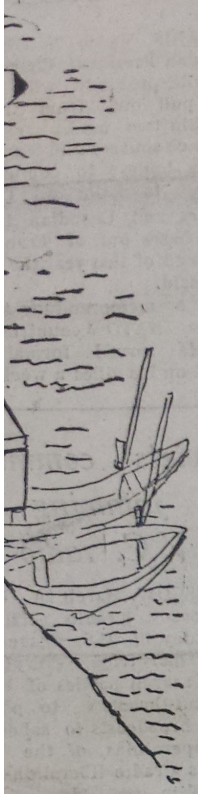

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WENDELL MERICK
The London Observer

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(OFNS-March 8)

ays it cool

By A.C. MILLER
Copley News Service

Indonesia, once China's top
on-Communist ally in Asia,
emains lost and wandering
n a chaotic state of para-

Life's Many Sides

A MOVING STORY

By TON THAT THIEN

The story of the curing of our children of cleft-lips by the US Navy surgeons is one of the most moving and the most inspiring of this foul war, and viewed from the angle of « Psywar », a most successful operation, and all the more so as it was unplanned : it just grew in the hearts of the surgeons, and it will be buried deep in the hearts of the children cured, as well as in those of their parents, relatives and neighbours.

The story, printed in the SDN on March 17, is simple enough : kindhearted men—who happened to be US officers — saw cruelty around them and thought of ways of doing away with it. They enlisted the services of those best able to do something about it: the surgeons—who happened to be US officers also. The services were eagerly offered and obvi, ously without any thought for reward of any kind- except perhaps that of having done one's duty and saving little children from a cruel fate.

Many cleft-lips have been repaired, and many lives will be blessed with happiness. The surgeons who performed the operations had undergone troubles and dangers to perform them. From the viewpoint of the villagers, these surgeons had perhaps names impossible to pronounce, and they will be remembered by some flowery Vietnamese transliteration — and distortion — of the American names, as the Vietnamese simple people of the countryside customarily do. But they will be rememebred above all as the «Bac Si My» (pronounced Bark Shee Me), the American doctors. From the point of view of the United States, that is perhaps all that really matters.

From the point of view of «Psywar», what has been done is the best, because it came straight from kind men's hearts, *and still more, because the simple villagers know that it was so.* Here is perhaps something for all those engaged in this kind of war to think about. The most successful operations are those which one carries out without any thought of being paid back. For this reason, the reward is all the more valuable because the gratitude felt will be genuine gratitude, deeply imbedded in the minds and hearts of those who had been the object of what they know was unselfish help.

But honest Vietnamese, reading the story of these operations, cannot help feeling ashamed. Where are our doctors and surgeons, for whom universities and medical schools have been built, expensive laboratory equipment provided, professors supplied at home and borrowed from abroad ? Where the officials who are supposed to see to it, that the people entrusted to their care should be really cared for and given happines s— in deeds, in the form of cured cleft-lips — and not just mentioned in speeches day after day? Has the oath of Hyppocrates become the oath of Hyppocrites?

The same honest Vietnamese feel a great debt of gratitude to wards the American doctors, surgeons, and other kind hearted Americans who have brought a little sunshine to the little girls whose live would have been condemned otherwise because they did not know that surgeons could help them, and still more because they know they could never afford to pay the costs of such an operation. The honest Vietnamese feel this great debt of gratitude because of the inspiring example of these people from overseas who have nothing to gain here but troubles and dangers, and for showing us how much just a kind heart can do.

I am one of those Vietnamese, and I feel no shame in saying so.

ED'S NOTE ;
Mr. Nguyen Van Tao regrets that owing to sickness he cannot write his usual column this week.

Letters to the Editor

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