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Emily Nelms

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Prior to the Vietnam Wars, including the occupation of both the French and American armies, the city of Saigon held architectural beauty and was known for its rich history spanning back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. In addition to the Vietnamese, the population comprised various ethnic backgrounds because of its access to ports and trade. However, as the United States Army moved into Saigon and established its central command post within the city, not only did it eradicate much of the city's housing and farming spaces for military usage, it positioned the city as a primary target for the Viet Cong Communist soldiers. Throughout the decades of warfare, the city of Saigon suffered enormous structural and economic damage as a result of the placement of the U.S. base. Furthermore, Vietnamese citizens in Saigon were forced to relocate, or endure the torture of everyday life in a battle zone. The invasion of U.S. forces into Vietnam resulted in a tremendous impact on the infrastructure of Saigon that was unplanned and left without restoration.

The establishment of a military base in Saigon by the U.S. in the 1970s was not the first occurrence in the city's history. In fact, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Nguyen lords held Saigon (then known as Gia Dinh) as a military base, and "intercepted and annihilated the Siamese invading armies" in 1654 and 1705.[1] Later in

[1] "Saigon: From Gia Dinh Citadel to Ho Chi Minh City," Vietnam Courier, June 1975, 18. Vietnam Courier Materials on Saigon Archive, Texas Tech University.

1781, the Saigon base allowed Nguyen Hue, a peasant insurgent leader who rose to national notoriety, to lead troops to resist another Siamese raid of 50,000. In 1790, a citadel was erected in Gia Dinh, "using big blocks of hardened laterite, in the form of a lotus flower with eight gates."[2] However, Saigon's architecture and military history were not the only factors that set it apart from many other cities in Vietnam.

Many ethnic groups, including the Chinese, Indians, Western Europeans, and Japanese, traveled up the Saigon River beginning in 1680, for trading purposes. Sources reveal that "around 1777, these merchants went to Saigon and settled down there, [and Saigon]... became an important port through which relations were maintained with foreign parts."[3] Many of the original population were from the Quang Binh province in Central Vietnam, who had sailed south to find new settlements. Original settlers were forced to emigrate by Nguyen lords. Eventually, the rich soils of the Gia Dinh drew others "who aspired to live a better and freer life than under the declining feudal regime in the North."[4]

Due to its locale on the Saigon and Mekong Rivers, the city of Saigon became South Vietnam's primary seaport, even though it sat almost forty miles inland. Local markets in South Vietnam exported their goods between small coastal villages and Saigon. However, Saigon's prominence came about because of the improvements in dredging and the addition of canals that "cut across swamplands and cultivated fields to join together the many tributaries of the Mekong and Saigon Rivers."[5] Saigon also served as the primary airport of South Vietnam, as well. Two airfields outside

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[2] Ibid., 18.

[3] Ibid., 18.

[4] Ibid., 18.

[5] Lieutenant General Carroll H. Dunn, Base Development in South Vietnam, 1965-1970, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1991, 7.

of Saigon, Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa, were able to receive jets prior to 1965. Air Vietnam, the national airline, owned thirteen planes, "none of which were jet powered, [which demonstrated] the paucity of Vietnam's airfield facilities."[6] The best direct method of transportation in Vietnam was rail. The railroad system, once named the Saigon-Hue-Hanoi Line, was established in 1936, and followed much of the coastline.[7] Saigon proved to be a vital part of the Vietnamese economy, especially to South Vietnam after the country's division by the 1954 Geneva Peace Accords.

Saigon, the capital of the Nam Ky province, became one of the wealthiest areas in all of Southeast Asia. However, French colonial administration never bode well with the residents of the Nam Ky province or the city of Saigon. In fact, the area was "seething with the patriotic movements of the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century."[8] Following World War I and through the Second World War, insurrections arose constantly in Saigon, as French colonialists continued to exploit the people of Indochina. Saigon contained a "well-organized and militant working class" that often demonstrated and went on strike in opposition of the French colonials.[9] Strikes and demonstrations persisted from 1912-1937, as democratic movements spread throughout the country, and Saigon played a crucial role in these democratic movements.[10] In a small glimpse of the social history of Saigon, its citizens contained activist roles and believed in democracy and freedom.

Including its suburbs, Saigon stretched to more than 700 square kilometers, from Long Binh in the North to Binh Dien in the South. Comprised of seven suburban villages and eleven districts, the

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[6] Ibid., 7.

[7] Ibid., 9.

