

THE ENEMY WITHIN

By James Arthur Jimenez

IN SEPTEMBER of last year, the Berlin-based Transparency International released its 1998 Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI represents the way various sectors of the international society — particularly private business interests which are most directly affected by corruption — perceive corruption levels in more than eighty countries worldwide by ranking those countries on a scale of one to ten, and listing them in descending order, from the least corrupt (ranked 10.0) to the most (ranked at 1.0). The Philippines ranked 55th with a rating of 3.3, behind Malaysia's 29th and light-years away from Singapore's 7th.

The Index itself came with a *caveat* that it did not necessarily reflect the actual levels of corruption in the evaluated countries as it resulted from the subjective assessment of businesses, risk analysts, and the general public. Nevertheless, the Philippine's poor showing must be considered a particularly alarming wake-up call as it comes after 1997's ranking of 40th, and 1996's, 44th.

The precipitous drop in the international community's opinion of the way things are in the country bodes ill for our ailing economy. It shows a

marked decrease in confidence in the Philippines which translates to lesser investments and a whole host of other financial woes. Worse, it could lead to further pull-outs of foreign industrial investors, thus worsening our already abysmal unemployment problems; the flight of Uniden earlier this year might, conceivably, be just the tip of the iceberg.

If for no other reason than its chilling effect on investments in the country, corruption must be tackled as a serious problem in and of itself, quite distinct from other, more directly financial, troubles. More so since no economy, no matter how well protected it may be against crisis can long survive on flawed fundamentals — foundations weakened by the deprivations of corruption. Thus, it becomes necessary to understand what corruption is exactly — beyond the common acceptance of the word; what causes it, what perpetuates it, and what it does. Only then can an appropriate response be crafted to decimate the enemy within.

What Is Corruption?

Corruption has been defined as the impairment of certain actions by improper considerations which contra-

dict the accepted principles of integrity, virtue, and morality. In practical terms, corruption is often manifested in governments, with the consent — explicit or otherwise — of those in power. As such, it is a system of control which rewards those who are obedient to the present administration, compels wanted patterns of behavior, and restrains unwanted initiative.

Contrary to popular belief, corruption is not unique to developing economies, nor endemic to Asia. Rather, corruption takes root wherever men handle money; the temptation to earn a little on the side hardly ever disappears regardless of the state of the local economy or where it is found on the globe.

However, as official corruption — the misuse of public power for private profit or political gain — largely involves personal profit-taking from government ventures, the degree to which it is practiced becomes more apparent the more depressed the local economy is. In larger and more stable economies, corruption takes on the aspect of subtle thievery since corrupt officials need to take less to attain comfortable levels of personal wealth. In shakier economies, exemplified by those of developing countries, corruption becomes more blatant, often to the point of outright banditry. The officials need to take more, and the effects of their taking are immediately more obvious because there was very little to take from in

the first place.

The Nature of Corruption

In the Philippines, the extent of corruption in government — or "occupational malpractice" — has assumed nearly mythical proportions such that it can arguably be called an institution in the set-up of government. What may have once started as occasional lapses of integrity has hardened into common usage. And like all such usages, corruption did not begin at this level of virulence. It *got* there, its cyclical nature allowed to continue unbroken until it now appears that it can no longer be arrested.

Corruption feeds on itself. It becomes more deeply entrenched and difficult to eliminate with each iteration of the cycle which starts with the first attempt at corruption. A successful try leads to the consummation of the corrupt act which, if likewise successful, makes the corrupter believe that it can be done again, thus spawning the determination to repeat the act. Another attempt is made and the cycle begins anew, becoming easier each time until it becomes almost second nature.

Absent the intervention of any outside factor, corruption is limitable only by the law of diminishing returns. Once the relationship between the corrupter and the corrupted ceases to be profitable for either, the cycle begins to wind down, eventually grinding to a halt. Otherwise, the wheel just

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keeps on spinning merrily along.

In any case, regardless where and to what extent it is practiced, corruption brings about the same detrimental effects to the economic, political, and social development of a country, not to mention its continued fiscal viability. Any attempt, therefore, to treat the economy's ills while not addressing the underlying problem of corruption, and without eliminating its root causes, would be doomed to fail.

