

Knowledge of Global Dynamics

HALF A LOAF

Rationale

The crisis of world development is not new to the countries of Latin America. Historically, foreign investment has provided many of these countries with the capital and technological know-how with which to carry out their development plans. Recently, many transnational corporations, faced with an increasingly competitive world market, have sought to cut their labor costs by relocating many of their labor-intensive operations to this region. This lesson will assist students in analyzing some of the consequences that these transnational flows of labor and capital have had for women workers in the Caribbean.

Objectives

The student will:

1. describe the interdependence of people and institutions in economic systems;
2. evaluate economic action and policies, understanding the complementary and competing objectives of economic systems and their members;
3. describe how production decisions in one country may be affected by economic conditions in other countries;
4. evaluate the role of women in development within the context of Latin America.

Key Concepts

Internationalization of labor/capital, development, EPZ, high-wage economy, low-wage economy, transnationalism

Infusion Area

Economics, area studies, sociology, gender studies, business education

Materials Needed

Group "Role Sheets"

"Contract" forms

"Caribbean Economy Ripe for Woman's Touch"

"Caribbean Economy Ripe for Woman's Touch" (student worksheet)

"Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit" (teacher resource)

Suggested Time

Three class periods

Learning Activities

Suggested Activities for Day 1:

1. Tell students that they are to respond to a statement that you are going to read aloud. Ask them to come up with as many reasons as possible that might explain why someone might make such a statement about women. Read the following statement to the class (you may want to write the statement on the board or show it on an overhead projector):

"We hire girls because they have less energy, are more disciplined, and are easier to control."

Personnel Officer, Intel Corporation, Malaysia

Source: Grossman, Rachael. "Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit." In *Global Issues*. Edited by Robert Jackson. Guilford, Conn.: Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., 1987, pp. 211-19.

Focus the discussion on the attributes ascribed to women in the statement--that "they have less energy," "are more disciplined," and "are easier to control." Ask students to consider why some people might consider these characteristics to be economically desirable?

2. Tell students that they are going to participate in an activity designed to simulate how some companies may do business in foreign countries. At this time you may want to review the following concepts with the class: transnational corporations, Third World countries, capital investments, labor costs, development, and the Caribbean.

Divide the class into four groups and distribute "Role Sheets" and "Contracts." Review these materials with class to make sure everyone understands their contents and what is to happen during the simulation. Have each of the groups choose individuals for each of the roles. In order to utilize class time more effectively, ask GPC to select three "negotiators" that will conduct business simultaneously with each of the "host" countries. Have students review the "Role Sheets" carefully for homework in order to participate effectively in the simulation during the following class period.

Suggested Activities for Day 2:

1. Briefly review activity with students and clarify any questions that students might have about what is to happen during the simulation. Begin simulation and play the role of facilitator. Remind students that they are to complete the contracts by the end of the class period.

Distribute "Caribbean Economy Ripe for a Woman's Touch" and accompanying "Student Worksheet." Ask students to read article and complete worksheet for homework.

Suggested Activities for Day 3:

1. Debrief the simulation by using the following questioning strategy:
 - a. What happened yesterday? At this point, ask each of the groups to briefly explain their goals and actions during the simulation.
 - b. Who were the major actors involved in the process? What process was involved here?
 - c. How easy/difficult was the negotiating process? Why?
 - d. Whose interests were in conflict here? Why?
 - e. What were your feelings during the negotiations? Why do you think you felt this way?
 - f. Which country did GPC choose to do business with? Why was this country chosen over the other two?

2. Conclude lesson with a discussion of the article "Caribbean Economy Ripe for a Woman's Touch." Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - a. What are some of the similarities and differences between the simulation and the situation depicted in the article?
 - b. What have you learned about the challenges and opportunities involved in business transactions between transnational firms and Third World countries?
 - c. In what ways might the seemingly opposed interests of businesses involved in a highly competitive global economy be reconciled with the development needs of Caribbean nations?
 - d. Given the important role that women play in the development process, what might be done to improve the position of women workers in these countries?

Assessment

Ask students to conduct research into the demands of early industrial workers in the United States and write an essay that compares and contrasts the basic bargaining issues of these workers with the issues of women workers in the Caribbean today.

Additional Activities

Ask students to conduct research into the work of the International Labor Organization and its efforts in the area of labor and worker's rights.

Caribbean economy ripe for a woman's touch

By KEVIN YELVINGTON

WOMEN in the Caribbean have always worked," recently wrote Joycelin Massiah, a Barbados-based researcher at the University of the West Indies. Massiah was director of the university's Women in Caribbean Project (WICP), which investigated the standard of living and status of women in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Her observation — that women have been economically active from the early days of slavery to the present — is especially relevant in a context where Caribbean governments are increasingly promoting the establishment of free-trade Export Processing Zones (EPZs) as key tools in their development strategies. The majority of workers in existing Caribbean EPZs, though, are women, who are often employed in sweatshop-like conditions.

At the recent 12th annual Miami Conference on the Caribbean, leaders of Caribbean public and private sectors, officials of U.S. and foreign governments, and representatives of U.S. and foreign multinational corporations met for one main purpose: to decide on how to facilitate increased investment in the region. It is time such de-

velopments were analyzed with regard to the consequences for half the Caribbean population.

One global economic trend in the past 20 years has been for multinational corporations to locate their labor-intensive production centers "offshore" in underdeveloped countries in order to cut costs, mainly in their wage bills. The best examples that come to mind are the *maquiladoras* of the Mexican border. EPZs seem to be the future of this trend — they're talking about establishing them in places such as China, Hungary, and the USSR — and in the Caribbean they already exist in such places as Costa Rica and Jamaica. In the Dominican Republic, nearly 200 companies employing 100,000 are located in EPZs.

EPZs are established by Caribbean governments and local and foreign companies as sites of production that are technically outside national customs and tax purview. Typically, exemptions on duties are offered along with tax holidays for periods of 10 years or more. Investors, as well, are offered factory shells at nominal rents.

