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OTHER SCENES

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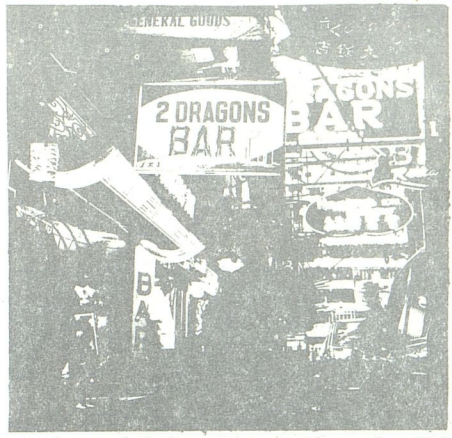
HONGKONG

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"Topless barmaids, bottomless hostesses and the naked look" say the signs in the back streets of Tsimshatsui and Wanchai and this once-staid (at least outwardly) British colony seems to have joined the rest of the free world in peddling open sex. It was always available in abundance, of course, although it was necessary to make a pretence of looking for it.

What caused the change was the ending last winter of Hong Kong's status as a major Rest & Recreation center for sex-hungry GI's and the sudden realisation by the colony's back street businesses and bars that today's tourist is seeking something more sophisticated than the typical Suzie Wong bar which for a decade or more had been so successful.

At its peak the lucrative R & R scheme was bringing 16 plane loads a month into HK, each plane containing 165 servicemen whose average expenditure was about \$150 each per day for a monthly total of almost \$2 million. Almost 900 hotel rooms nightly were reserved for U.S. servicemen on leave and 35 hotels plus hundreds of bars, cocktail lounges, brothels, tailors and shops catered almost exclusively to this clientele.

Not to mention a generation of readily available bargirls who built houses, bought boats and looked after their families on their earnings. One 29-year-old former hostess admitted owning two blocks of apartments and putting \$40,000 in the bank; another said she now made much more from her



stock market investments than she did from the bar.

Of course, for every one who achieved a life of financial independence, a hundred others ended up with lives ravaged by disease, drink or drugs. In fact the prevalence of drug traffic, said an R&R spokesman, is one of the reasons that the five-year-old program in Hong Kong was phased out although gradual withdrawal from Vietnam would have cut down the trade heavily anyhow. Major R & R place remaining is Bangkok, other cities being Sydney, Taipei and Honolulu.

Some of Hong Kong's Suzies readily found employment in the blossoming 'private clubs' where visitors magically become "members" on payment of about \$2 at the door, coughing up around \$10 or \$12 more to see blue movies, lesbian couples or other sex acts. Recently one was raided after police noticed 80 Japanese businessmen being led down the narrow alleyway to

its entrance off a main street in Kowloon, but usually the police don't bother the membership clubs on the grounds that the shows they present are "not on public view."

A few of the performers move from club to club, and some clubs are said to take in as much as \$2,500 per night—a considerable sum in a town where the average secretary might make \$150 per month.

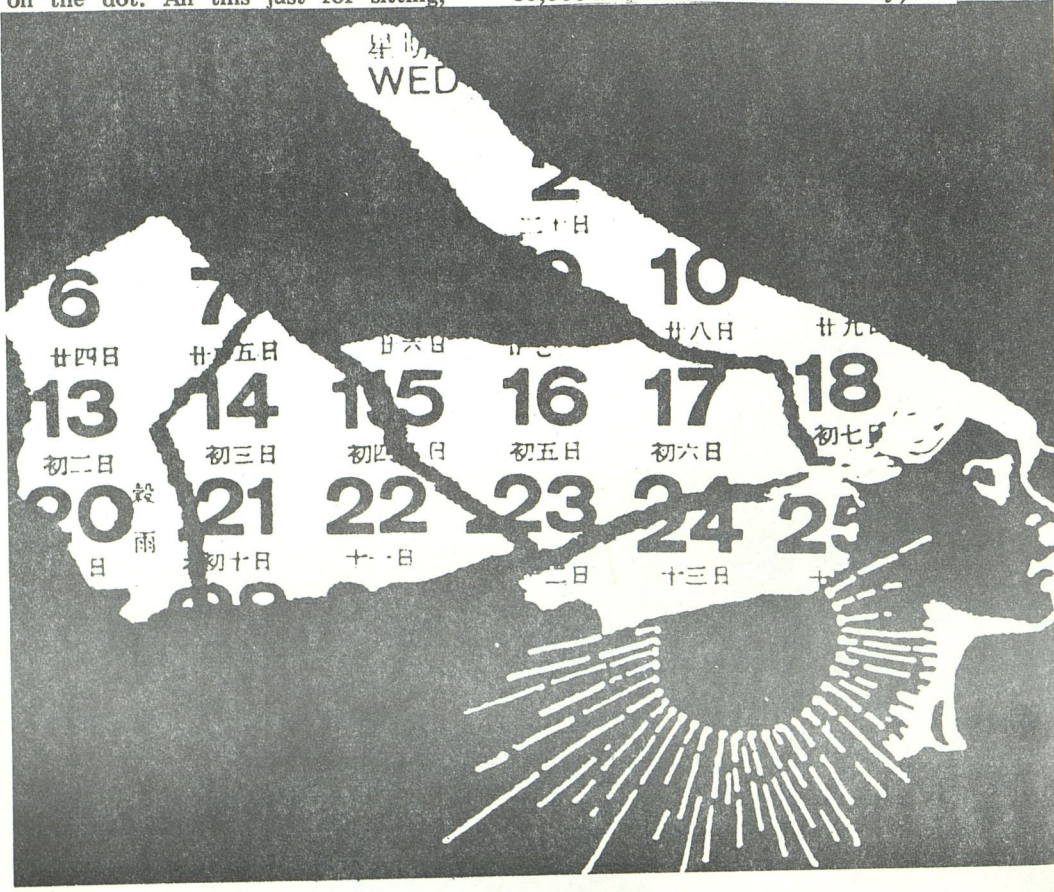
Mostly, though, the bars have been shifting to the Japanese hostess system and, indeed, it was Japanese businessmen from Tokyo's Ginza district who opened the first of the new-style bars. Here, according to a recent ad in the South China Morning Post, hostesses who are "educated, good-looking, European, Chinese Korean and other nationalities" can earn as much as \$700 U.S. monthly. European girls, in fact, are highly in demand and charge higher rates for the after-hours business that accounts for the bulk of a hostess' income. (On duty she costs the customer the price of a drink, \$11 H.K.—about \$2 U.S.—every 15 minutes on the dot. All this just for sitting,