The Effects of Corruption on Economic Development

There are a number of channels through which corruption might affect economic performance and growth. One effect which is clearly of the first order is the loss of government revenue. Lost revenues include tax revenues lost when tax inspectors are bribed to overlook unreported income, output, or imports. Corruption may also bring about loss of tax revenue when it takes the form of tax evasion or the improper use of discretionary tax exemptions. By affecting tax collection or the level of public expenditure, corruption may lead to adverse budgetary consequences. In the case where it takes the form of improper use of directed lending at below-market interest rates by public sector financial institutions, corruption may result in an undesirable monetary stance. Lost revenues also include wasted subsidies allocated to undeserving claimants and what

amounts to the same thing, giving away resources controlled by the government to private parties at a fraction of their market price.

A consequence of the loss of government revenue is a cutback on government expenditure or a switch to inflation and other less desirable forms of taxation. Cutbacks on government expenditure may also turn out to be regressive since it is expenditure for the poor that is often easiest to cut. The cutbacks also have direct undesirable growth effects since infrastructural investment is another area where, in the short run, it is easy to cut government expenditure. To the various sources of loss of revenue on the collection side must be added losses from direct stealing by those who are supposed to spend the money.

The following are the other channels wherein corruption lowers economic growth and development:

- In the presence of corruption, entrepreneurs are made aware that a portion of the proceeds from investments may be claimed by corrupt officials. Payment of bribes is often required up front if the necessary permits are to be issued. Therefore, corruption may be interpreted to act as a tax though of a particularly pernicious nature., given the need for secrecy and uncertainty that comes with it—which correspondingly reduces incentive to invest.
 - The possibility that corruption
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might reduce the effectiveness of aid flows, through the diversification of funds, is of particular relevance to developing countries. The vast literature on aid flows has addressed the question of whether the fungibility of aid resources may imply that aid flows ultimately finance unproductive public expenditures. Perhaps as a result of this ongoing debate, many donor countries have focused increasingly on issues of good governance, and in some cases where governance is judged to be very poor, some donors have scaled back their assistance.

- The allocation of public procurement contracts through a corrupt system may lead to lower quality of public infrastructure and services. For example, corrupt bureaucrats could allow the use of cheap materials in the construction of buildings or bridges that would subsequently collapse.
- Another problem arises when corruption affects the allocation of publicly provided private goods like education or health care. These are goods that the market is unlikely to supply effectively, both because there are expenditures and because buying them tend to be credit-constrained. To the extent that corruption reintroduces market forces into the allocation of these goods, it brings back precisely the distortions the original intervention was intended to avoid. To take an example,

suppose the government was supplying education at a below-market price because it wanted the poor to avail of it. With corrupt bureaucrats, the cost of such education will go back to market price and the poor will be priced out of the market. Corruption frustrates any attempt to do something to help the poor.

Corruption denies the access to resources, public organization, and the protection of law to the poor, since officials guide the distribution of production resources. There is virtually no way in which ordinary people can seek redress. The apathy of the poor is well known because they feel helpless to influence events in their own favor.

The Effects of Corruption on Political Development

The corruption prevalent in developing countries is said to create a breeding ground for violence. This claim has been borne out by the facts in several countries. Many of the military takeovers in parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been justified by the need to stamp out corruption. However, just as regime changes do not guarantee that corruption will be reduced or eliminated, not all corruption leads to regime change. Although widespread corruption in the Philippines, for example, has eroded public trust in the government, including its leaders and functionaries, the regime

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of Ferdinand Marcos remained unchallenged for decades primarily because of the repressive nature of the state apparatus.

It has also been noted that corruption in political development:

- Encourages and perpetuates closed politics and violence, preventing development;
- Suppresses political opposition, generating increased resentment and violence;
- Perpetuates and widens social class and economic divisions, leading to societal strain and preventing cohesion;
- Prevents policy changes and diverts public resources, contributing to conditions of private affluence and public squalor.
- Corruption results to poor governance.
- Reforms which are designed to fight corruption are partial because the government are favoring the interests of a privileged few.

So What Causes Corruption?

