

The U.S. Military and the Growth of Prostitution in Southeast Asia

By Preston Jones

Advisory Board Member, ECPAT-USA

In the last years of the twentieth century the growth of prostitution in Southeast Asia received considerable attention from journalists, human rights activists, feminists (including Hillary Rodham Clinton),¹ political commentators, and Pope John Paul II.² While the bulk of this attention focused on contemporary events and concerns--e.g. child prostitution and the spread of AIDS--the U.S. military's historic role in laying the foundation for the Asian sex industry was frequently noted. The International Labor Organization, for instance, maintained that "[by] far the most significant impact on prostitution in the Philippines was the establishment of United States military bases in the country."³ Over the same period, moreover, some important works were published on prostitution outside U.S. military installations in East Asia.⁴ So far as this writer has been able to determine, however, no study that focuses on the U.S. military's historic link to the Southeast Asian sex trade has been published. Drawing on journalistic articles written in the 1960s and '70s, published recollections of U.S. military personnel and Asian prostitutes, interviews conducted with American veterans,⁵ U.S. Navy cruise books (the Navy's equivalent of a high school annuals), and secondary sources, this paper outlines the military's role in building and supporting the Southeast Asian sex trade.

It is a commonplace that prostitutes, pliers of the "world's oldest trade," have always found ready patrons among military personnel⁶--even if the prostitutes were not themselves

¹ See "Trafficking of girls decried," *Press Democrat* (Santa Rosa, CA) 11 October 1999, A3.

² See Kevin Bales, "Thailand: Because She Looks Like a Child," ch. in *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Oliver Starr, Jr., "Prostitution at the U.N.," *Weekly Standard* 21 December 1998, 29; Sister Soledad Perpinan, "Militarism and the Sex Industry in the Philippines," ch. in *Women and Violence* ed., Miranda Davis (London, UK: Zed Books, 1994); Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, "Sexual Economies in the Asia-Pacific Community," ch. in *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Idea of the Pacific Region* ed., Arif Dirlik (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Betty Rogers, "Bitter Harvest," *Ms.* (October/November 1999), 45-53; and "Sex for Sale," *Time* 21 June 1993, 51.

³ Cited in a letter from Jennifer Butler, Presbyterian United Nations Office, to Carolyn Becraft, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, 3 November 1999.

⁴ The best works in this regard are Sandra Pollack et al., *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military* (New York: The New Press, 1992) and Katherine Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁵ Five U.S. military veterans whose periods of service ranged from the late 1960s to the present were interviewed for this study. While these interviews inform this paper, none of them are cited directly, primarily for reasons of confidentiality.

⁶ This view seems to have been expressed in a letter to the editor by Theodore Fahey, written in protest against an essay by Preston Jones on the U.S. military and the Asian sex trade published in the *Press Democrat* (29 August 1999, G4). "Research would show...that there was a sex trade in Asia before there was a U.S. Navy, or even a British or Roman Navy [*sic*]. It will probably be there when the United States has gone the way of the Romans." *Press Democrat* 14 September 1999, B4.

always volunteers.⁷ In Smolensk, during the Second World War, the German military opened a brothel for officers, and thus forced women into sexual service.⁸ Less sordid though still pathetic is the testimony of Italian women who, at the end of the Second World War, “would perform any service for a can of food,” and who found American military personnel of all ethnic persuasions ready to oblige.⁹

According to Beth Bailey and David Farber, during the Second World War a large number of prostitutes in Hawaii, each servicing upward of 100 men a day, made a fiscal “killing.” “Shackjobs,” or long-term, paid relationships with women of Hawaiian or Filipino descent were also common among military personnel stationed in Hawaii (as they were later in Vietnam); and while some objected to the military’s tolerance of the sex trade in Honolulu, local military authorities believed that such was necessary to boost U.S. servicemen’s dismal morale--though whether morale was in fact boosted by these means is not clear.¹⁰ Military doctors were employed to ensure that Hawaii’s prostitutes were free from venereal disease, while moral dissenters—the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement, for example--were patronized but effectively ignored. “Close to 250,000 men a month paid three dollars for three minutes of the only intimacy most were going to find in Honolulu.”¹¹