[8] Vietnam Courier, June, 1975, 19.

[9] Ibid., 19.

[10] Ibid., 19.

city of Saigon was home to approximately four million people.[11] Prior to the American buildup of soldiers in the mid-1960s, the unpaved streets of Saigon were still filled with thousands of American GIs. The establishment of military bases in Saigon was evident, as one journalist remembered as he entered the city, "Concertina wire with razor-sharp attachments, stolen from the U.S. military, encircled many walled villas."[12] The sudden influx of population forced builders to hastily erect structures of cinder blocks and concrete, with a whitewash cover. These unsightly buildings provided stark contrast to the historic villas of early settlers and those built by early French colonials. However, the facades displayed only a glimpse of what their former architectural glory had been, as warfare with France had damaged much of the integrity of the structures, and they were beginning to collapse. Furthermore, Saigon no longer held the fresh air needed for its agricultural way of life, as gasoline and other toxic fumes of tanks and army supplies heavily polluted the city.[13]

As U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson requested a military buildup from Congress, the U.S. Army realized the gaining momentum of the Vietnam support efforts. Army contractors currently in the city of Saigon did not have the capacity or supplies available to build the facilities required by the incoming numbers of troops. Forces specializing in engineering and construction "received higher priorities for mobilization and deployment," and their efforts could not be put toward base development in South Vietnam.[14] The

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[11] "Saigon, Bastion of the Anti-US Struggle," Vietnam Courier, June 1975, 24. Vietnam Courier Materials on Saigon History (June-Sept. 1975), Douglas Pike Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

[12] David Steinman, Inside Television's First War: A Saigon Journal, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002, 28.

[13] Ibid., 28-29.

[14] Base Development in South Vietnam, 17.

influx of soldiers to the area increased quickly, and construction on the bases "had to be accomplished on a crash basis."[15]

On June 9, 1965, the 35th Engineer Group and D Company, and the 84th Engineers landed in South Vietnam. Together with the 159th Engineer Group (Construction), who landed toward the end of August, the combined units worked to activate the Army Central Headquarters in Saigon. Other engineer and construction units eventually joined in, but the initial months proved to be tedious for the crews as they scrambled to find space in Saigon, as well as provide buildings with structural integrity. These units comprised the Base Development Division, which "served as the focal point for base development planning, for monitoring the component service base construction projects, and for interservice facility management matters."[16]

According to the 1950 Agreement for Mutual Defense Assistance in Indochina, also known as the Pentalateral Agreement for the World Military Assistance Forces, the U.S. had the ability to obtain "rent-free" property in Vietnam. Although the agreement technically expired in 1965, the U.S. pursued high-level diplomacy talks with Vietnamese officials. In the end, Vietnam's government agreed to "assume responsibility for all land acquisition, funding for payments, and relocations without directly charging the United States. The cost would be covered by continued American support of the deficit in the Vietnamese budget."[17] While American forces determined what land was to be purchased, Vietnamese officials discussed finances and actually made payments without American involvement. Once land was attained, the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV) decided the fate of the property and whether a military installation would appear or not. The approval of all transactions held the stipulations that all land would be returned

[15] Ibid., 17

[16] Ibid., 20-23.

[17] Ibid., 29.

to Vietnamese forces. The "rent-free" program only applied to land outside urban regions. Within urban areas, land that was already improved had to be purchased from the private sector, and extensive leasing was required. During occupation, "the U.S. leasing program had an annual cost of over $20 million."[18]

In the beginning of the program, the Army had not established any construction standards, with the exception of living quarters and "the general admonition that facilities would be minimum and austere."[19] The standards slowly evolved, and were continually inconsistent. The uniqueness of the Vietnam War and the country's landscape complicated the process of establishing construction standards. Due to the lack of technology that Vietnam possessed compared to America, "more sophisticated equipment became necessary" at all sites, which also encouraged improvement and construction to "relatively high standards."[20]

The MACV logistical support plan in 1965 identified five improvement priorities: airfields and related facilities, supply routes, railroads, port facilities, and base and support facilities, including petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) storage. Prior to 1965, most cargo coming into Vietnam entered through Saigon — "the only port with deep draft berths" — and was then distributed throughout the country by other methods of transportation.[21] With the buildup of soldiers, Saigon's port system did not have the capacity for the influx of soldiers and equipment into only one port. The logical answer for the U.S. was to build more "deep-draft ports."[22] However, in order to fulfill the adequate space needed for supplies to enter Saigon, port development required more than just additional piers. To complete the projects, "[b]arge off loading facilities, ramps for landing craft,