The primary cause of corruption, and one which is common to all government officials from legislators to office messengers, is the fact that the expected benefits of corruption far outweigh the expected costs of punishment if caught. Otherwise stated, there is low cost of opportunity loss vis-a-vis the high rewards of corruption. The *total opportunity cost (TOC)* rises and falls — and with it, the probability

of corrupt acts being perpetrated — in direct proportion to three factors: *first*, the cost of acquiring the opportunity to work in government (O), *second*, the possibility of discovery in the event of culpable irregularities, or accountability (A), and third, the consequences of such discovery (C). Thus, the higher the *total opportunity cost*, the less likely corruption becomes (*see figure 1*).

$$(O) +/- (A) +/- (C) = TOC$$

(O) = cost of acquiring the opportunity to work in government

(A) = accountability

(C) = consequences of discovery

Figure 1. Total Opportunity Cost

In the Philippines, the cost of acquiring government positions is kept low by the chronic operation of a system of patronage where employment opportunities are snapped up by those with well-connected family members (nepotism), friends, or *patrons*, thereby lowering the cost acquiring the opportunity to work in government. In Malaysia, the Bumi Putra Statute lowers opportunity cost by providing for the preferential treatment of the minority Bumi Putra's — native Malays — over Malaysians of Chinese or Indian stock.

Here, while there are laws which ostensibly prohibit nepotism, such as Section 49 of PD 807, and the Constitutional exhortation that "The spouse and relatives by consanguinity or af-

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finitude within the fourth civil degree of the president shall not during his tenure be appointed as Members of the Constitutional Commission, or of the Office of the Ombudsman, or as Secretaries, Under Secretaries, chairmen or heads of bureaus or offices, including government-owned or controlled corporations and their subsidiaries" (Article VII, Section 13), there nevertheless exist substantial loopholes which have been exploited shamelessly.

According to one English-language broadsheet, "About half of our senators have in their offices at least one relative with the top two Senate leaders having their daughters as their Chiefs-of Staff. Two popular senators — Robert Jaworski, and his father-in-law Ramon Revilla have the most number of relations in the office in their offices in the 24-man Senate. The Senate personnel list shows Jaworski having 3 children in his roster of employees while Revilla has 4" (Macaspac, Manila Standard, 21 April 1998, p 14).

While it may be argued that qualified relatives ought not to be denied the opportunity to work for the country by a mere accident of birth, the practice of hiring relatives, to the exclusion of others in the Civil Service just as qualified, takes its toll on the government's credibility and casts into doubt its rhetoric on equal opportunities. Whether or not it is admitted, merit has taken a backseat to blood, and skill has been subordinated to

connections. As a result, those who get into positions of power feel they have very little to lose and everything to gain.

Corollarily, government officials also enjoy the luxury of low accountability. This decreases opportunity cost further by decreasing the chances of discovery from low to practically nil.

In most East Asian countries, the low accountability of government officials is a direct function of an authoritarian form of government. Authoritarianism necessitates rigorous control over the news and information delivery infrastructure, typically to the point of gross opacity in terms of government dealings and operations. Because of low transparency, corruption can thrive and those in a position to be more proximate to the process of decision making are in better positions to benefit from these decisions. This lack of transparency further translates to poor enforcement of anti-corruption statutes which, in most of these countries, have become dead-letter laws anyway.

In the Philippines, even with our democratic government and in spite of the fact that our press is considered one of the most liberal in the entire Asian region, there is still a fair amount of press-muzzling going on. In authoritarian climes the suppression of media occurs blatantly, operating almost as a species of prior restraint. Locally on the other hand, the same effect is achieved through other

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means as evidenced by the libel cases filed by two Chief Executives: Corazon Aquino against Beltran, Soliven, and the Philippine Star, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, against the Manila Times.

Admittedly Aquino lost the case, and Estrada withdrew his suit, yet the mere filing of those actions had an unquestionable dampening effect on media's zeal for criticizing the powers that be. Thus, protected from the harsh light of public scrutiny by the threat of libel suits, government officials are able to do as they please with the impunity of those who *know* they can't be caught.

In any case, even when corrupt officials *are* caught, they fall comfortably into an inefficient legal system that, through endless delays and a congenital susceptibility to bribery, nevertheless allows them to get off, usually with nothing more than a slap on the wrist. This means that the consequences of getting caught are not nearly enough to cause a deterrent effect; quite to the contrary, the laxity or scarcity of anti-corruption laws and the feebleness of enforcement makes "official malpractice" a very attractive proposition.

A clear example of the sad state of the Philippine crusade against corruption involves the country's prime anti-graft body, created by the Constitution itself.