Caribbean governments find EPZs attractive because Caribbean economies face worldwide competition to locate offshore production. As relatively high-wage econo-

mies, they compare unfavorably to the low-wage economies of Asia. For example, in 1985, manufacturing workers in St. Lucia made roughly \$146 per month, while unskilled workers in the Philippines made around \$61.

What the Caribbean territories have going for them, though, is general political stability and geographic proximity to U.S. markets.

But they need to attract investors. And this is where women come in. Women are employed in EPZ production simply because they can be paid less than men and will work under more-onerous conditions. They are paid less because employers rationalize that women are working for "pin money," that they are the family's second wage earner. But this argument is at odds with Caribbean reality because of the high percentage of female-headed households, especially in the English-speaking territories.

In addition, employers label females as "unskilled" workers. They are deemed more suitable than men for the tedious, repetitive tasks commonly found in light manufacturing. All of this justifies their lower pay.

Because of their familial responsibility, women will take jobs in export-processing

industries where the low wages and poor conditions offered are better than any alternatives. This is what employers rely on, and what Caribbean labor unions typically ignore.

At present, many Caribbean governments and business leaders are going ahead with plans to attract investors with EPZs, despite their poor record of earning foreign exchange or providing linkages with the rest of the economy. Plus, these "runaway shops" can, and frequently do, pick up and leave after their tax concessions expire, when unions become too successful, or when exchange-rate fluctuations make production more profitable elsewhere.

Take the example of Trinidad and Tobago, the region's most developed country. After the slump in oil prices, this country is in a severe economic recession and is turning to the international debt agencies. The government is pushing for the establishment of at least one EPZ at Point Lisas.

Even though the nation's Senate voted against the government proposal in mid-July, the House of Representatives had voted for the proposal a week earlier. And this was in the face of protests by the "Women Against Free Trade Zones" movement, a

joint project of the Women's Studies Unit of the University of the West Indies and the country's most powerful trade union.

Even though female's average salaries are sometimes little more than half of men's, the number of women working and seeking work is increasing. But as the WICP showed, Caribbean women want access to meaningful, productive employment.

Caribbean territories face ever-increasing economic constraints. Despite their deleterious effects, EPZs do have the potential to ease unemployment. After all, "Half a loaf is better than no loaf," as they say in Trinidad. But EPZs can be only part of the solution to economic woes. Caribbean governments, along with their partners, should develop strategies that benefit all of their citizens. Caribbean women should be fully integrated into the development process.

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NAME: _____

DATE: _____

PERIOD: _____

Caribbean Economy Ripe for Woman's Touch

Student Worksheet

1. What are Export Processing Zones (EPZs)?
2. Who uses EPZs as a "tool" of economic development? Why? What kinds of benefits do EPZs offer businesses?
3. Why have multinational corporations set up operations in underdeveloped countries during the past twenty years?
4. Despite the region's higher wages, what attracts multinational corporations to the Caribbean region?

General Progress Corporation

Role Sheet

Your group represents General Progress Corporation, a large transnational corporation heavily involved in the manufacturing and marketing of personal computers. Although you are one of the largest American-owned companies in this field, your company is involved in a very competitive market that includes some of the most powerful Japanese and European firms in the world.

Recent developments in the computer field have put tremendous pressure on your company to cut production costs to a bare minimum. This means that you will be aggressively seeking to relocate part of your assembly process outside of the United States. This will result in a major reduction of your labor costs. Thus, your negotiations during this exercise will aim to acquire permission to set up an assembly plant in a Third World country that will have a large, low wage labor pool.

After extensive research, your company has decided that the Caribbean region offers the best possible environment for your operation. Certain Caribbean countries are very eager to increase foreign investment to help their development plans and to assist them in the repayment of their large foreign debt. Your company views this situation as a great investment opportunity.

GOAL: To secure the most favorable contract for GPC with each of the three participating Caribbean nations.

These are some of the concessions that you want to get from the host countries:

1. *Export Processing Zone (EPZ):* This is an area where the government of a country establishes a site of production that is exempt from duties, taxes, and is outside national customs.
2. *Factory Shells:* These are already constructed structures in which you can set up your manufacturing or assembly operation. These are offered to you at very low rents.
3. *Geographic Proximity:* You want to try to locate your assembly operation in a country that is as close as possible to entry points in the United States. This will keep your shipping expenses to a minimum.
4. *Low Wage Population:* You want to try to negotiate this contract with the country where workers will be willing to accept the lowest possible wage. Research conducted by your company shows that countries with a large, unskilled labor force are the most desirable--these are precisely the kind of workers that will be willing to work for very low wages.
5. *Political Stability:* The most desirable countries are those in which there exists general political stability. That is, a country whose government is in firm control and where no serious

subversive threat exists--a government that is not in danger of being overthrown in the near future. This situation will provide the least amount of risk for your company's operation.

6. *Organized Labor*: Since organized labor efforts will undoubtedly lead to higher wages, the most desirable country will be one in which there is little or no organized labor activity. Governments that do not allow, or are quick to squelch, any organized labor activity are the most desirable.

ROLES: Your group now needs to select individuals to fill the following roles:

1. *Negotiator*: This person should be aggressive and have the best interest of the company at heart. Your goal is to secure the best possible contract for GPC that will maximize company profits while at the same time assure it a competitive edge in the global market place. Your group needs to select three "negotiators," each of which will draw up a contract with one of the three Caribbean nations involved.
2. *GPC Board of Directors*: The negotiator reports and answers directly to you. Ultimately, it will be up to you to carefully examine all proposed contracts and to decide in which country GPC will base its operations.

REMEMBER THAT YOUR GOAL IS TO SECURE THE MOST FAVORABLE CONTRACT FOR GPC. YOU WILL OBTAIN A WRITTEN AND SIGNED CONTRACT FROM EACH OF THE PARTICIPATING CARIBBEAN NATIONS. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MUST THEN REVIEW AND CHOOSE THE CONTRACT THAT MEETS THE COMPANY'S NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES BEST.