[18] Ibid., 32.
[19] Ibid., 43.
[20] Ibid., 44.
[21] Ibid., 37.
[22] Ibid., 37.

and petroleum unloading facilities were all required."[23] Several airfields appeared, or were reconstructed from existing runways, across South Vietnam. In total, "five major jet air bases were constructed in Vietnam to supplement the three already in existence [outside Saigon], and over 100 widely dispersed fields were built for infratheater transport aircraft."[24]

Road programs and railway improvement plans began implementation soon after. The "opening or reconstruction of secondary and rural roads was recognized by General Westmoreland and pacification officials as critical to the... economic growth of Vietnam."[25] Westmoreland sought the completion of the roadwork by 1971, which would place the rate of work at approximately 774 kilometers per year when the program began in early 1967. The plan included asphalt pavement for the roads, in order to deter frequent mine placement by the Viet Cong.[26] Many bridges were also installed during the road program. As many as 675 bridges, with an average length of forty feet, appeared across South Vietnam improving U.S. military mobility.[27] The Department of Defense aimed to lay more than 4,000 kilometers of pavement for the road systems by the end of the program, but funds were cut. As of October 1970, 3,660 kilometers of roadways were paved.[28]

The railway system also needed comprehensive upgrades. The original system was built by the French in 1906, and completed in 1936. However, the 1954 Geneva Agreement required a reconstruction of its path due to the division of the country. Its

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[23] Ibid., 52.

[24] Ibid., 63.

[25] Ibid., 108.

[26] Ibid., 99, 105.

[27] Ibid., 106.

[28] Ibid., 112; "The Highway Program in Vietnam," 1, USAID Report: The Highway Program in Vietnam, No Date, Glenn Helm Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

reconstruction was finished by 1959. In 1962, U.S. security advisers observed the Vietnamese Railway System. During that time, they upgraded the system "by modernizing shop facilities, mechanizing track maintenance, changing motive power from steam to diesel-electric, and replacing rolling stock with modern equipment."[29] However, in 1964, two typhoons struck Vietnam, and damaged much of the railway system. In many areas, the rail was cut off from operations, and separated into segments. The U.S. government, with the help of the Agency for International Development, provided support for the Vietnamese to reopen the rail lines in 1966. The U.S. military brought ten locomotives and two hundred rail cars to Vietnam to assist in handling military cargo. According to the U.S. Army, the railway "contributed significantly to the war effort, the pacification program, and the economic growth of South Vietnam," as well as "providing a well[-]defined network which connect[ed] population centers and military installations."[30]

The primary and secondary road programs, as well as the reconstruction and improvement efforts in the rail system, caused displacement among the Vietnamese population. Displaced refugees often "settled along these roads, constructed new homes, and tilled the land."[31] According to the U.S. Army, commuting traffic filled the highways, as they became less fearful as the area progressed toward pacification. While land clearing for these projects denied the enemy opportunities of ambush, it also refused the local population many agricultural prospects.[32]

In 1966, the city of Siagon saw massive change as construction began in order to support 39,700 combat troops, 18,300 combat support troops, and 42,800 service support troops. Facilities established in Saigon included deepwater ports, a new depot, and jet

[29] Base Development in South Vietnam, 109.
[30] Ibid., 109; "The Highway Program in Vietnam," 1.
[31] Base Development in Vietnam, 112.
[32] Ibid., 112.

airfields at Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut, including eight additional airstrips large enough to land C-130 planes. Provisions were also created for Operations Market Time and Game Warden, which oversaw construction in Saigon. Once the ports, airfields, supply depots, and transportation methods were set up and in working order, the base development plan advanced to its next stage: building the base in the city of Saigon.

U.S. troops stationed in Saigon lived in a base camp in the delta south of the city at Dong Tam. In order for the camp to be built, it had to be elevated several feet because of the surface. Planning for the terrain and the climate's monsoon season, bridges and roads were built and paved to drive into Saigon.[33] In the initial days of warfare, most of the U.S. Army's administrative branches operated in existing facilities within the city of Saigon. As military buildup continued and forces were deployed throughout Vietnam, more administrative centers were necessary, especially near command headquarters. Additional administrative facilities were established in Saigon. In early 1967, General Westmoreland sought to move a large number of troops out of Saigon and reduce the military presence, in order to preserve the administrative headquarters. However, the program proved difficult to execute. Problems arose when attempting to locate space outside Saigon, where the same missions could be accomplished. Commanders were also unenthusiastic about leaving the central hub of activity, only to be placed away from central command and possibly left alone. Regardless, General Westmoreland's campaign found success, and by mid-1967, nearly half of the Army personnel in Saigon were relocated to the Long Binh complex.[34]

The Long Binh complex was located near the Tan Son Nhut Airport. Known commonly as "Pentagon East," the two-story prefabricated command post provided "air-conditioned working space

[33] Ibid., 73.