It is clear that before the war in Vietnam military personnel consorted with prostitutes, often with their officers’ tacit approval. But what also seems clear is that prostitution played a much more central role in the American effort in Vietnam than it did in any previous conflict. During the war in Indochina, U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright and *Sunday Times* of London correspondent Murray Sayle maintained, independently of one another, that U.S. forces in South Vietnam had turned Saigon into a “brothel”¹²--a reference to the estimated 500,000 Vietnamese prostitutes who served an approximately equal number of GI’s.¹³ The frequency of references to brothels in soldiers’ memoirs,¹⁴ as well as certain criticisms brought to bear against the war by some of its opponents, suggests the ease with which American troops could procure prostitutes during the war. On 4 April 1968--exactly one year before he was assassinated--Martin Luther King decried a situation in Vietnam wherein children were compelled to “[sell] their sisters to

⁷ Rape is also an unfortunate constant in war. See Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 31-113. Also see Kathleen Berry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 59-64.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰ Perhaps the most interesting theme that emerged from the interviews conducted for this study was that participation in the Southeast Asian sex trade was in fact no boost to morale. In fact, four of the five interviewees maintained that they soon regretted, as the case was, either their own participation or that of their peers.

¹¹ Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: The Alchemy of Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 36, 46, 95, 98 and 100-101.

¹² Fulbright quoted in Jill Gay, “The ‘Patriotic’ Prostitute,” *The Progressive* (February 1985), 34; Sayle cited in Grace Sevy, ed., *The American Experience in Vietnam: A Reader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 119.

¹³ Nanette J. Davis, ed., *Prostitution: An International Handbook on Trends, Problems and Policies* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 334.

¹⁴ See, for example, John A Parrish, *12, 20 & 5: A Doctor’s Year in Vietnam* (New York: E.P Dutton, 1972), 169-173; Robert Mason, *Chickenhawk* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 159-160; John Sack, *Lieutenant Calley: His Own Story* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 75; and Kim Willeson, *The Bad War: An Oral History of the Vietnam War* (New York: NAL Books, 1987), 58. Also see James Fenton, *All the Wrong Places: Adrift in the Politics of the Pacific Rim* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988), 58, 70-71, and 92-93; Alan Dawson, *55 Days: The Fall of South Vietnam* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 267; and James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 262-265.

our soldiers.” “We have corrupted their [Vietnamese] women and children...,” said King. “What liberators!”¹⁵ Furthermore, while the thriving sex industry that existed in (for example) Honolulu during the Second World War went into rapid decline after American troops went home, and while at least one authority in Korean history maintains that South Korea’s brothel-centered camp towns would vanish were American troops to leave the Korean peninsula,¹⁶ the ongoing legacy of the U.S. military’s support of prostitution in Southeast Asia appears to be very great--the Americans’ own large-scale departure from Southeast Asia in the early 1970s notwithstanding.¹⁷

Of course, American troops did not, so to say, invent Southeast Asian prostitution or its grimmer handmaid, sexual slavery. American military personnel did however capitalize on, and consequently helped to promote, a regime that already existed in Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines.¹⁸ Three hundred years before U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara negotiated an agreement with the government of Thailand that allowed American servicemen to enjoy rest and recreation in that country,¹⁹ one Thai official ran a “prostitution monopoly” that comprised some 600 sex slaves.²⁰ Still, no sources consulted for this study hesitate to suggest that the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia during the war in Vietnam significantly boosted the sex trade.²¹

To put the point another way, American personnel stationed at the air base in (for example) Sattahip, Thailand, did not introduce the idea of prostitution into the region. But the brothel industry that was built near that base, in Pattaya Beach, grew into, and remains, one of the East Asian sex industry’s main centers.²² Pattaya was a “great place for a sailor on leave...,” wrote an Australian journalist in 1976. “Pattaya in fact, [*sic*] got its start as a resort when there was an American base at nearby Sattaheep [*sic*]--nowadays there are still plenty of sailors about, both Thai and American.”²³ In the 1990s, the U.S. Navy continued to use Pattaya Beach as a rest and recreation site for sailors and marines on lengthy deployments in the Pacific. Sailors stationed aboard the *U.S.S. Midway* on the way home from the Gulf War in March 1991 were greeted by bar girls whose trade had suffered as a result of the war. One Pattaya Beach club raised a banner bidding the sailors “Welcome... to the Red Parrot Sexy Life Show.”²⁴ Two years earlier the editors of a cruise book--under the direction of a certain Lieutenant Commander Roun--commemorated a deployment of the *U.S.S. Ranger* with a photograph of Pattaya’s bar strip. In the photograph one sees signs advertising the Grace Disco Club, Baby Go Go, and the Honey Bar and Go Go. Mostly, however, the *Ranger*’s photographers focused on sailors

¹⁵ Sevy, *The American Experience in Vietnam*, 229.