Liberte

Role Sheet

You represent the poorest country of the region. It is mostly rural and four out of five people are peasants who farm small plots of land. The per capita income is less than \$400 per year and the unemployment rate is about 50%. About 60% of the children in your country are malnourished and there is an extremely high infant mortality rate as a result. For most of your history, your country has experienced a series of harsh authoritarian governments. If successful in attracting GPC's investment, unemployment will be reduced and your personal wealth and power will increase.

GOAL: To secure GPC's agreement to locate operations in your country.

In negotiating with GPC, the following are conditions that Liberte can offer:

1. *Export Processing Zones:* You can offer GPC this benefit.
Tax holiday: 20 years. Duties: none. At the end of 20 years, taxes can be jointly negotiated by company and country.
2. *Factory Shells:* Limited amount. Offer at \$1,000 per month rent for first 5 years and \$2,000 per month for the remaining 15 years.

3. *Geographic Proximity:* 450 miles from Miami, the nearest shipping port.
4. *Low Wage Population:* Women make up 73% of the available work force. 90% of these female laborers are unskilled.
Acceptable monthly wage: \$61.
5. *Political Stability:* Right-wing dictatorship with a good track record of maintaining order. No serious political threat to government from opposition groups.
6. *Organized Labor:* No significant labor movement exists to protect the rights of the workers.

ROLES: Your group now needs to select individuals to fill the following roles:

1. *President:* The major responsibility for successfully negotiating a contract with GPC falls on your shoulders. As you negotiate with GPC, remember that although you may try to increase the terms and rates to benefit your position, you MAY NOT fall below the terms given above.
2. *Advisors:* You will participate in the negotiating process and advise the President on which strategies to employ to secure GPC's contract. You must assure that the President does not offer terms that fall below the conditions given above and does

not yield to company demands for more favorable contract terms.

REMEMBER THAT YOUR GOAL IS TO SECURE GPC'S AGREEMENT TO LOCATE ITS OPERATIONS IN LIBERTE. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, YOU MUST COMPLETE A WRITTEN CONTRACT SPECIFYING THE TERMS OF YOUR AGREEMENT.

Barbudos

Role Sheet

You are one of the oldest democracies in the Western Hemisphere. You are proud of the fact that the people of Barbudos enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the region. Your economy is stable and has grown modestly in recent years. Unemployment is currently running at less than 10%. Although the economic situation in your country currently is favorable, you nevertheless will want to encourage foreign investment.

GOAL: To secure GPC's agreement to locate operations in Barbudos.

In negotiating with GPC, the following are conditions that Barbudos can offer:

1. *Export Processing Zones:* You can offer GPC this benefit.
Tax holiday: 8 years. Duties: minimal for the export of the assembled components.
2. *Factory Shells:* Well-built, large structures. Rent: \$2,500 for the first 3 years. Rent will be renegotiated for the following 5 years.
3. *Geographic Proximity:* 400 miles from Miami, the nearest shipping port.

4. *Low-Wage Population:* Women make up 61% of the available work force. The average monthly wage is about \$146.
5. *Political Stability:* Parliamentary democracy. Present government is composed of a coalition of labor and business interests. Government enjoys popular support from workers for its prolabor legislation and human rights record.
6. *Organized Labor:* Long tradition of labor unions. Recently, women workers have been integrated into all major labor unions and have succeeded in establishing the Barbudos Federation of Women Workers (BFWW). The BFWW is the first women's labor union in the region.

ROLES: Your group now needs to select individuals to fill the following roles:

1. *President:* The major responsibility for successfully negotiating a contract with GPC falls on your shoulders. In negotiating with the company, your main goal is to maintain or increase your country's relatively high standard of living. You will be up for reelection in 6 months, so worker groups will be very interested in your negotiations with GPC.
2. *Advisors:* You will participate in the negotiating process and advise the President on which strategies to employ to secure GPC's contract. You must assure that the President stands

firm on the above conditions and does not yield to company demands for more favorable contract terms.

REMEMBER YOUR GOAL IS TO SECURE GPC'S AGREEMENT TO LOCATE ITS OPERATIONS IN BARBUDOS. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, YOU MUST COMPLETE A WRITTEN CONTRACT SPECIFYING THE TERMS OF YOUR AGREEMENT.

Costa Fuerte

Role Sheet

You represent one of the few Marxist states in the region. Although your government receives financial assistance from other communist countries, recently you have been told that the level of assistance from these countries will be dramatically reduced. Your government has been told to seek greater economic assistance from Western countries even though your total foreign debt to these countries already stands at 4 billion dollars. You are proud of the fact that life expectancy in your country is among the highest in the world and infant mortality is one of the lowest in the region. Yet, in order to maintain this position, you will have to increase the level of foreign investment in your country dramatically.

GOAL: To secure GPC's agreement to locate operations in Costa Fuerte.

In negotiating with GPC, the following are conditions that Costa Fuerte can offer:

1. *Export Processing Zone:* You can offer GPC this benefit.

Tax holiday: 8 years. Duties: minimal for the export of the assembled components.

2. *Factory Shells*: Abundant, well-constructed structures.
Rent: \$2,500 for the first year and will be renegotiated on a yearly basis thereafter.
3. *Geographic Proximity*: 125 miles from Miami, the nearest shipping port.
4. *Low-Wage Population*: 60% of the available labor force is female. Average monthly wage: \$95. Extensive government welfare programs.
5. *Political Stability*: Costa Fuerte is led by a very popular dictator known as "a man of the people." Virtually no political opposition due to the President's "iron fist rule." Prospects for political change: none.
6. *Organized Labor*: No organized labor. Government maintains that there is no need for independent labor unions in a country where "the government and the people are one."

ROLES: Your group now needs to select individuals to fill the following roles:

1. *President*: The major responsibility for successfully negotiating a contract with GPC falls on your shoulders. In negotiating with the company, your main goal is to maintain or increase your country's relatively high standard of living. Only then will

you be able to maintain the support of the people and protect the revolution from both internal and external threats.

