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SAIGON--The rapid build-up of American forces has produced a golden, glittering blossom of bars, brothels, cheap hotels and battalions of prostitutes.

For the young Vietnamese woman, the war-time needs of "entertainment" have produced an unprecedented opportunity for social mobility which escalates her into a ~~and~~ Cinderella-like existence.

For both the American and the South Vietnamese governments, the bars and prostitutes present an immensely snarled problem with <sup>Social, Economic, Security And Political</sup> ~~serious political~~ overtones. As Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky <sup>Recently</sup> proposed legalizing prostitution, both Saigon intellectuals and radio Hanoi accused him of being "a pimp" for the Americans.

The almost magical opportunities for a young peasant girl to earn a <sup>Luxurious</sup> ~~healthy~~ though only slightly dishonorable ~~and~~ livelihood in the cities marks one of the key social explosions of Vietnamese womanhood. It presents itself as emancipation <sup>And</sup> from the family, from rural or low-class life, from the traditional cultural values. For many, it is the first time in their lives they owned a dress.



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"During the French times, a young woman in the morning could be planting rice in the paddyfields, by afternoon she would be in a lovely dress and by evening she would be learning the tango," one old-time Vietnamese bar hostess explained. "But it's even more pronounced now because some of the French officers had their French wives with them here, and if they didn't, the French army had the military field brothels (brodel militaire de campagne) which accompanied the troops into battle for legalized, medically-approved prostitution."

Young Vietnamese women from the provinces, who once came to Saigon as housemaids, have long ago started working as bargirls and waitresses in restaurants, thus causing middle-class Saigon housewives to complain they can no longer find maids, housekeepers and baby-sitters.

The war ~~has also~~ which drained the young men into the armed forces on both the Communist and the government side has also presented other unequalled job opportunities, <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ low-class ~~and~~ ~~and~~ women. For example, One young woman who a year ago had been a cleaner of pigsties in the provinces is now a clerk typist for an American firm, *in Saigon.*



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In the provinces, many of the roads are built by the grudgingly manual work of women; in the isolated Special Forces camps women are often hired to build the defense bunkers ("They work harder than men, but are paid less," one American captain reported) and in Saigon, the ~~booming~~ construction of military billets and private villas to be rented to Americans is being done partially by women.

The war, which has caused the ~~st~~ disintegration of Vietnam's social fabric traditionally centering around the family, has given the young low-class Vietnamese woman two extreme alternatives <sup>in</sup> "Going where the Boys are." The first alternative is to find "excitement and fun" with the Viet Cong Communists who promise ~~her~~ <sup>with</sup> "new society" ~~of~~ the second is to migrate to the secure urban areas <sup>with</sup> heavy troop concentrations. In the later case, if she selects to become a prostitute, even operating under the cover and camouflage of being a bargirl, waitress or singer, she could, with luck, snag an American husband in which case she would jump from Cinderella to being a queen. If she fails, she accepts the fact she can be the mistress of many, but can never ~~officially~~ <sup>officially</sup> marry a Vietnamese, who considers her "from a different social world" outside his boundaries.



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Economically, her one ambition is gradually to change from being a bar-girl to being a bar-owner--which she calls being a businesswoman. For some, it's not difficult. Reliable sources report that one very successful bar-girl saved one million piastres (roughly \$10,000) within a two-year period; however, less successful bar-girls complain that by the time they pay off the bar-owners and the police for protection they have less than 5000 piastres (\$50) a month left. "It's better to be a prostitute to one American man for 10,000 piastres a month until he goes home," one bar-girl reported.

During the past three years, the increasing flow of men into Saigon has produced a transformation on Saigon's main street called "Tu-Do" which means freedom. A number of garrish hotels, also called "short-time brothels", which are ~~rented~~ <sup>utilized</sup> either by the hour or by the night, have mushroomed along the mainstreet, along with a number of bars. By official count there are 146 bars in the area of several blocks around the mainstreet; and several thousand throughout the city of Saigon.



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Technically, the problem of bar-girls <sup>is</sup> not considered an infraction of U.S. military regulations since the girls are not permitted and do not spend overnight <sup>inside</sup> ~~within~~ American billets; instead they go to organized brothels or the girl's home. Since there <sup>is</sup> a shortage of rooms in U.S. military billets in Saigon, the difficulty of finding a hotel room is so great that the cheap hotels and brothels can charge the American serviceman 500 piastres (about \$5) for a bed (with as many as ten beds in one room) plus an additional mandatory charge of 500 piastres for a woman--the serviceman must pay the woman whether he takes her or not.

Upon entering the hotel with a woman, the G.I. in Saigon is obliged in some cases to sign a paper reading: "I \_\_\_\_\_, I.D. card number \_\_\_\_\_ dated \_\_\_\_\_, have brought Miss \_\_\_\_\_ to my room on \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ hotel. If an incident occurs I assume complete responsibility." (Signature)."