¹⁶ Bruce Cumings, “Silent but Deadly: Sexual Subordination in the U.S.-Korean Relationship,” in Pollack, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 175. Also see Moon, *Sex Among Allies*; and Stephen Barlay, *Bondage: The Slave Traffic in Women Today* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), 140-144.

¹⁷ See, for example, Charles Nicholl, *Borderlines: A Journey in Thailand and Burma* (New York: Viking, 1988), 44; and Christopher Hitchens, “Minority Report,” *The Nation* 29 November 1986, 598.

¹⁸ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 93.

¹⁹ Rogers, “Bitter Harvest,” 48.

²⁰ Joshua Eliot, *Thailand Handbook* (Bath, UK: Passport Books, 1997), 75.

²¹ See, for example, Ellen Baker “Prostitution,” in *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* ed., Stanley I. Kutler (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 460; and Rogers, “Bitter Harvest,” 48.

²² On Sattahip and other U.S. bases in Thailand, see Frederica M. Booge, ed., *Thailand: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 157 and 240.

²³ Joe Cummings, *Thailand: A Travel Survival Kit* (Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 1976), 121.

²⁴ Steven Erlanger, “Thai Bar Girls Greet Sailors Like Heroes,” *New York Times* 25 March 1991, A9.

shopping and windsurfing.²⁵ What actually went on in Pattaya when the American navy arrived is only hinted at, and there is no indication that local Thais would have any reason, in the words of one resident of Pattaya Beach, to “dread the arrival of the Americans.”²⁶

There is no doubt that the 45,000 men stationed in Thailand during the war in Vietnam, along with the thousands of others who visited the country on R&R, had a dramatic effect on the Thai economy²⁷--particularly insofar as the “entertainment” industry was concerned. “Bangkok today is a wide-open boom town,” one observer wrote in the late 1960s. “New hotels are springing up overnight, to cater for the tourists and the terrific number of American servicemen on duty here.”²⁸ In July 1967 another journalist noted that Bangkok was “booming” and becoming “more and more divorced in character and outlook from the Thai countryside.”

I couldn't help wondering just how long all the neon-lighted prosperity of Bangkok would last after a settlement of the Vietnam War: a large section of the Thai economy is geared to the demands created by the war, and in particular to the more basic demands made by the thousands of American military personnel on “R and R.”²⁹

Unlike Thailand, the Philippines was not a regular R&R site for ground troops serving in Vietnam, though the 37,000 U.S. Air Force and Navy personnel stationed in the Philippines in the late 1960s--chiefly at Clark Air Force Base near Angeles City, and Subic Bay Naval Base, near Olongapo³⁰--were supplied with their own recreational facilities. In the late 1950s about 20 “rest and recreation” centers for American troops existed in the Philippines; by the mid-1960s that number had risen to 600.³¹ And whereas in 1967 there had been some cultural debate over the propriety of Filipinas in mini-skirts,³² by the mid-1970s there was little open resistance to the U.S. military's involvement with the sex trade in the Philippines. “Although there is occasional criticism from the Catholic Church and old ladies against the libidinous activities of Filipinos,” wrote one journalist, “the warm-blooded Filipinos take little notice.”³³ In 1971 the *U.S.S. San Jose's* cruise book included two photographs of scantily clad Filipino bar girls and the book's editors noted that Olongapo “is the Tijuana of Asia in every respect, both good and bad.”³⁴

In a lugubrious sort of way, it is almost fitting that prostitution became an entrenched, and officially sanctioned, U.S. military institution at the same time that Friedrich Nietzsche's famous dictum--“God is dead--supposedly became an article of faith for disenchanting youth; for it was Nietzsche who wrote that “Man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior.”³⁵ And so it was:

²⁵ *U.S. Ranger CV-61, 1989: Western Pacific and Indian Ocean Deployment* (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1989), 439.

²⁶ Yora Lin, “Thailand,” *ECPAT-USA News* (August 1999), 2. In her “eyewitness account of child prostitution” in Pattaya Beach, Lin writes that American sailors she observed seemed to be unaware of “how wrong it is to pay for sex with these barely developed girls.”

²⁷ Bunge, *Thailand*, 240.

²⁸ Sean O'Callaghan, *The Yellow Slave Trade: A Survey of the Traffic in Women and Children in the East* London, UK: Anthony Blond, 1968), 121.

