*, 47 Phil. 249; *Chartered Bank v. Imperial*, 48 Phil. 931). A statute must be so construed as to harmonize and give effect to all its provisions whenever possible (*People v. Polmon*, 86 Phil. 350). The meaning of the law, it must be borne in mind, is not to be extracted from any single part, portion or section or from isolated words and phrases, clauses or sentences but from a general consideration or view of the act as a whole (82 C.J.S., Section 345, pp. 699-700). Every part of the statute must be interpreted with reference to the context. This means that every part of the statute must be considered together with the other parts, and kept subservient to the general intent of the whole enactment, not separately and independently (*Tamayo v. Gsell*, 35 Phil. 953). More importantly, the doctrine of associated words (*Noscitur a Sociis*) provides that where a particular word or phrase in a statement is ambiguous in itself or is equally susceptible of various meanings, its true meaning may be made clear and specific by considering the company in which it is found or with which it

is associated (Co Kim Cham v. Valdez Tan Keh & Dizon, 75 Phil. 371)." (Aisporna v. The Court of Appeals, 113 SCRA 459 [1982])

It is crystal clear from the law that the PCGG may file an independent civil action separate from the criminal action. Hence, section 5 thereof which empowers the PCGG to grant criminal immunity must be interpreted to relate only to a criminal action and not to a civil action. In case of a civil action, the power to grant immunity or the making of the decision not to file a civil case or to drop one already in progress must be related to section 3 of the law which specifically provides for the procedures and the applicable laws in the prosecution of civil suits.

The well-settled doctrine is that amicable settlements and/or compromises are not only allowed but actually encouraged in civil cases. Article 2028 of the Civil Code categorically states: "A compromise is a contract whereby the parties, by making reciprocal concessions, avoid a litigation or put an end to one already commenced." On the other hand, there is no similar general rule in criminal prosecutions. Immunity must be specifically granted.

In the instant case, the PCGG issued a resolution dated May 28, 1986, granting immunity from both civil and criminal prosecutions to Jose Y. Campos and his family. The pertinent provisions of the resolution read as follows:

"3.0. In consideration of the full cooperation of Mr. Jose Y. Campos to this Commission, his voluntary surrender of the properties and assets disclosed and declared by him to belong to deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, his full, complete and truthful disclosures, and his commitment to pay a sum of money as determined by the Philippine Government, this Commission has decided and agreed:

"3.1. To grant to Mr. Jose Y. Campos, his family, Mariano K. Tan and Francisco de Guzman immunity from criminal prosecutions, as provided in Section 5 of Executive Order No. 14.

"3.2. To release Mr. Jose Y. Campos, his family, Mariano K. Tan and Francisco de Guzman from any and all civil liabilities with respect to all matters arising from his/their past relationship with deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

"3.3. To exclude Jose Y. Campos, his family, Mariano K. Tan and Francisco de Guzman from the complaint filed by the Solicitor General with the Commission docketed as Republic of the Philippines v. Ferdinand E. Marcos, et al., PCGG I.S. No. 1 for graft and corrupt practices and other issues related to public service. x x x. (Underscoring supplied.)" (pp. 18-19, Rollo)

Undoubtedly, this resolution embodies a compromise agreement between the PCGG on one hand and Jose Y. Campos on the other. Hence, in exchange for the voluntary surrender of the ill-gotten properties acquired by the then President Ferdinand E. Marcos and his family which were in Jose Campos' control, the latter and his family were given full immunity in both civil and criminal prosecutions. In the absence of an express prohibition, the rule on amicable settlements and/or compromises on civil cases under the Civil Code is applicable to PCGG cases. This is the proper interpretation of the law in the light of the purposes enumerated in Executive Order No. 14, to wit:

"x x x the vital task of the Commission involves the just and expeditious recovery of such ill-gotten wealth in order that the funds, assets and other properties may be used to hasten national economic recovery;

"x x x the overriding considerations of national interest and national survival require that the Presidential Commission on Good Government achieve its vital task efficiently and effectively, with due regard to the requirements of fairness and due process;"

Since petitioner-intervenor Jose Campos, Jr. is a legitimate son of Jose Y. Campos, the full immunity granted to the latter and his family must also extend to the former pursuant to the May 28, 1986 resolution of the PCGG.

We note that the law governing the issues raised in this petition calls for the setting aside of technical rules when necessary to achieve the purposes behind the PCGG's creation.

It is to be reiterated that paragraph 2 of section 3, of Executive Order No. 14 reads:

x x x x x x x x

"The technical rules of procedure and evidence shall not be strictly applied to the civil cases filed hereunder."

Section 7 hereof also provides:

"SECTION 7. The provisions of this Executive Order shall prevail over any and all laws, or parts thereof, as regards the investigation, prosecution, and trial of cases for violations of laws involving the acquisition and accumulation of ill-gotten wealth as mentioned in Executive order Nos. 1 and 2."

A settled rule on construction is found in the case of *Leveriza v. Intermediate Appellate Court*, (157 SCRA 282 [1988]):

"x x x that another basic principle of statutory construction mandates that general legislation must give way to special legislation on the same subject, and generally be so interpreted as to embrace only cases in which the special provisions are not applicable (*Sto. Domingo v. De los Angeles*, 96 SCRA 139), that a specific statute prevails over a general statute (*De Jesus v. People*, 120 SCRA 760) and that where two statutes are of equal theoretical application to a particular case, the one designed therefor specially should prevail (*Wil Wilhensen, Inc. v. Baluyot*, 83 SCRA 38)

On this score alone, the Sandiganbayan's rejection of the petitioner's motion on the ground that dropping Campos, Jr. as defendant in the civil case would amount to a violation of the Rules of Court is based on shaky ground.