talking, drinking and occasionally feeling him up).

Buckets o' Blood

Chinese swordplay movies, turned out in the dozens by Shaw Brothers studios, use gallons of a special fake blood which spurts out every few minutes from severed heads, punctured eyes and eardrums and from karate villains puncturing the stomach of an unfortunate victim. Often it is gushingly spit forth from an injured mouth. All this is regarded as good clean fun and movies with such themes reap millions; even being shown on television. Recently however, HK authorities banned from local display a series of BBC sex education movies (Merry-Go-Round—shown to eight-year-olds in England) and the movie "Easy Rider" because of its publicizing of marihuana dealers.

P.S. HK narcotics officials confiscated more than 10,000 pounds of opium in the first few months of last year and there are estimated to be 80,000 heroin addicts in the colony).





Hair of the Dog

Such delicacies as braised bear paw, stewed snow frog, braised wildcat, fish lips in clear soup, sea bear, birds tongues, frogs belly with minced shrimps, birds nests and deers tails are all available in the exotic restaurants of HK. But—although it's rarely talked about—"fragrant meat", otherwise known as plain old dogmeat, is also a favorite at back alley greasy spoons near the HK-Macau ferry dock where a steaming hot bowlfull sells for about \$1.50. Dogmeat is illegal but for centuries has been a favorite in Chinese cuisine. Westerners who've tried it say that the meat is a little tough but that it's certainly "fragrant"—the aroma lingers in your throat for days afterwards.

On the Move

HK's system of minibuses—14-seater micro-buses operating on the main routes like taxis that can be boarded or left at any point for a fixed fare of 8¢—are so successful at relieving transport problems that they should be instituted in every major city of the world. That's the theme of a recent study by Richard Butler, HK's assistant traffic commissioner, which won him a doctorate from London University. Most of the minibus drivers hire their vehicles for \$8 per shift, operating independently and making as many trips as possible consistent with traffic conditions to bring in a profit of an additional \$10 for their day's work. HK's transport system is expanding rapidly with a new tunnel under the harbor to Kowloon being constructed, an elaborate 50-mile subway project in

the works and plans for the existing helicopter service to the airport to be extended to local hotel roofs and to the neighboring Portuguese colony of Macau.

Escaping China

Ten hours' swimming in rough seas patrolled by Chinese gunboats is the route chosen by thousands of refugees from mainland China on their escape bid to Hong Kong. Hundreds are shot or stoned to death while still clinging to inflated pig bladders in the water, many drown and scores of others are caught while still on land by specially-trained dogs patrolling from a Chinese border post.

But still the refugees come—almost 20,000 last year (1971) in the biggest exodus since 1962. Most of those caught by Hong Kong authorities are sent back but some, particularly the swimmers are allowed to stay. And some of these find that adjusting to a free society is even harder than escaping. Incessant traffic, crowded streets, noise, fumes and poverty are difficult to accept after the tranquility of the Chinese countryside and, report some refugees, even "the foul language and obscene talk about girls" is upsetting.

"I am not a puritan but I shrink from many things I see in Hong Kong", escapee Au Kam, 21, told a local paper. "Hot pants and miniskirts everywhere, near-nudity on the beaches, even the uniforms of schoolgirls high above the knees. Films sprout sex and brutality. There are none of these things in China."

CHINESE UNDERGROUND

For almost two years now, Hong Kong has had its own underground paper, The 70's Biweekly (c/o 226 Queens Road East, HK) published in Chinese and English by a mixed bunch of freeks who say that Mao is the aging head of a too-long-entrenched bureaucracy and they look forward to getting into China and helping to change it all.

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