2. *Advisors:* You will participate in the negotiating process and advise the President on which strategies to employ to secure GPC's contract. You must assure that the President stands firm on the above conditions and does not yield to company demands for more favorable contract terms.

REMEMBER THAT YOUR GOAL IS TO SECURE GPC'S AGREEMENT TO LOCATE ITS OPERATIONS IN COSTA FUERTE. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, YOU MUST COMPLETE A WRITTEN CONTRACT SPECIFYING THE TERMS OF YOUR AGREEMENT.

Proposed Contract

I, _____, President of _____, agree that if General Progress Corporation agrees to locate its operations in my country, GPC will receive the following conditions:

Export Processing Zone

Yes ___ No ___

Duties: _____ Taxes: _____

Factory Shells

Yes ___ No ___

Quantity: _____ Rents: _____

Geographic Proximity

Number of miles from Miami: _____

Low Wage Population

Percentage of unskilled labor force: _____

Lowest acceptable wage: _____

Political Stability

Form of government: _____

Threat of subversion: _____

Organized Labor

Allowed? Yes ___ No ___

Political Parties: _____

President of Nation

Representative of GPC

For GPC Purposes Only

Approved _____ Not Approved _____

GPC Board of Directors:

Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit

Electronics corporations have developed the first truly integrated world assembly line. Rachael Grossman reports on their latest personnel management techniques—specially designed to manipulate women.

Rachael Grossman

Rachael Grossman has lived in Indonesia and traveled throughout Southeast Asia. She has worked at the Pacific Studies Center researching U.S. corporate involvement in Asia and also helped found an electronics health and safety project in California. She is now a staff member of the Southeast Asia Resource Center.

*"We hire girls because they have less energy, are more disciplined, and are easier to control."
—Personnel officer, Intel Corp., Malaysia*

A group of women was wrapping gifts of talcum powder and candy for the upcoming Christmas party, while I talked to the personnel officer at the Intel plant in Penang. She described the charts which hang beside each operator's chair on the plant floor to record the quantity and quality of her daily production. She told me about factory-wide competitions and weekly quotas sent from California.

This personnel officer, a very likable Malay woman in her late 20s, spoke casually. But her message was brutally clear. There is a direct relationship between her ability to control and involve "her girls" and the numbers on the productivity charts. "Personnel operates with the goal of having management and operators cooperate. Otherwise, we can't survive."

The Intel plant in Penang, Malaysia, is a subsidiary of one of the largest semiconductor firms based in northern

California's "Silicon Valley." Women make up 90 percent of the assembly workforce in this 1400-person plant, as they do in the other 18 electronics factories on the island of Penang. Approximately 19,000 women work in these factories, and several thousand more work in electronics factories in other places in Malaysia. In all, between 200,000 and 300,000 women work in electronics plants throughout Southeast Asia.

Electronics, especially semiconductors, is the fastest growing industry in Southeast Asia. It is also the technologically most advanced industry in the developed economies, providing critical components to all others. Governments, banks, factories, armed forces and other major institutions are changing their operations to incorporate new electronic products—all involving some kind of "brain"—while even individual consumers find themselves increasingly dependent on such gadgets as hand calculators. Ironically, the almost invisible element in this glamorous, breakthrough industry is the repetitive, semi-skilled labor of Asian women. Driven by the need to cut prices in their competition for profitable shares of the market, virtually all the major semiconductor companies have sought cheap labor to perform the labor-intensive parts of their operations. To a large extent, they have found it in Asia, where women assemble the tiny components of products ranging from digital watches to multi-million-dollar computers. Their labor makes possible the low prices which in turn have made possible the explosive growth in the market for semiconductor-based devices.

Because they must keep productivity high and costs low to be competitive, semiconductor firms have put a great

deal of effort into developing a whole battery of methods to manipulate and control the women who work in their plants. Their personnel policies now combine authoritarian discipline with the most sophisticated human relations techniques. Most highly developed in Malaysia, these techniques specifically exploit the traditionally defined attributes of femininity—passivity, submissiveness, sentimentality, sexual desirability—while creating a factory lifestyle distinct from that of the general society. Their purpose is to make workers more immediately productive and to inculcate into them a long-term sense of identity with the company. At the same time, the emphasis on passive and ornamental femininity is intended to forestall the rise of any sense of independence or unified strength among the women workers. In the patriarchal societies of Southeast Asia, the sudden concentration of women in advanced industrial enclaves might well be expected to foster the emergence of a strong feminist consciousness among them. The carefully planned personnel policies work against this.

RECREATION AS TECHNIQUE

Beauty contests are the most dramatic example of the way electronics factories manipulate traditional concepts of femininity and gender roles. "The last beauty contest winner spent M \$80 [US \$40] on her evening gown. But she made so many slits up the skirt—to show more leg, you know—that she can't wear the dress anymore." The personnel officer was very matter of fact about the extravagance, which she saw as an example of how seriously the workers take participation in the beauty contest. This year's beauty contest winners will receive: first prize, a package tour to Medan (the nearest big city); second prize, a cassette player; and third prize, a night for two at the Rasa Sayang (the ritziest hotel in Penang). When I asked about the implications of offering a night for two to 18-year-old Malay women, primarily from rural Muslim backgrounds, the officer quipped, "We tell the winner, 'This is your prize. Whatever happens nine months from now, we aren't responsible.'"

One American plant manager in Penang explained, "We've developed recreation to a technique. Recreational activities keep turnover down. We spend US \$100,000 a year on personnel activities." He listed such stereotypically feminine activities as sewing classes, a monthly shoe sale, singing competitions and the beauty contest as well as a library, the company store and sports events. A plant manager in the Philippines described the only function of his large personnel staff as "creating activities." Monthly company publications contain an endless stream of images of women as sex objects and passive providers. Their features range from pictures of the scantily clad beauty contest participants to romantic poetry and sexist humor. There are also notices of such activities as classes in cooking or using cosmetics.