The Sandiganbayan's objections will hamper PCGG efforts in this and similar cases.

By virtue of the PCGG's May 28, 1986 resolution, Jose Campos, Jr. was given full immunity from both civil and criminal prosecutions in exchange for the "full cooperation of Mr. Jose Y. Campos to this Commission, his voluntary surrender of the properties and assets disclosed and declared by him to belong to deposed President Ferdinand E. Marcos to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, his full, complete and truthful disclosures, and his commitment to pay a sum of money as determined by the Philippine Government." In addition, Campos, Jr. had already waived and surrendered to the Republic his registered equity interest in the Marcos/Romualdez corporations involved in the civil case. Thus, as far as the petitioner is concerned, it had already released Campos, Jr. from all criminal and civil liabilities in connection with His association with the said corporations. Under the law, civil liabilities would include restitution and damages in favor of the government.

It is immaterial whether or not Campos, Jr. was given specific or individual immunity from his liabilities as regards the Marcos/Romualdez corporations, the subject matter of Civil Case No. 0010. The grant of full immunity to Campos, Senior and his family covers all of Campos, Jr.'s liabilities, criminal or civil, arising from association with the Marcoses including transactions with the corporations involved in the said civil case.

Even from the viewpoint of procedure, the PCGG was right when it filed a motion to drop Jose Campos, Jr. as defendant in the civil case. Section 11, Rule 3 of the Rules of Court states:

"SECTION 11, RULE 3. Misjoinder and non-joinder of parties. - Misjoinder of parties is not ground for dismissal of an action. Parties may be dropped or added by order of the court on motion of any party or of its own initiative at any stage of the action and on such terms as are just. x x x (Underlining supplied)"

We interpreted this rule in the case of *Lim Tanhu v. Ramolete*, 66 SCRA 425 (1975):

"x x x the latter rule does not comprehend whimsical and irrational dropping or adding of parties in a complaint. What it really contemplates is erroneous or mistaken non-joinder and misjoinder of parties. No one is free to join anybody in a complaint in court only to drop him unceremoniously later at the pleasure of the plaintiff. The rule presupposes that the original inclusion had been made in the honest conviction that it was proper and the subsequent dropping is requested because it turned out that such inclusion was a mistake. And this is the reason why the rule ordains that the dropping be on such terms as are just' - just to all the other parties."

There is nothing whimsical or capricious in dropping the petitioner-intervenor from the complaint. Quite the contrary, it is based on sound and salutary reasons.

As discussed earlier, the PCGG's motion to drop Campos, Jr. as defendant in Civil Case No. 0010 has legal basis under Executive Order No. 14. The fact that Campos, Jr. and all the other defendants were charged solidarily in the complaint does not make him an indispensable party. We have ruled in the case of *Operators Incorporated v. American Biscuit Co., Inc.*, [154 SCRA 738 (1987)] that "Solidarity does not make a solidary obligor an indispensable party in a suit filed by the creditor. Article 1216 of the Civil Code says that the creditor 'may proceed against anyone of the solidary debtors or some or all of them simultaneously.'"

There is no showing that the dropping of Jose Campos, Jr. as defendant would be unjust to the other defendants in the civil case because, the other defendants can still pursue the case and put up their defenses. In the case of *Lim Tanhu v. Ramolete*, (supra), the main reason why we did not allow the dropping of two defendants who were charged solidarily with the other remaining defendants, despite the motion of the plaintiff, is the fact that the latter filed such motion after the two remaining defendants defaulted. Thus, we said:

"x x x In the case at bar, there is nothing in the record to legally justify the dropping of the non-defaulted defendants, Lim and Leonardo. The motion of October 18, 1974 cites none. From all appearances, plaintiff just decided to ask for it, without any relevant explanation at all. Usually, the court in granting such a motion inquires for the reasons and in the appropriate instances directs the granting of some form of compensation for the trouble undergone by the defendant in answering the complaint, preparing for or proceeding partially to trial, hiring counsel and making corresponding expenses in the premises. Nothing of these, appears in the order in question. Most importantly, His Honor ought to have considered that the outright dropping of the non-defaulted defendants Lim and Leonardo, over their objection at that, would certainly be unjust not only to the petitioners, their own parents, who would in consequence be entirely defenseless, but also to Lim and Leonardo themselves who would naturally correspondingly suffer from the eventual judgment against their parents. Respondent court paid no heed at all to the mandate that such dropping must be 'on such terms as are just' - meaning to all concerned with its legal and factual effects."

There is no similar reason in this case.

Moreover, as correctly stated by the herein petitioner: "Under the law, the solidary debtor who pays shall have a right of action against the others for the amount of their respective shares. And, with the dropping of a defendant who pays his share, the other solidary co-defendants are also benefited to the extent of that paid share. Truly, each solidary debtor ends up paying his own share, including the defendant who had been dropped. Hence, there is no injustice." (p. 28, Rollo)

WHEREFORE, the instant petition is hereby GRANTED. The questioned resolutions of the Sandiganbayan are REVERSED and SET ASIDE. The Sandiganbayan is ordered to drop Jose Campos, Jr. as defendant in Civil Case No. 0010. The temporary restraining order issued on November 29, 1988 is made permanent insofar as Jose D. Campos, Jr. is concerned. No costs.

SO ORDERED.

Fernan, C.J., Narvasa, Melencio-Herrera, Cruz, Gancayco, Padilla, Bidin, Cortes, Grino-Aquino, Medialdea, and Regalado, JJ., concur.

Sarmiento, J., dissents in a separate opinion.

Paras and Feliciano, JJ., no part.

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