

OBSERVATIONS BY REPRESENTATIVE TRAN NGOC CHAU
ON THE ABOLITION OF CORRUPTION

I. Corruption is a social phenomenon common to every country including the United States.

During recent years, we had heard much about the cases of bribery, abuses of budget rights among officials in the White House, the Senate and House of Representatives, and above all, the so-called "American Mayor of Saigon"

II. In Vietnam, corruption is widely practiced due to the following reasons:

1. The budget allotted to administrative and military authorities is not sufficient, thus it does not allow them to solve many urgent needs that frequently come up such as:

a. Immediate relief for families suffering from war accidents.

b. Repair & Replacement of damaged military posts, bridges and roads.

c. Consolation & Relief for soldiers, cadre and their families.

Furthermore, administrative and financial regulations concerning the operation of approved budgets are too strict.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, administrative and military authorities usually make their own re-allocations and

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adjustments within the limit of their budgets, and sometimes even create illegal collections in order to meet those demands. No leader will be able to win the hearts of their people and subordinates without solving those minimal needs for them.

Those temporary solutions (re-allocations, adjustments of budget, and exceptional collections), therefore, have given them opportunities for corruption.

1. The control of budget operation seems to be based on only the following criteria:

- a. Monopoly of administrative organization.
- b. Complication of paper work.
- c. Inspection.

Therefore, it goes without saying that forging papers, buying over accomplices and forming up factions should happen, thus making corruption more expensive.

From Central down to local levels, elected bodies have not actually taken part in the budget management or its control. The main impediment to this is that the law does not clearly state their power. Besides most of the local authorities still have the usual prejudice of self-esteem and monopoly.

3. Supervisory, inspectorial, and judicial organizations

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and their heads have been up to now, established and directed by provisional political authorities. Therefore no matter how honest they are, they still have to act and judge according to the directions required by those political authorities.

The judgment of corrupted elements, therefore, cannot be impartial and fair.

There have been evidences showing that so far, only those elements who are isolated, out of influence and of middle or low levels are brought to court and sentenced. Meanwhile many important officials are merely criticized or discharged silently but never prosecuted.

This has caused the corruption abolition operation and machinery to be looked upon as an opportunity and a means by the government to:

- a. Bring down prestige of adverse elements.
- b. Create pressure to form up factions.
- c. Satisfy any American critics.

Evidently, this cannot abolish corruption, on the contrary it helps corruption develop more systematically.

4. The selection and assignment of high ranking officials also depends upon the above factor. That is why these officials usually act with the feeling of being "protected" and they

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disregard all law. It is these officials who have caused the most severe problem of corruption.

5. Salaries and allowances of soldiers and civil servants at all levels are not adequate in relation with the cost of living. Everybody feels that once he is dead or disabled on mission, his family will be in financial difficulty, and nobody will care for them.

That is also one of the facts that lead to corruption, especially among local officials.

6. Our regime does not yet reflect a stable future for the country. This constitutes an assumed reason for why many people wish to gather money as fast and as much as possible.

III The present counter-measures used in abolishing corruptions can only solve the problem partially due to the following reasons:

1. We have not yet been able to determine the main reasons that cause and nourish corruption.

2. The campaign is directed mainly for political propaganda and for the satisfaction of criticisms by American opinion.

3. The measures taken are somewhat partial because they are only aimed at low ranking, isolated and out-of-power local officials.

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4. The above-mentioned measures are so inefficient and erroneous that they can cause:

- a. Corruption to be more severe.
- b. Formation of factions to be stronger.
- c. Honest officials to become agitated and to have a crime obsession and an inferiority complex; thus making our regime internally as well as internationally more scattered and weaker.

IV. Appropriate measures to cope with and to abolish corruption must be those which are able to solve the entire problem down to the roots as mentioned in Section II

Those measurers should include:

1. Entrust to local authorities (province chief, district chief, military commander) the basic responsibility of budget management, receipts and expenditures and delegate these officials complete power to solving urgent demands in their respective localities; meanwhile, elected bodies must be consulted properly and they must have the power to control and certify all the receipts and expenditures.

It is not true of course, that all elected bodies are honest; corruption can still exist though it is less likely.

2. Establish immediately the council of supervision and

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supreme court as determined in the constitution.

3. Promulgate, as soon as possible, a press statute so that the press will have a chance to participate formally in the abolition of corruption without being criticized as partial or purposely slanderous.

4. Review the statute of civil service of all administrative, financial and judicial branches and guarantee the government employees a minimum material condition and a secure position so that they can carry out their missions impartially and independently from faction's power.

5. Solve the problems of salary, housing, supply and movement so that government employees will feel that they have enough guarantee for their families and themselves. Only in doing that could we hope they will work hard, devotedly and honestly.

6. Legislative, Executive, Judicial and mass media organizations must reflect an ideal and unanimous image of the nation. Political opposition, which is very necessary in a democracy, must be directed towards national policy, constructive methods and processes, and not towards strengthening nor attacking individuals' or factions' prestige.

This element is necessary not only for the abolition of corruption but also to the existence of the whole nation.

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7. Corruption should be abolished and put out down to roots. However we must be careful, impartial and patient because:

a. A number of dovish politicians in America are plotting to pick up our errors and deficiencies for an honorable withdrawal.

b. A number of others take advantage of the corruption denouncement and hold real power more easily.

Those mentioned above should remember that:

a. Since the collapse of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, Americans have actually used their influence in all fields and at all levels. Today, if Vietnam fails the United States must also share with our failure.

It is not my intention to lower the prestige of Vietnamese leaders in saying that everyone who appeared after the Nov. 1st. 1963 crisis must admit that he has been in the grip of Americans. I agree that some of the leaders have tried hard to escape from that grip.

During my recent visits in America, France, Italy and Thailand, everywhere I went I only heard of the progress and failure of the communists and Americans in VN; very seldom did people mention our government in the South.

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It is quite an insult for our country, but it is also a reality that we have to accept and think of in order to improve the situation.

For more than 4 years, Americans have been holding much power in VN at all levels and yet corruption is still going on and progress is very slow. Therefore, it is time for Americans to return that actual power to the Vietnamese.

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