Much of the organized recreation takes the form of competition, which is intended, in the words of one personnel officer, to "develop incentive and motivation." Competitions also pit workers against one another, strengthening their sense of individualism and their willingness to work hard. The contests, highlighted again and again in the monthly publications, run the gamut of possibilities—singing contests, sports contests, "guess whose legs these are" contests, talent contests, crazy-costume contests.

Production competition, also billed as "fun," barely mask speed-ups and provide the rationale for increasing quotas. Like the other contests, production competitions take place at all levels of the organization. They range from individual contests based on the individual daily charts hanging beside each worker to competitions between subsidiaries in different countries. Workers in one Indonesian factory reported they had been asked to compete with the productivity charts of workers in other Asian subsidiaries of their company. Individual winners usually receive special mention in the company publications, sometimes with a box of candy or some money. Departments win trophies, special outings or a party. At Intel two winners of a factory-wide competition for most productive worker of the year even won a trip to company headquarters in California.

In the transition from beauty contests to production competitions, the guiding principle behind all the clever games becomes suddenly visible: control. Discipline is strict, because electronics components are either perfect or unusable. Workers are assigned quotas and monitored by daily productivity charts. They are prohibited from talking on the factory floor. They must wear uniforms. They are allowed an average of only 45 minutes break time during an eight-hour shift, and workers at the Fairchild factory in Indonesia reported having only one ten-minute tea break and a 15-minute lunch break. They also said about 20 women were laid off every week for failing to meet their production quotas.

Discipline extends beyond the factory floor as management uses a variety of methods to orient workers' lives around factory schedules. In Malaysia, factories rotate shifts every two weeks. "They like rotating shifts. They plan their lives around the rotation," explained a personnel officer at Monolithic Memories, Inc. Yet the workers complained that changing shifts every two weeks meant they could not plan many activities or enroll in classes outside the factory, and they found it hard to readjust their sleeping and eating habits. A workers' manual at Advanced Micro Devices—Philippines (AMD) demands another form of subordination to factory requirements: "Do not accept employment by another company, work part time or hold any other job without the consent of the personnel manager and the general manager."¹

“TOGETHER TO STAY, TOGETHER FOR GOOD”

From the day a worker enters the factory, she is bombarded with such slogans as “Catch on to the Motorola Family Spirit and build a good future for yourself and your family.” These portray the factory as a family incorporating many of the patriarchal features characteristic of real families in Southeast Asia. “Big brother” male supervisors lord it over the female operators. The plant manager, usually an American, presents himself as a kindly—but nonetheless demanding—father figure, playing basketball with the team, kissing the beauty contest winner, eating in the factory canteen. As the manager of Fairchild’s Indonesia plant explained, “What we are doing resembles a family system in which I am not just the manager but also a father to all of those here in Fairchild. This conforms to a very important Indonesian principle, that of the family [*kekeluargaan*].”²

For the women, brought up in families in which the father’s word is law, the image is compelling. While the culture of the factory is radically different from that of their homes, the stress on family ideology helps prevent them from recognizing the implications of their own independence from their families. At the same time, the family analogy legitimizes the combination of authoritarian discipline and “indulgence” (recreation) which management uses so effectively to keep workers in line. For management, the point is to preclude any desire by workers to organize themselves to challenge the management-imposed factory consensus. Management representatives throughout Southeast Asia express the same thought: “If management operates well, it is my hope that a union will be unnecessary.” “Unions only set up an adversary relationship between workers and management.” “Intel doesn’t believe in unions. We believe in finding out what workers want. We conduct twice-yearly attitude surveys with workers.” Back in California a semiconductor executive went further, explaining that the industry stresses human relations to prevent unionization, because it would raise wage costs now and “rigidify” the size of the work force in the future.³ The industry wants to retain its ability to lay off workers if the market slumps or if automation becomes profitable.

AN INTEGRATED ASIAN CIRCUIT

The use of personnel policies to create a distinct culture within the factory is more dramatic in Malaysia than in the other Southeast Asian countries. Foreign-owned semiconductor corporations are now well established in Malaysia, particularly in Penang, and some of them have begun to upgrade their operations, adding testing and automated bonding processes. Malaysia is becoming the center for testing in Southeast Asia. National Semiconductor (NS), for example, tests products from its plants in Thailand, Indonesia and Penang at the Penang plant. The automated bonding machines cost \$50,000 per

unit and allow a single worker to produce 10 times as much as one working with a microscope. These more complex processes require virtually fail-proof factory discipline. Malaysia has been chosen for upgrading because its educated, English-speaking workers have shown themselves to be easily trainable and controllable. Most of the electronics workers have not held any other industrial job, and many of them are the first female members of their families to hold such jobs. They are particularly susceptible to the appeal of the “Western culture” which is offered as a part of the employment package. As a result, electronics workers are conspicuous wherever they go, identified by their elaborate make-up, tight jeans and high heels.

In Hong Kong and Singapore, where industrial work and Western culture are more familiar and job mobility is more common, workers hold out for hard cash rather than being impressed by such offerings as beauty contests and cosmetics classes. Both Singapore and Hong Kong have become regional headquarters for the electronics industry, providing high-skilled jobs and better wages to their workers. Singapore has become particularly attractive to international industry because of its highly controlled society, free port status, good harbor and well-developed communications infrastructure. Electronics subsidiaries there provide warehousing, final testing and some marketing services for other Asian subsidiaries of their companies. . . .

Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand (not covered in this report) are the last frontier in the highly integrated Asian circuit of semiconductor factories. In these countries, poverty and unemployment spawn extremely cheap labor forces, but they also threaten political instability in the future. At the same time, these countries lack necessary infrastructure. An American manager in Indonesia illustrated the problem when he complained that it is easier to telephone Santa Clara than the other side of Jakarta. The plants located in the poorer countries are the most labor intensive and least expensive, what one American manager called “jellybean operations.” They are plants which can be closed down on short notice if the political climate appears too risky or if they become economically superfluous. The NS plants in Thailand, Indonesia and Penang, for instance, do the same work, so that political upheaval in one country will not precipitate a breakdown in the overall production cycle.