[34] Ibid., 77-78.

for 4,000 men."[35] Additionally, it included shelters, fences, and guard towers. Long Binh was sixteen miles outside of Saigon, and occupied "twenty-five square miles and house[d] 50,000 soldiers at a cost of more than $100 million."[36] As construction continued outside the city and pushed toward the rain forest, it began to recede rapidly. Tigers and elephants disappeared as a result of the overwhelming growth of Saigon by military troops and service contractors. Camps and military battles encroached upon the wildlife, and they could never be fully restored.[37]

While Saigon became a military complex during the 1960s, it was also a central hub for the "commercial, banking, financial, and industrial activities of the occupied zone."[38] The economy seemed completely dependent on foreign support, as the consumer market was flooded with American and Western European products, from cars to televisions and appliances to cigarettes. "Saigon produced nothing for its needs."[39] As American programming and propaganda inundated the Vietnamese, an intense hatred began to build. Throughout the twenty years of occupation, the people of Saigon had "been conditioned by a tendentious and uninterrupted propaganda. The 'Pearl of the Far East' became, under US domination, an immense brothel with 100,000 professional and semi-professional prostitutes and 30,000 suffering from venereal diseases."[40] One study noted that the "Americans and their lackeys [took] special care to subject school boys and girls to ideological poisoning and enslavement. Reactionary curriculums attempt[ed] to root out all patriotic sentiment... and kill all ideals and love of

[35] Ibid., 145.
[36] Ibid., 145.
[37] Neil Sheehan, After the War Was Over: Hanoi and Saigon. New York: Random House, 1992, 83.
[38] Vietnam Courier, June 1975, 24.
[39] Ibid., 24.
[40] Ibid., 24

action."[41] The study went on to say that the shortage of schools intentionally drove young men into the Vietnamese army or into an allied force.[42] As Americans continued to occupy Vietnam during the War, attitudes toward their presence grew increasingly bitter.

When the Battle of Saigon commenced in May 1968, the Viet Cong, along with the National Liberation Front (NLF), outside rebels groups, and other disgruntled people of Saigon, wreaked havoc on U.S. military installations and weaponry. Within 15 days, two U.S. battalions were lost. The combined forces "destroyed 900 military vehicles, shot down or destroyed on the ground 300 aircraft, sank or set afire 10 war vessels including ships of 10,000 to 13,000 tons."[43] After the battle, the U.S. lost control of Saigon as a central command center, and only proved that "planes and armoured vehicles, chief support of the US armed forces, have... little effectiveness in the cities."[44]

U.S. occupancy had devastating effects on the economy of Saigon. All of South Vietnam faced "[e]conomic standstill, galloping inflation, soaring prices, hoarding, and [a] black market [that] worsen[ed] the living conditions of the Saigon population with each passing day."[45] While military battles continued day-in and day-out on the streets of Saigon, political struggles also continued for the people of Saigon. Strikers, from the sugar mills to the docks, continually demonstrated. Political organizations, such as the Forces Defending National Culture, formed to express their discontent with

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[41] To Minh Trung, "The Battle of Saigon," Vietnamese Studies 20 (December 1968), 155. Douglas Pike Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

[42] Ibid., 155-156.

[43] Ibid., 183-187.

[44] Ibid., 189-190.

[45] Ibid., 153.