²⁹ Traveller's Tales, *Far Eastern Economic Review* 27 July 1967, 187. Hereafter this journal is referred to as FEER.

³⁰ Kayser Sung, “Changing Horizons: America in Asia,” FEER 4 July 1968, 24.

³¹ Gay, “The ‘Patriotic’ Prostitute,” 34.

³² “Traveller's Tales,” FEER 14 September 1967, 499.

³³ “Philippines: The ‘Open Society,’” FEER 9 January 1976, 31.

³⁴ *The Crew's Book: U.S.S. San Jose AFS-7* (Palo Alto, CA: Litho Graphics West, 1971), 161 and 167.

³⁵ Nietzsche cited in Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 48.

Military brothels on Army base camps (“Sin Cities,” “Disneylands,” or “boom-boom parlors”) were built by decisions of a division commander, a two-star general, and were under the direct operational control of a brigade commander with the rank of colonel. Clearly, Army brothels in Vietnam existed by the grace of Army Chief of Staff William C. Westmorland, the United States Embassy in Saigon, and the Pentagon.³⁶

Necessary to the healthy functioning of this system were the military’s doctors who checked Vietnamese, Thai, and Filipino prostitutes for venereal disease—and they continued to do so in the Philippines until the American bases there closed in the early 1990s.³⁷ Matters concerning prices for women, on the other hand, were left up to local officials, brothel owners and the servicemen themselves.³⁸ Similarly, questions concerning the ages of prostitutes were not frequently asked nor, apparently, were they considered important: a law specifically against U.S. citizens, including military personnel, engaging in sexual relations with minors overseas was not passed until 1992.³⁹ Indeed, minors employed as prostitutes in Southeast Asia were so common that an American aircraft carrier’s cruise book, published in 1989, unabashedly included a picture of an obviously very young, perhaps fifteen-year-old, Thai prostitute striking a sexually provocative pose.⁴⁰ As late as 1999 a Thai resident of Pattaya Beach expressed amazement that U.S. naval officers did nothing to stop sailors from paying under-aged girls for sex.⁴¹ It seems likely that many if not most of the Southeast Asian prostitutes employed by U.S. military personnel during the conflict in Vietnam and, later, in ports-of-call in Thailand and around U.S. military installations in the Philippines were minors.⁴²

During the conflict in Vietnam, American military personnel were afforded rest and recreation not only in Thailand and the Philippines but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan; one finds numerous reports in the press of the day on marines having their “basic needs” met in both places.⁴³ In 1966 American servicemen occupied about one-third of Taipei’s hotel rooms, and in February of the next year some ten thousand U.S. troops converged on Taipei for rest and recreation.⁴⁴ Three decades later, however, Hong Kong and Taiwan—unlike Thailand and the Philippines—were not considered major centers of the Asian sex industry (though a large majority of Taiwanese themselves believed prostitution and pornography present serious problems for their society).⁴⁵ Determining why this is the case is beyond the scope of this paper, though a significant part of the answer is probably to be found in the strength of Hong Kong’s

³⁶ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 95.

³⁷ Sandra Sturdevant, “The Bar Girls of Subic Bay” *The Nation* 3 April 1989, 444-446; Perpinan, “Militarism and the Sex Industry in the Philippines,” 151-52.

³⁸ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 96.

³⁹ The Mann Act was amended to make sexual relations with minors in foreign countries a punishable offense in the United States. In September 1999 Michael David Rostoker was arrested for his relations with a thirteen-year-old Vietnamese girl. “CEO arrested in sex case,” *Press Democrat* 24 September 1999, B3.

⁴⁰ *U.S. Ranger CV-61, 1989*, 439.

⁴¹ Yin, “Thailand,” 2.

⁴² Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 96.

⁴³ “Traveller’s Tales,” *FEER* 21 September 1972, 552. Also see “R&R in Hong Kong,” ch. in Stanley Goff et al., *Brothers: Black Soldiers in the Nam* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982).

⁴⁴ “R&R Boom,” *FEER* 16 March 1967, 488.