The Office of the Ombudsman, mandated by the Constitution to stamp out corruption in government,

suffers from a serious crisis of credibility. In 1995, a scandal involving 11 dead bank robbery suspects, three generals, a colonel, and over 20 of their men, plus 10 television sets supposedly brought on a 20 percent discount (Balgos, [HTTP://www.pcij.org.ph/stories/1998/ombudsman.html](http://www.pcij.org.ph/stories/1998/ombudsman.html)) rocked the Office and further damaged its already fractured reputation. Things have not gotten better since.

To aggravate matters, the Ombudsman has also acquired notoriety in the sloppiness of its case preparation and its predisposition to unreasonable delays. "The Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), for instance, filed a complaint against alleged Marcos crony Herminio Disini, with the Ombudsman in 1990, charging him with violation of RA 3019 for 'having induced then President Marcos to acquire financial and pecuniary interest' worth a total of P65.5 billion in two firms. *Four years later*, the case investigator required five other people to submit their counter-affidavits. Yet it took the Ombudsman until May 1997, or another three years, to rule that there was a 'lack of legal and factual basis' for the charges against Disini and company" (*ibid*).

"Indeed, the agency that had been especially created to (fight graft and corruption) seems to be falling short of its primary task. Far from striking fear in civil servants and bureaucrats

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from doing questionable deeds, the Office of the Ombudsman instead has been eliciting disappointment — if not contempt — among many of those seeking redress for the wrongdoing of public officials" (*ibid.*).

How does the Ombudsman really work?

Created under the 1986 Constitution, the Ombudsman is responsible for evidence build-up, investigation, and prosecution of corrupt bureaucrats, and conducts its war on corruption on two fronts simultaneously: the psychological and confrontational approaches (Desierto, IBP Law Journal, 1998).

The psychological approach involves the reorientation of moral values of bureaucrats through regularly conducted seminars and Values Orientation Workshops (VOW's). Unlike the confrontational approach, the psychological attack seeks to restore and strengthen the sound values of the Filipino people. This strategy does not merely aim to provide redress for the wrongful acts, but is intended to provide a lasting solution to the problem of graft and corruption by "transforming the moral make-up of the individual" (*ibid.*).

Unfortunately, although the psychological approach adopted by the Ombudsman rests on sound principles and certainly lacks nothing in nobility of purpose, it is essentially a long-term solution which presupposes

that the enlightened youth will, one day, replace the entrenched bureaucracy in one fell swoop. Since this obviously will not happen, the effects sought to be achieved by the psychological approach are so insubstantial in the short-term as to be almost illusory.

The confrontational approach holds more promise. Founded on a whole slew of anti-corruption laws, this approach calls for the administrative and criminal investigation, and prosecution of corrupt officials. But does it really work?

The Tools of the Ombudsman's Trade

The Ombudsman relies on a relatively extensive armory of laws and statutes in the fulfillment of its mission to extirpate graft and corruption and to promote integrity, efficiency, and high ethical standards in public service (*ibid.*). However, these laws are, as a rule, merely reactive — as opposed to proactive — essentially doing only two things: defining the wrongful act, and providing the penalties therefor. Stated otherwise, they ignore the need to create mechanisms by which corruption may be forestalled, waiting instead for the wrongful acts to be committed before intervention; thus, the mass of Philippine anti-corruption legislation performs practically no preventive function. This much is evidenced by the sheer volume of cases filed before the Sandiganbayan: 4,825

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in 1993; 5,349 in 1994; 4,754 in 1995; and 2,355 in 1996

This short-coming of the law is best exemplified by the provisions of the Revised Penal Code on Direct Bribery (Art. 210), Indirect Bribery (Art. 211), Qualified Theft (Art.211-A), Corruption of Public Officials (Art. 212), Frauds Against the Public Treasury (Art. 213), and Malversation of Public Funds or Property (Art.217). In all of these is the unwritten condition *sine qua non* that at least an overt act, which would necessarily bring about corruption as a direct result, must precede the attachment of liability.

Just as reactive are: RA 1379, the law on forfeiture which operates only after it has been shown that the public official concerned has amassed wealth disproportionate to his salary; PD 46, which prohibits the giving of gifts to, and the acceptance of such gifts by, public officers; and RA 7080, the law on plunder, which requires that a minimum amount of P50 million first be wrongfully accumulated by the public official before it becomes applicable.

