

Thursday, May 26, 1966

## Life's Many Sides

IF...

By TON THAT THIEN

If you can keep your head  
When all about you are losing theirs.  
But think they still have them where they should be;

If you can keep your mouth from uttering the word  
That would cause a dissenter's blood to boil;

If you can get your gun ready to fire  
But turn it ten times in your hand before deciding who is your enemy.  
Then stretch out your hand to him  
Instead of putting at once a bullet through his heart;

If you are offered high honours,  
Or heaps of money,  
And can spit on both of them,

If you can set your mind  
To thinking creatively for the benefit of all,  
And not just to devise petty schemes  
To further your selfish interests;

If you can look at things foreign  
And neither rush to reject nor embrace them blindly,  
But carefully pick and choose what is best  
For your country and people, now and in the future;

If you can cling to your ideals  
When your pestering wife calls you a fool;

If you have good ideas,  
But deny no one the right to have them too;

If you can see the might of others,  
And refuse to bow your head,  
Unless the might be put to some noble end;

If you can be firm towards your friends,  
And generous towards your enemies;

If you can pardon others' weaknesses  
And tolerate no weakness in yourself;

If you can look at a pretty woman,  
And not think of her as a tender steak,  
Or at a man and not look upon him  
Merely as an inexhaustible bank;

If you can clear your desk clean everyday  
Instead of withholding your signature  
Each time the fifteen per cent commission has not been paid;

*(Censure 10 lignes)*

Destitute widows and uncared for orphans;

If you can look down from the balcony of your luxury flat  
And feel ashamed, sick and angry  
At the night of dirty thatch huts,  
Stretching under your eyes among heaps of uncleared rubbish;

If you feel the urge to strangle,  
When seeing hospitals and schools leaking in the rain  
Because their builders have stolen from the rich and young  
To cater to the whims of their expensive mistresses  
And the inspectors had closed their eyes  
On the sloppy work done  
Because they get a share of the shameless theft;

If you can put all the powers that are in you  
To serving good instead of evil,  
To building instead of destroying,  
Then Viet Nam, our country, our beloved Mother  
Will give us Freedom, and Peace, and Pride,  
And the Happiness that we all have been yearning after.