Whatever the economic wonderland for Vietnamese women, however, the bars and brothels present a very delicate and snarled problem for both the Vietnamese and American governments.



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Politically, the problem takes on three aspects. If Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky goes through with his proposal to legalize prostitution, and creating "professional but restricted red light districts," he would be criticized by the Vietnamese in the urban centers. Likewise, American officialdom, while recognizing he has the right to do so, blanches at <sup>this</sup> ~~the~~ thought, fearing domestic repercussions within the United States.

Secondly, in the words of one American official, speaking privately, "the American GI is now competing with the Vietnamese government soldier for two of the scarest commodities in country--women and booze. Obviously, the American <sup>has</sup> ~~have~~ more money and win <sup>him</sup> ~~which~~ doesn't endear <sup>him</sup> ~~them~~ to <sup>his</sup> ~~their~~ Vietnamese allies."

Third, ~~in~~ in the U.S. Marine enclave of Danang, the <sup>SEVERAL MONTHS AGO</sup> ~~brought~~ mushrooming of 45 bars along the main street brought a such a storm of criticism from local Vietnamese citizens that the commanding general, Brig. Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi, promised to move all the bars into the dimly-light back alleys.



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Fourth, the American image has been immeasurably tarnished by the flourishing trade of what the Communists call "decadence." One American official, witnessing the mad rush of drunken GI's and bargirls for cyclos and taxis at the the curfew hour in Saigon, groaned "the American image here is terrific. These poor fellows lose the war ~~in the night time~~ in Saigon but <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ to win it in the provinces." Pro-American diplomats in Saigon have been only somewhat less than appalled at the "indiscretion" of American commanders in tolerating such a flourishing bar and brothel traffic to be visibly displayed.

"The Viet Cong have the image of morality," one high-ranking reliable source explained. And, as one ex-Viet Cong female cadre, married to another Viet Cong explained, "The Viet Cong stamp on my husband's card that he's married. If we're separated, I know the Party would not tolerate his having an affair with another woman. Even if we're separated for two years, he'll just have to endure it," she laughed.

<sup>2</sup>  
But ~~the security and intelligence side of the problem~~ <sup>as tangled as</sup> is considered even more immense than the political.

"You must know the Viet Cong have a cell in every block in town, in every bar and in every restaurant," one highly reliable security source explained. "The waiters <sup>or</sup> of the doormen or the bar-girls--someone has to be Viet Cong or the bar would not be allowed to exist."



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One bar-girl confided, "Oh, the Americans tell us everything. They even tell us where they'll build new airbases and installations so we can buy up the land in that section."

One province chief in a remote area explained, "My (Vietnamese) troops get lonely out here without their families. The Viet Cong have planted a number of women in this town to keep them happy---but these women always know when we are going on operations---and where they will be."

Of more immediate concern to some security officials is the fact that often the American GI is robbed "while in an unknown hotel with unknown woman." In some cases, the GI is robbed of his weapons; in other cases his billfold, <sup>LOSING NOT</sup> only his money, but also his American military iidentity card. Some security officers fear that these military identity cards, containing a photograph, could be used by Communist <sup>Q</sup>Caucasians to penetrate American installations ~~in the area~~.

Since many of the newly-arrived bar-girls in Saigon do not possess the national identity card of the Vietnamese government, the total number of girls operating in Saigon is unknown. "Trying to figure out what's what' and Who's where is a major security problem," one reliable source indicated.



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Medically, one official said "there is a high incident rate of venereal disease--and that rate is rising, but it is not rising as quickly as is the increase in the number of American troops." In one random catch of 44 bar-girls in the U.S. Marine Corps enclave of Danang, 21 turned out to have venereal disease.

In an unusual situation, the strains of the disease in Vietnam are resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics. None of the American modern medicines are able to cure permanently the disease; those contracting it are, according to reliable sources, ~~are~~ detained at the hospital at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, and are refused re-admission into the United States until the disease is considered satisfactorily arrested.

There is no ~~compulsory~~ compulsory, government-sponsored or approved medical program for the bar-girls, but in some of the remotest outposts and towns, American Special Forces medics are known to treat medically the women involved. A Vietnamese government program of medical control is now under discussion.



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One Saigon intellectual explained one viewpoint of the Vietnamese population. "The Vietnamese peasant is very simple. Don't steal his rice or his chickens, don't touch his wife or daughters. Once you've done that, you've lost."

Or expressed more bluntly, a Vietnamese taxidriver, whirling past the bars and brothels of Saigon's main street explained, "This is not ~~Americans~~. This is America-ca" Ca-ca is the lowest of French slang meaning excrement.