⁴⁵ Murray A. Rubinstein, ed., *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to Present* (London, UK: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 91.

and Taiwan's economies relative to the economies of the Philippines and Thailand. In the late-1990s per capita gross domestic product in Hong Kong and Taiwan was, respectively, \$21,650 and \$14,700; in 1998 per capita GDP in Thailand and the Philippines stood at \$7,700 and \$2,600.⁴⁶ With relatively fewer economic opportunities available to them, Thai and Filipino families were more willing to see their daughters sell themselves into prostitution than was true in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Indeed, in Thailand and the Philippines impoverished parents themselves oftentimes sold their daughters to brothel operators, thus effectively handing their daughters, and sometimes their sons, into slavery.⁴⁷ In 1976 a journalist noted that some "country girls" from northern Thailand were "tricked into coming to Bangkok and then literally imprisoned in brothels by vicious and unscrupulous men and women who sometimes resort to beating the girls and forcing them to take drugs to keep them submissive."⁴⁸ This scenario was still being played out, though in greater numbers, in the 1990s.⁴⁹

To repeat an important point, this phenomenon did not begin with American R&R in Thailand and the installation of U.S. military bases in the Philippines. But the well-founded belief that good money could be made in the sex industry became deeply rooted during the war in Vietnam, and in Thailand and the Philippines the industry has, since the mid-1960s, gone from strength to strength.⁵⁰ The placards Thai bar girls painted in protest against the withdrawal of U.S. troops from their country in the mid-1970s--"G.I. No Go Back"; "G.I. I Love You"--attest to the extent to which their livelihood depended on U.S. currency.⁵¹ In the late 1980s some retired bar girls, now elevated into mamsans (brothel managers), still pined for the golden days. "I work bars more than 25 years," said one Thai woman in an interview conducted in the early 1990s. "I started when 14. I miss Americans from Vietnam War. I still like."⁵²

The resistance of Filipino bar girls to efforts at shutting down the U.S. military bases in their country provides comparable evidence of the extent to which the sex trade in the Philippines thrived on American money.⁵³ To be sure, this fact was not lost on the Filipino authorities. By the early 1970s the Filipino government had come to recognize that "The lovely... Filipinas are one of the country's greatest assets," and that, given the country's high number of impoverished Filipinas, there was no dearth of available capital.⁵⁴ That the government of the Philippines succeeded in finding a sufficient number of women to feed the sex industry--despite its long-standing insistence that prostitution is illegal in the Philippines and, hence, does not exist--is clear. In 1973 a Ministry of Tourism was formed in the Philippines--to considerable effect: in 1971 about 150,000 tourists visited the country; a million did so in 1980--about 66 percent of which were men, mostly Japanese. "For Japanese men the main lure [was] the sex tour."⁵⁵

⁴⁶ *The Europa World Year Book* (London, UK: Europa Publications, 1997), 897; and *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (Mahwah, NJ: 1998), 833, 848 and 849.

⁴⁷ Gordon Fairclough et al., "Flesh-Trade Options," FEER 14 April 1994, 28.

⁴⁸ "Thailand: What the GI's Left Behind," FEER 9 January 1976, 27.

⁴⁹ See Bales, "Thailand: Because She Looks Like a Child."

⁵⁰ Siriporn Skrobanek et al., *The Traffic in Women: Human Realities of the International Sex Trade* (London, UK: Zed Books, 1997), 8 and 30-31.

⁵¹ "Thailand: What the GI's Left Behind," FEER 9 January 1976, 27.

⁵² Dave Walker and Richard S. Ehrlich, eds., *"Hello My Big Big Honey!" Love Letters to Bangkok Bar Girls and Their Revealing Views* (Bangkok: Dragon Dance Publications, 1992), 93.

⁵³ "Philippines: The 'Open Society,'" FEER 9 January 1976, 30.

⁵⁴ William Knox, "Field Problems," FEER 25 March 1972, 74.

⁵⁵ Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom, *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 182-83.

To illustrate the matter another way: whereas in the mid-1960s some 600 Filipino brothels catered mostly to American servicemen, by 1990 that number had arisen to 1,200.⁵⁶ And when the Americans closed their bases in the Philippines in the early 1990s, the Filipino sex industry, now well endowed with infrastructure, turned its attention to attracting foreign tourists.⁵⁷ The long-running farce wherein Filipino officials vowed, pointlessly, to stamp out the sex trade was hauled onto center stage in mid-1992, but only briefly.⁵⁸

