

MALACAÑANG
MANILA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 288

EXONERATING CORAZON L. BELMONTE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

This pertains to the administrative case filed by the Department of Foreign Affairs, hereinafter the "Department", against Ms. Corazon L. Belmonte for dishonesty, inefficiency, incompetence in the performance of official duty, and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

The charges stem from two misfeasance allegedly committed by respondent in 1987: (1) issuance of a Category 9 (E-2) visa to a Russian correspondent on 18 September 1987; (2) issuing of false statement in connection with a car accident on 1 January 1987.

Anent the first misfeasance, after a painstaking perusal of the records and evidence submitted, we find it difficult to believe respondent as responsible for the issuance of a diplomatic (E-2) visa to a Russian correspondent, a certain Alexander Ivanovich Kisselev connected with Tass agency. Firstly, records disclosed that at the time the purported visa was issued by the Philippine Embassy in Moscow to Mr. Kisselev, respondent was in the Home Office. Secondly, a careful review of the communications exchanged between the Philippine Embassy in Moscow and the Home Office relative to the visa of Mr. Kisselev reveals that the issuance of the visa was made upon authority from the Home Office. Telex No. Mo-3587-S dated 14 September 1987 reads:

" x x x EMBASSY AUTHORIZED TO ISSUE APPROPRIATE
VISAS TO A.I. KISSELEV AND FAMILY. END x x x x

MANUEL T. YAN
Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs"

And lastly, on the claim that the visa issued to Mr. Kisselev was not the proper visa, there was no competent evidence submitted showing that the visa issued to Mr. Kisselev was improper. It should be noted that in the Soviet Union, privately owned mass media was inexistent at the time the visa was issued. Tass agency is the official Soviet news agency and is regarded as a vital organ of the Soviet Union and an important component of the government. Thus, its correspondent, for all intents and purposes, could very well be classified as a "diplomat" equivalent to an information attache. Moreover, since prior to 1987 Mr. Kisselev had previously, i.e. in 1982 and 1985, been issued a category 9 (E-2) visa, it would not be inappropriate then, i.e. 1987, to issue him the same type of visa.

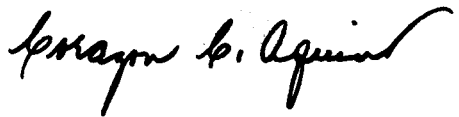
On the second alleged misfeasance by respondent, the pertinent facts are undisputed.

On 31 December 1986, the Philippine Embassy in Moscow hosted a party for the Filipino community to usher in the New Year. After the party, Mr. Alejandro Liwanag, an employee of the Department assigned at the Moscow Embassy, was instructed to bring home some of the Filipino student-guests. While in the performance of such task, Mr. Liwanag figured in a vehicular accident and sustained injuries which required hospitalization and treatment. Thereafter, Mr. Liwanag claimed reimbursement of expenses incurred for hospitalization and other medical expenses, submitting as part of the documentary requirements the medical certificate issued by a Soviet physician in the hospital where he was admitted. In addition, Mr. Liwanag also submitted a certification issued by respondent Belmonte attesting to the fact that Mr. Liwanag was in the performance of official duties at the time the vehicular accident occurred. Respondent is now being charged with issuing false statements as a result of said certification issued in favor of Mr. Liwanag.

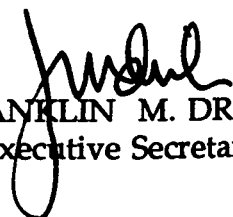
The allegation that respondent made a false statement in connection with the certification issued to Mr. Liwanag was not properly established by competent evidence. On the contrary, the Office of Fiscal Management Services of the Department, in approving the claim for reimbursement of Mr. Liwanag, accepted the veracity of the certification issued by respondent. To date, the approval of the claim remains uncontested.

In view of the foregoing, respondent Corazon L. Belmonte is hereby EXONERATED from the instant charges.

DONE in the City of Manila, this 2nd day of June, in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety-two.



By the President:



FRANKLIN M. DRILON
Executive Secretary