U.S. occupation. These movements inspired a sense of patriotism for the people of Saigon.[46]

In April 1975, the North Vietnamese made a final push against U.S. forces into the city of Saigon. By April 30, 1975, the "old Saigon" ceased to exist. Now, it was "the soon-to-be-impoverished economic capital of a peasant nation."[47] Communists took over the country, and banned the traditional "ao dai" dress, claiming it was "bourgeois."[48] Markets began to recess, and the people of Vietnam were left with only the necessities, if available. While the fall of Saigon became an end for the U.S., it was a beginning for Vietnam. It was not, however, the peaceful beginning they sought. "Old rivalries and suspicions reemerged, and retribution was still to be meted out."[49] Moreover, U.S. forces exited Saigon almost immediately, leaving behind weaponry and materials and disregarding all destruction. Following the Paris Agreement, the U.S. was required to end military involvement. Regardless of the Agreement, war materials were still shipped to Saigon after the cease-fire, and "[n]one of the military bases was dismantled as stipulated."[50]

The U.S. government left Vietnam in disarray, with a ravaged countryside and a shattered economy. During the War, the economy boomed, as GIs poured money into luxuries, such as cars and televisions at the local PX stores. However, after the war was over, Vietnam displayed "the true face of an unproductive society,

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[46] Ibid., 175-176.

[47] David Lamb, Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns, New York: Public Affairs, 2002, 88.

[48] Ibid., 90.

[49] Ibid., 90.

[50] Thanh Nam, "Saigon: One Year After the Signing of the Paris Agreement," Vietnam Courier, Feburary 1974, 13, Glenn Helm Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

impoverished and exhausted by war."[51] In 1973, the piastre, the currency of Saigon, devalued "ten times, and the prices of all commodities in the first ten months of the year went up by 100 to 200%, and even higher for some primary goods."[52]

The U.S., in an attempt to assist what it had left unfinished, proposed continuing economic financial aid to help the city maintain its everyday function. One loan proposal in July 1973, for $50 million, came under major questioning before the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. Guy Gran, of the Indochina Resource Center, claimed:

> What these numbers suggest is that it is meaningless to talk about South Vietnam (or Laos or Cambodia) as a state in the normal sense of the word. It has long been and remains an essentially artificial economic creation of the United States. AID has maintained for 19 years that it is teaching the Vietnamese how to stand on their own feet; this loan supposedly contributes to this effort. The reality is that the Vietnamese in Saigon have only learned how to dangle their supposed strategic merit to gain American tax dollars. These Vietnamese have never had to run a normal government, never had to act in a fashion that would encourage the Vietnamese citizens to support financially the government in Saigon at a level commensurate with the activities of the GVN.
>
> This is 1973. The accumulation of years of dependence is a culture of dependence. One component has been to accustom various strata of Vietnamese to an artificial lifestyle they can never hope to maintain on their own...
>
> A second component of the culture of dependence is the absurdly oversized military-police apparatus, far beyond Vietnamese financial abilities, which was pressed upon them by American advisers who could see only an

[51] Ibid., 14.

[52] Ibid., 14.

American way of fighting a war... Now the Vietnamese are effectively blinded to any alternative.

A third component in this culture of dependence is the reflex response by both AID and the GVN to seek to fill any fiscal need first from the American taxpayer rather than from the Vietnamese...

The solution offered by AID to the culture of dependence it has created is more years of $50,000,000 loans and massive yearly aid programs, a "transition" period of indeterminate length... It is illogical to assume that Vietnamese will learn how to be self-sufficient by maintaining their crutches. It is a profound tragedy that our gifts to Vietnam include not merely death, destruction and physical suffering but also permanently unrealistic material goals and unhealthy psychological props to overburden their attempts to recover from the thirty-year war.[53]

The proposed loan was not only due to the U.S. exit according to the Paris Agreement, but also because aid had been reduced to only $86.1 million in 1973, from $255 million per year in 1967.[54] Postwar Saigon attempted to raise revenues as best it could. As much as 126 billion piastres were collected in tax revenues in 1973, and 247 billion were expected in 1974. The government also sold off many of the

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[53] Statement of Guy Gran (Indochina Resource Center) before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Senate Committee on Appropriations on the $50,000,000 Development Loan Proposal to Vietnam, 13 July 1973, Douglas Pike Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

[54] Bui Thien My, "Aspects of US Neo-Colonialism: US Aid to the Saigon Administration," Vietnam Courier, December 1974, 26. Glenn Helm Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.

country's natural resources to offset the budget's deficit, since foreign aid was not enough.[55]

The economic strain attested to the weakness of South Vietnam. The government promised jobs through a "reconstruction programme," which fell through. As GIs and contractors exited, their buildings, which were previously leased, were vacated and landlords were left with no income. Eventually, thousands of laborers lost their jobs as well, as no new construction jobs were available in the city. More than one million peasants were confined to "settlement centres" and "refugee camps" that provided some government assistance.[56] Jobs could not be found anywhere in Saigon in 1974; the only wide-open opportunity available was the army, and the Vietnamese were completely exhausted by war.[57] Everyday social scourges included "[t]heft, hold-ups,... beggary, [and] corruption."[58]