A similar pattern emerged in Thailand. In the mid-1960s, even as some in Thailand were complaining that too many tourists were visiting the country⁵⁹ and that American military personnel were creating “moral and social problems,”⁶⁰ the *Far Eastern Economic Review* guessed that between Thailand’s “hostesses,” “dancing partners,” masseuses, and less glamorous bar girls, some 20,000 young women were “earning well from Thailand’s fastest-growing industry.”⁶¹ In 1976 public health officials in Thailand estimated that there were some 86,000 prostitutes employed in over 1,400 brothels, 490 bars, some 450 massage parlors and 600 other business locations.⁶² By the late 1980s estimates of the number merely of *child* prostitutes in Thailand ranged from 100,000 (Thai police study) to 250,000 (ECPAT) to 800,000 (Centre for the Protection of Children’s Rights).⁶³ In 1967 tourism was Thailand’s sixth greatest source of foreign currency; thirty years later it was the greatest. In 1965 some 250,000 tourists visited Thailand;⁶⁴ in 1996 seven million tourists--two-thirds of them unaccompanied men--did.⁶⁵ To the extent that the U.S. military laid the foundation for sex tourism in Thailand, this last figure points to an important, if finally unquantifiable, American legacy.

For visitors to Southeast Asian cities where U.S. military personnel once worked and played, perhaps the most immediate reminder of the Americans’ former presence are the populations of fatherless Amerasian children, many of whom by the end of the twentieth century were young adults. By the time the United States closed its last military base in the Philippines in 1992, some 50,000 Filipino children had been fathered by American servicemen.⁶⁶ Twenty-five years after U.S. forces had withdrawn from Vietnam, American journalists still criticized the U.S. Army for never accepting its “responsibility to the thousands of Amerasian children fathered and abandoned by U.S. servicemen.”⁶⁷

It is well known that Amerasian children, particularly those with black fathers, face discrimination in Southeast Asia and thus find it very difficult to find legitimate work.

⁵⁶ Gay, “The ‘Patriotic’ Prostitute,” 34; and Pollock et al, *Let the Good Times Roll*, 37.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Jonathan Friedland, “Passion Play,” FEER 12 March 1992, 40.

⁵⁸ Rodney Tasker, “Capital Punishment,” FEER 11 June 1992, 13.

⁵⁹ “A.B. Santos, “Door Ajar,” FEER 6 July 1967, 33.

⁶⁰ Frances L. Starnier, “Troubled Triangle,” FEER 22 June 1967, 663. On 13 April 1967 FEER cited U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Young as saying that the Americans “should lower our visibility...and improve our quality” in Thailand (57).

⁶¹ Traveller’s Tales, FEER 27 July 1967, 187.

⁶² “Thailand and What the GI’s Left Behind,” FEER 9 January 1976, 27.

⁶³ Vickie F. Li, “Child Sex Tourism to Thailand: The Role of the United States as a Consumer Country,” *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal* 4:2 (May 1995), 512-13. ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.

⁶⁴ Frances L. Starnier, “Thai Sins,” FEER 8 June 1967, 583.

⁶⁵ Kevin Bales, *Disposable People*, 75.

⁶⁶ Jennifer Butler, United Nations Office Presbyterian Church (USA), unpublished paper on the U.S. military and the Asian sex trade, 21.

⁶⁷ Katha Pollitt, “War and Memory,” *The Nation* 12 July 1999, 9.

Consequently, some of these children turned to prostitution or were forced by pedophiles and sex traffickers into the skin trade.⁶⁸

In the late 1980s, American journalists Brian Kelley and Mark London observed some such children. “The girls in string bikinis came on [stage],” they wrote of their experience in a Thai club, “some with eerily beautiful faces were part Asian, part American. Most striking was one girl who was part black, part Thai. She had a muscular body with full breasts and a tight Afro. They’d [the dancers] be about 18 years old.” And this, Kelly and London continued, was “One last American legacy, before we licked our wounds and headed home from Vietnam.”⁶⁹

Preston Jones served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific in the late-1980s. He teaches history at John Brown University.

⁶⁸ See footnote 67 above.

⁶⁹ Brian Kelly and Mark London, *The Four Little Dragons: Inside Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore at the Dawn of the Pacific Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 402.

Southeast Asia is a region in which democratization has proceeded at a mixed pace. In the past decade, the Philippines and Thailand have consolidated relatively young democracies. Indonesia, under authoritarian rule for 30 years, continues to make strides in its democratic transformation. In Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, we are promoting more open societies and democratic government.Â Domestic and cross-border trafficking in women and children, including for the purpose of prostitution, remains a very serious problem in Cambodia. As of April 2002, the Government of Cambodia had not fully complied with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and had not made significant efforts to do so.