RA 3019, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, on the other hand, while still largely reactive, does contain a few measures meant to punish acts which tend toward corruption — in particular, the provisions which prohibit:

(a) Persuading, inducing, or influencing another public officer to perform an act constituting a

violation of rules and regulations duly promulgated by competent authority or an offense in connection with the official duties of the latter, or allowing himself to be persuaded, induced, or influenced to commit such violation or offense;

(b) Causing any undue injury to any party, including the government, or giving any private party any unwarranted benefits, advantage, or preference in the discharge of his official administrative or judicial functions through manifest partiality, evident bad faith, or gross inexcusable negligence (this provision being applicable to officers or employees of offices or government corporations charged with the grant of licenses or permits or other concessions);

(c) Entering, on behalf of the Government, into any contract or transaction manifestly and grossly disadvantageous to it, whether or not the public officer profited or otherwise stands to gain thereby; and

(d) Directly or indirectly having financial or pecuniary interest in any business, contract, or transaction in connection with which the public official intervenes in any capacity, or in which he is prohibited by the Constitution, or by any law from having any interest.

As the Supreme Court declared,

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the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act does not merely contemplate the repression of acts that are unlawful or corrupt *per se*, but even those that may lead to, or result in, graft and corruption (*Luciano v. Estrella*, 345 SCRA 769). The problem with these statutes lies in the legislative theory and intent on which they are based and to which they are responsive. Corruption, as defined by the existing laws, becomes nothing more than larceny qualified by the in-

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volvement of government officials. As such, it simply has to be punished if performed.

Quite to the contrary, corruption comprehends more than just the act characterized as corrupt. Rather, it also refers to the perpetrator's state of mind—his tendency to perpetrate acts which are reflective of his depauperate mo-

rality and impoverished integrity. Unfortunately, Criminal Laws cannot punish intentions, no matter how reprehensible—morality simply cannot be legislated. This is where our laws fall short. However, while it may be true that laws cannot be made to penalize a state of mind, laws *can* be made which make it difficult, if not impossible, to translate mental determination to physical action.

The Ombudsman's Confrontational Approach

Under the best conditions, the Ombudsman's confrontational approach methodology encourages inefficiency. Ideally, the Ombudsman conducts fact-finding and intelligence operations to build-up a case against erring officials once the complaint is presented to the Office. From there, a preliminary investigation ensues for the criminal prosecution, as well as a formal administrative investigation. Should the evidence warrant it, a case gets filed with the Sandiganbayan.

The process itself, while seemingly smooth and problem-free, suffers from a congenital susceptibility to delay, wholly separate from a myriad of other factors, which could also slow the proceedings down such as the complexity of the cases themselves or the dearth of evidence.

Firstly, the task of evidence build-up falls on the Office's Fact-Finding and Investigation Bureau (FFIB) which in turn relies heavily on the assistance

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of other state agencies such as the National Bureau of Investigation, and the Commission on Audit. Unfortunately, the coordination between the FFIB and the agencies which aid it leaves a great deal to be desired. In one case, the FFIB had to wait seven years for the results of an NBI investigation (Balgos, *ibid*)

Secondly, the investigators themselves are coddled by a quota system instituted by former Ombudsman Conrado Vasquez. The way it operates, the quota system obligates investigators to finish a certain number of assigned cases every month, regardless of the number of cases originally allotted to them. As a result, the investigators tend to sift through the simpler cases until the quota is satisfied leaving the more complex ones untouched. The gross inefficiency of this system resulted in the Office of the Ombudsman having, at one time, a backlog of 14,652 cases, or 65 percent of its total workload (*ibid*).

Third, when the cases do get through the snail-paced mill of the Office, they are frequently withdrawn after having been filed with the Sandiganbayan, or returned to the Office for apparent deficiencies in the informations, or worst, dismissed outrightly by the Anti-graft Court. Clearly, the withdrawal of the informations filed in the Sandiganbayan and the dismissal of cases by the court is an indication of an apparent flaw in the investigation and prosecution of corrup-

tion cases (Villa, IBP Law Journal, 1998).

Solutions

In fairness to the Office of the Ombudsman, however, it cannot be held solely to blame for its seeming inability to curb the spiraling of graft and corruption. After all, the Office was meant only to enforce the anti-corruption statutes. While its performance may be less than stellar, the fact remains that it is severely hobbled by the very nature of the laws being enforced: almost purely reactive; mere symptomatic, and palliative, remedies which only treat the outward manifestations of the ailment while mostly ignoring the root cause of the disease.