A GLOBAL ASSEMBLY LINE

The production process of which the semiconductor factories in Southeast Asia are a part is literally a global assembly line stretching more than halfway around the world. While it has grown with the general expansion of multinational capital, it has received a special impetus from the nature of the semiconductor industry. Semiconductors are the “brains” of the new generation of electronic products: hand calculators, digital watches, computers, communications equipment, “smart bombs,” and strategic missile guidance systems all share the same

type of component. The industry has come into being since the 1947 invention of the transistor, and it has grown with help from generous Pentagon contracts and research done at Stamford and other universities. Many of the largest companies are headquartered in the area around Stanford, known as "Silicon Valley," because silicon is the basic material for semiconductors.

Competition in the industry is so heated that prices for its products are falling faster than the cost of production. "A transistor which 12 years ago cost \$25 now costs 15 cents," bragged one American executive in Penang. In the race to survive, companies have introduced new products, such as electronic toys and home computers, while cutting costs in every feasible way. Since, ironically, much of the production process for these labor-saving devices is extremely labor intensive, labor costs have been the major target for economizing. In California, 90 percent of the assembly workforce is young and female. More important than cutting costs in California, however, has been the division of the production process into smaller and smaller discrete segments. This and the microscopic size of the semiconductors (which makes it practical to ship unfinished parts from one plant to another) has allowed the industry to shift its most labor-intensive work to places where labor is cheap. Furthermore, the very equipment produced by the industry makes finely tuned long-distance coordination possible. As a U.S. manager in Asia quipped, "Santa Clara is just a telex away."

The first moves were to Mexico, but the industry soon looked to the even cheaper labor of Asia. Fairchild Camera and Instrument Co. set up the first Asian assembly plant in Hong Kong in 1962. During the 1960s, other U.S., European and Japanese companies expanded to Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. Searching for ever cheaper wages, the semiconductor industry then moved into Southeast Asia, coming to Singapore in 1969, Malaysia in 1972, Thailand in 1973, and the Philippines and Indonesia in 1974. The manager of a plant in Malaysia explained how profitable these moves have been: "One worker working one hour produces enough to pay the wages of 10 workers working one shift plus all the cost of materials and transport."

THE FAST-FINGERED MALAYSIAN

The electronics industry has not operated in a vacuum in constructing its Asian circuit. Asian governments, looking for development capital and solutions to their employment problems, have actively sought labor-intensive investment. Semiconductors have appeared particularly attractive, according to one Malaysian government official, because "they are so fast moving. They come in and quickly soak up people."⁴ In addition, governments hope to acquire new technology from the semiconductor industry. In wooing foreign investment, Asian governments have stressed the availability of large, cheap pools of female labor. Glossy brochures describe the prospects

in terms similar to the following from *Malaysia: The Solid State for Electronics*:

The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production than the oriental girl?⁵

Domestically, Asian governments have taken measures to make their country's women even more attractive as potential employees by ensuring that they will not resist demands made on them by the foreign firms. In 1970, when electronics companies wanted to locate in Malaysia, the government provided for exceptions in the law which protected women from night-shift work. In the Philippines, Presidential Decree No. 148, issued shortly after the declaration of martial law in 1972, reduced maternity benefits from 60 percent of pay for 14 weeks to 100 percent of pay for six weeks, and limited coverage to the first four children. According to the personnel director at one textile factory, "This made it profitable to hire women again."

Perhaps even more serious than removing legal protections has been the active role of all capitalist Southeast Asian governments in putting down all forms of worker protest. Over and over again the story is told—in the Philippines, in Indonesia, in Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea: "As soon as the protest began, carloads of police and government officials descended on the plant . . ." Such actions are backed up by laws prohibiting strikes in "vital" industry, which normally includes foreign-owned manufacturing plants.

At times, government officials address their own citizens in tones similar to those they direct at potential investors, seeking to convince them that government and workers share the same interests. In a recent article entitled "Why We Woo Foreign Investment," Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed asserted: "The government could not help the people if they refuse to realize the importance of a better economy and to be more responsible. . . . Workers must uphold their dignity and not cause problems that would scare away foreign investors. They should instead be more productive so that government efforts to attract investors would be successful."⁶

"SOAKING UP PEOPLE?"

In actual fact, the electronics corporations have failed to live up to the expectations of their hosts in providing employment. While they have brought thousands of jobs to Southeast Asia, their requirements for young, educated (high school) female workers have meant that they have brought a new category of people into the workforce rather than reducing the ranks of the unemployed. A recent study in Penang found that over two-thirds of the workers had never worked before and came from families whose female members had never worked for wages.⁷ Malaysia defines "active unemployed" as men who have registered

as unemployed on the Labor Exchange, and government officials complain that the electronics firms are not helping them, because they rely almost exclusively on women. In the Philippines and Indonesia, many electronics workers are the daughters of teachers or low-level bureaucrats and had aspired to but could not find white-collar jobs. . . .

Until recently, it has been the men—fathers and sons—who have sought wage labor when family farming could no longer support the people dependent on it. The men have migrated to cities to take whatever jobs they could find, while the women often stayed behind to run the household and continue farming. In cases where the family lost its land, all its members accompanied the father to the city. When women migrate to look for work, however, it is not mothers, but daughters, who go. While they frequently send money home, their families do not accompany them. By its reliance on women, the electronics industry offers new opportunities and new hopes for women seeking income. However, the requirement that electronics workers possess a high school education means that these jobs are not available to the majority of women looking for work. In fact, a personnel officer at NS-Philippines reported that 30 percent of the assemblers there are college graduates and another 30 percent have some college education.

For the electronics firms, the newness of the work force they are creating is an advantage. Not only are the young women more tractable than older women or men might be, but since they are not believed to be supporting families, their wages can be kept low and they can be laid off with relatively few repercussions. Thus the employers give first preference to women with no work experience and generally refuse to hire married women, although they do not necessarily fire them if they marry after being hired. The ability to lay their workers off at will is essential to the electronics firms, because the work is almost by definition temporary. After three or four years of peering through a microscope, a worker's vision begins to blur, so that she can no longer meet the production quotas. The unspoken expectancy of the company is that she will marry and "retire" by the time she becomes unfit for the work, but she will be laid off in any case. . . .