Juvenile delinquency was also on the rise, as children learned to work crowds and pick pockets, steal from the market, or work the crowd for money for their next drug fix.[59] Poverty surrounded the city, and need was everywhere, from "education to dental cavities to dirty ears."[60] Reeducations camps were initiated, which "meant intensive indoctrination on such topics as the evils of American imperialism, the inevitability of the Communist victory, the glory of labor, and the benevolence of the new government toward 'rebels' (the current prisoners who had fought against them)."[61] Decades of

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[55] Vietnam Courier, February 1974, 15.

[56] Ibid., 15.

[57] Ibid., 16.

[58] Ibid., 16.

[59] Vietnam Courier, February 1974, 16.

[60] Katie Kelly, A Year in Saigon: How I Gave Up My Glitzy Job in Television to Have the Time of My Life Teaching Amerasian Kids in Vietnam, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, 82.

[61] "The New Vietnam," 17.

war produced social crises that only complicated the transitional government. In Saigon alone, statistics showed:

1. Three million had contracted venereal diseases,
2. One million suffered from tuberculosis,
3. 500,000 were employed as prostitutes,
4. 500,000 were addicted to hard drugs,
5. 370,000 were orphans,
6. 430,000 suffered from malnutrition,
7. 200,000 existed solely on the proceeds of begging.[62]

Furthermore, because of wide-spread prostitution, AIDS became a nationwide epidemic.[63]

One of the major problems the Communists faced as they took reign in the South was the transformation from capitalism into Marxism. The regime "intended to ostracize the middle and upper classes" in order to emphasize class-consciousness.[64] To initiate the class struggle, Communists divided "workers from managers, teachers from students, employees from employers, and require[ed] the upper classes to 'confess' to their crimes" of exploitation of their subordinates.[65] The Communist government maintained tight control over the South, and reaped huge gains economically and militarily because of its conquest and what the U.S. had left behind. The regime reigned until April 1976, when the two countries were reunited into one government, allowing the regions to exist within their own cultural means.[66]

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[62] Peter Limqueco, "Notes on a Visit to Vietnam," Journal of Contemporary Asia 4 (December 1976), 408. Douglas Pike Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.
[63] Kelly, A Year in Saigon, 233.
[64] "The New Vietnam," 19, Douglas Pike Collection, The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University.
[65] Ibid., 19.
[66] Ibid., 20-22.

Since Communist capture in 1975, Saigon "has experienced dramatic changes in political, social, economic and environmental aspects. From 1975 to the 1980s, millions of people in the South fled the country, leaving their property and wealth behind."[67] The entire nation experienced a downward demography shift after the Vietnam War. The introduction of "doi moi," a new economic policy for Saigon, established in 1986, has encouraged an increase in the population. Urban growth "has accelerated the process of conversion of farmland in the outlying areas to urban use."[68] In 1997, a new Master Plan was initiated, but it lacked the effective planning to provide for a fast expanding city.[69]

The city of Saigon experienced many hard times throughout its history. While its early military history contained victory, U.S. occupation brought death and destruction to the city. The remains of the Vietnam War left Saigon in economic, social, and political turmoil, and the U.S. did nothing to assist with the chaos it had left behind. The city has struggled to overcome the treachery of occupation since the last U.S. GI left in 1975, and it is still trying to improve many economic aspects of the region. As Saigon, now known as Ho Chi Minh City since 1975, continues to develop, it brings hope to the country, and to the region, as it continually rises above the ashes.

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[67] Huong Ha and Tai-Chee Wong, "Economic reforms and the New Master Plan of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: Implementation issues and policy recommendations," GeoJournal 49, 302.
[68] Ibid., 302.
[69] Ibid., 308.

Emily Nelms received a B.A. in History from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in August 2007. After completing her M.A. in American History at UAB, she hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in American History, concentrating on u rban studies, race relations, and socioeconomics of the communities affected by the race riots of the 1960s, with a specific focus on Washington, D.C. Her film review of "Talk to Me," which documented the life of Washingtonian Petey Greene, appeared in the 2008 edition of the Vulcan Historical Review. Emily is a member of the American Historical Association, Urban Historical Association, Southern Historical Association, Phi Alpha Theta, and the Golden Key International Honour Society.