In order to gain any sort of headway, government must set up preventive mechanisms designed to tackle the conditions and circumstances which eventually give rise to corruption: the indecent ease with which government positions can be acquired; the opacity of government operations and the concomitantly low accountability of the bureaucracy; and the grossly ineffectual system of bringing the offenders to answer for their deeds, to the bar of justice.

How, then, can this be done?

An Enlightened Bureaucracy

Like Taiwan and South Korea, the Philippines draws most of its politicians and bureaucrats from the military corps. At a very fundamental level,

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this practice spawns an "old boys' club" mentality which promotes patronage, cronyism, and nepotism. Thus, the country ends up with a bureaucracy that jealously guards its prerogatives by allowing entry only to those who would be willing to play the game their way.

In Singapore, things are run differently. That country's brightest political icons and government workers are products of a strict meritocracy which sees to it that individuals who desire to become government officials and civil workers must be qualified to take hold of such a position, as determined by their proficiency in rigorous, and highly competitive, civil service examinations. As a consequence, Singapore's public policy is unique in that it was formulated by highly-trained and skillful individuals, the cream of Singapore's educational system, not just by any well-connected Tom, Dick, or Pi-Hsien.

Lee-Kuan-Yew established this system and in so doing created an "incorruptible" class of government workers who worked long and hard to achieve that status. Unlike individuals who attained their positions through nepotism or patronage, these incorruptibles would not compromise their hard-earned status, and their integrity, for filthy lucre. The cost of losing the opportunity to work for the government would be so high as to be prohibitive.

Another factor which makes the

Singaporean bureaucracy nearly impervious to corruption is the government's use of huge amounts of financial remuneration. This makes government jobs the most sought after occupations, unlike in the Philippines where the country's best and brightest often find their niches in the private sector. In Singapore, the financial fulfillment of a government position outweighs the lure of corruption. The same cannot be said for the Philippines where government employees are popularly perceived as being grossly overworked and abominably underpaid.

Transparency, Accountability, and the Public's Trust

Since corruption violates public trust, erodes social capital, and weakens the force of law, it is the duty of the government to assure the public that corruption does not harm its performance. Like Caesar's wife, the government must not only avoid all taint of scandal but must also take positive steps to assure the public of its integrity.

In Hong Kong, the government does this through the Corruption Prevention Department (CPD) which, with its close media ties, acts as the anti-corruption watch-dog of Hong Kong's bureaucracy. As such, it ensures public trust by: first, having its work method closely covered by the Asian Journal of Public Administration which renders its operations transpar-

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ent to the public. In effect, this direct media involvement serves as an internal audit for the CPD, keeping its officers under constant exposure to public scrutiny, perforce, keeping them honest.

Divide and Conquer

A cursory examination of the anti-corruption laws which the Ombudsman needs to enforce reveals the wide range of offenses covered. The Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act alone lists more than half-a-dozen punishable acts only barely related to each other. As one chief prosecutor put it: "The anti-graft law is so broad that there are many collateral issues to consider." This dissipates the office's energies and contributes directly to it already appalling inefficiency.

In Hong Kong, the CPD, although a very small unit in the government's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), has been a very powerful arm in curbing corrupt practices in government by concentrating on very specific problems such as stock control, purchasing, and rules for staff on accepting advantages. Put another way, the CPD has a detailed job description which complements those of other units under the ICAC. Thus, it knows exactly what it is expected to do and is able to concentrate fully on the accomplishment of its task. The specific job description also cuts down on inter-

departmental overlaps and redundancies. More importantly, it allows immediate identification of malingering units since the clear outlining of duties precludes finger-pointing.

By streamlining its operations in this manner, the CPD has substantially cut down on delays which benefit only the accused who is guilty; a trick the Ombudsman has yet to learn. And learn fast since delay acts a deterrent to complainants who, believing that they would lose the waiting game anyway, opt to keep silent and thus help perpetuate corruption.

Second, the CPD concentrates on very specific problems which eliminates the possibility of giving broad discretionary powers to its officials, and focuses its energies allowing it to look into issues with greater efficiency unlike in the Philippine counterpart, the Ombudsman.

A Final Word...

In the last analysis, anti-corruption reform will only work when it finds itself supported by officials intent on its implementation. Even with all the right laws and mechanisms in place, the fight against corruption would remain an exercise in futility without the necessary political will to see it through. And so, that begs the question: do *we* have the strength of resolve needed to finally defeat the enemy within? The desperation of the times we live in will accept only one answer.