If electronics plants do not provide permanent jobs, then perhaps they train women for other work? Not so. As highly compartmentalized segments of a multinational production process, the jobs develop skills with no application in other industries. Bonding, for example, requires looking through a microscope and testing, dipping into tanks of chemicals. As the only part of the electronics process which comes to Southeast Asia, there is not even an opportunity for advancement or transfer to other kinds of work within the same industry. Similarly, this kind of division of the production process does not lead to the growth of semiconductor firms, because there is no transfer of technology to the local economy. Government officials whom I interviewed in more than one country expressed dissatisfaction with the failure to acquire tech-

nology, and one U.S. Embassy official in Jakarta asserted, "The only thing electronics investments give the country is the RP 500 [US \$.80] a day wages!"

SUBSISTENCE OR LESS

For the women on the production line, there are tangible consequences of their position within the international structure of the industry. The companies use various means to keep wages low, although many of the electronics workers are expected to contribute substantially to their families' income. In the Philippines and Indonesia, women are paid less than the minimum wage for as long as six months, during which they are considered apprentices. With legal minimum daily wages of 11 pesos in the Philippines and Rp. 500 in Indonesia, electronics apprentices receive eight pesos or Rp. 390 respectively. Yet personnel officers readily admit that a new operator can learn her job in a week, or at most, two. Such pay is in many cases less than subsistence for one person. In Manila, a worker living in the six-by-six-foot extension of a squatter hut told me she needed ten pesos a day to pay for the bare minimum of fish, rice, water and rent. A community organizer in the province of Bataan reported that peasant families often had to support their daughters for the first months, and often the first year, of employment in factories in the Bataan Export Processing Zone or Manila.

Rather than institute adequate wages, companies use monetary bonuses as a means to put pressure on their workers even after the apprenticeship period. In order to earn adequate income, a worker must qualify for bonuses, which are paid for perfect attendance, punctuality, high production, work on the microscopes. With any infraction of company rules or a single absence in a month, a woman loses her eligibility for extra payment. This is particularly rampant in Hong Kong, where industry uses monetary incentives rather than recreational activities to discipline and motivate the work force. . . .

At plants in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines, employees receive a thirteenth month bonus at the end of the year instead of higher monthly pay for 12 months. A worker hired at mid-year has her bonus prorated, while one who leaves during the year receives none of the bonus. Workers in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Philippines reported that their employers had tried to avoid giving them the year-end bonus, resulting in strikes and walk-outs.

Wages increase somewhat after the apprenticeship period, and most women begin contributing to their families once their own subsistence needs are met. In the Philippines many workers employed for more than two years report that they send half or more of their monthly earnings home. In Malaysia, where electronics workers come from slightly less severe economic backgrounds, they still turn over 25 to 50 percent of their wages to their families.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A photograph of the interior of an electronics plant is striking for its sense of immaculate order: a spacious, well-lighted room in which rows of women dressed in white bend over gleaming microscopes. On an actual walk through a plant, however, the visitor often gags on the strong smell of chemicals, and a trial look through a microscope quickly produces dizziness or a headache. Toxic fumes and eye ailments are the twin enemies of electronics workers. Yet the companies do not inform them of the health hazards their jobs entail, and management-run health and safety committees actually divert attention from these problems.

"Hey, Grandma!" Young women greet their slightly older co-workers at the factory gate every morning. In Hong Kong most electronics workers over 25 are called "Grandma" because they wear glasses. While workers in Southeast Asia are much newer to electronics work than those in Hong Kong, they too are beginning to have serious eye problems. In 1975, just three years after the first electronics plant opened in Penang, nearly half the workers there complained of deteriorating eyesight and frequent headaches—the result of microscope work. Most workers suffer at one time or another from conjunctivitis, a painful and highly contagious inflammation of the eye. Individual comments echoed this worker's story: "After some time we can't see very clearly; it's blurred. We'll be looking into the microscope for over seven hours. We have to work with those gold wires, very thin like our hair . . ."8 Virtually anyone who stays on the job more than three years must eventually wear glasses. Companies usually refuse to pay for the glasses—although they require 20-20 vision when they hire.

Caustic chemicals, all toxic and many suspected of being cancer-causing, sit in open containers beside many workers, giving off the fumes which so assault the first-time visitor to the plant. They include TCE, xylene, and MEK, all particularly dangerous acids and solvents which are used extensively throughout the production process. Workers who must dip components in acids and rub them with solvents frequently experience serious burns, dizziness, nausea, sometimes even losing their fingers in accidents. A major cause of accidents is the high speed at which workers are required to carry out their tasks. It will be ten or fifteen years before the possible carcinogenic effects of these chemicals begin to show up in the women who work with them now.

Management representatives deny or trivialize the dangers of electronics work. Sometimes their denials are unintentionally revealing, however. The manager at Hewlett-Packard in Malaysia answered my question about eye problems: "These girls are used to working with 'scopes. We've found no eye problems. But it sure makes me dizzy to look through those things." Personnel departments set up management-worker health and safety committees, but these seldom address the real hazards or consider ways to correct them. Instead of questioning the way in which

chemicals are handled, they generally focus on health and safety poster or essay contests, fire drills, or an annual health and safety week.

A BED AND A CUPBOARD

As a new segment of the work force, many women—although not all—have to move long distances from their homes to take jobs in the electronics plants. The conditions in which they live away from home reflect both the meagerness of their wages and the social disruption caused by foreign-dominated industrialization in enclaves not integrated into the local economy. In Malaysia, where wages and living conditions are better than in the other countries I visited, electronics workers live in boarding houses. Four to eight women usually share a room. In a hostel where I stayed, each individual possesses a bunk space and a two-foot cube of a cupboard. The kitchen, outfitted only with 19 kerosene stoves, is shared by 50 women. . . .

In the Philippines, factory women live in even grimmer conditions than in Malaysia. Many are able to afford only a place to sleep in a squatter shack pitched in a slum. In the boarding houses, ten women share a room, which is "furnished" only with straw sleeping mats.

COFFEE AND COSMETICS

After casting a sidelong glance at the men at the next table, Tuti shot the rest of us a conspiratorial smile, eyes twinkling. I stared into the coffee I was stirring, pulling the Malay words together in my mind to ask why they had come to work in this factory. Suddenly I laughed to myself, realizing that part of the answer was right here at this coffee stand at 11 o'clock at night.

Malaysian workers' answers to my question were often similar. They come for the money, of course, but also for the freedom. They talk of freedom to go out late at night, to have a boyfriend, to wear blue jeans, high heels and make-up. Implicitly they contrast this social freedom with the sheltered, regulated lives they would lead with their families in Malay villages and small towns. They revel in their escape from the watchful eyes of fathers and brothers.

Complementing the sense of social freedom is the opportunity to sample a bit of the consumer society which is their image of the West and modernity. On pay day, the factories arrange for sellers of cosmetics and costume jewelry to come in during lunch break. "Tee-shirt and clothing salespeople are not allowed in, because try-ons would take more than the half-hour lunch breaks. Whatever we do, we don't disrupt production time," explained a personnel officer. "I worry about the price of one lipstick," she continued. "But an operator walks up to the salesperson and buys M\$80 [US\$40] worth of cosmetics at once!" She could not explain how an assembler could afford two weeks' pay for a package of cosmetics. Elaborate make-up is part of the electronics image in

Malaysia, and the factories even provide classes in how to apply it. All this allows the workers to feel they are part of a global culture which includes the choice between Avon and Mary Quant products, posters of John Travolta and Farah Fawcett-Majors by their beds, and the music from *Saturday Night Fever* played on the factory Muzak system.

Underlying the lifestyle attractions of electronics work, most strongly felt and articulated in Malaysia, is the economic imperative. Women come to work in the factories because their families need or want the income their wages will allow them to contribute to the household. Families who may not approve of the factory lifestyle allow their daughters to go to work when they realize this will increase the family's income. . . .

TENSIONS

The role of income provider is a relatively new one for Southeast Asian women. While women have always shared the work of family enterprises—whether peasant or urban—and supplemented household income by doing cottage craft work, only a small proportion have taken on full-time wage-earning jobs outside the family. Those women who have entered the paid work force have generally been members of the small proletariat taking jobs in such industries as textiles, where they work under sweatshop conditions, or educated women working in clerical or professional positions. The arrival of the electronics industry has dramatically expanded opportunities for young women to play independent economic roles, often at times when their brothers cannot find wage jobs.

While the families welcome their daughters' income, it is often difficult to accept a daughter's greater independence. This tension becomes especially acute when the women push for more freedom or flaunt the alien lifestyle which is so actively encouraged inside the factory. It is particularly severe in Malaysia, where the factory culture is more pronounced than other countries in the region. The Intel Penang personnel officer complained, "Our major problem is complaints from parents, and brothers in particular, when they see the cultural changes and new lifestyles their daughters and sisters are taking on." In an attempt to overcome parental disapproval, several factories have arranged Parents' Days to "show parents that the working environment is actually very amenable." These events feature tours of the plant and free snacks and activities. Other plants have established factory-run hostels for workers so that parents will not worry about what their daughters do during unsupervised hours. The hostels feature chaperones and strict rules: residents must sign in and out, giving their destination when they leave, and they must return before 11:00 p.m. If they have guests, they must provide complete information about them. Workers living in these hostels are quite wary of talking to outsiders. One group with whom I had become friendly

would not let me enter for fear of repercussions from the chaperone.

Despite such measures, the tension persists, perhaps most of all for the workers themselves. They have been thrust into a limbo between two worlds, neither of which fully accepts the other. When they take on the styles and mannerisms encouraged in the factories, they may find themselves ostracized by their families and communities. Yet if they do not, they find themselves considered "backward" and perhaps unfit for factory work. One Malaysian worker recounted an experience familiar to many:

When I first came to Penang, I lived in the *Kampung* [village] near the factory because it reminded me of my *kampung* back in Ipoh. But after a couple of months I moved out of the *kampung* and into a boarding house in the town because all the older *kampung* men were bothering me, telling me I was loose and bad . . .

The poignancy is heightened when one remembers that most electronics workers will be forced by deteriorating vision to leave their jobs before they are 30.

TIES TO CALIFORNIA

While they seek to become members of a global culture by consuming its products, Asian electronics workers in fact share much more than they know with their California co-workers. Approximately 60,000 assemblers work in the plants of Silicon Valley to begin the semiconductor production process and to test the finished products after Asian assemblers have completed their work. Ninety percent of these American workers are women, and roughly half of them are of Asian and Latin origin, including Filipinas, Koreans, Vietnamese, Mexicans, Azoreans. Unlike their Southeast Asian sisters, many of the women in California are single mothers who provide their families' primary support.

Workers in Asia and California are subject to many of the same conditions and problems, including job hazards, high production pressures, coercive discipline and human relations techniques aimed at preventing independent worker organizing. In California, the hazards arise from the great number of chemicals used in the fabrication of silicon wafers. The pressure to produce is expressed in forced overtime, speed-ups and competition. California executives regularly attend seminars on "How to Make Unions Unnecessary," which simulate organizing drives and discuss likely organizer personality types. It is in such management meetings that the personnel techniques are refined for use in California and export to Southeast Asia.

Women in California are very aware that women in Asia carry out part of the production process, because their employers constantly remind them. Many of the Southeast Asian electronics workers, however, do not realize that women in California do work very similar to their own. The companies use the international division of labor to manipulate and intimidate their workers, rather than providing ways for the workers to develop a feeling of

kinship among themselves. California workers are threatened with the loss of their jobs if they organize themselves or make too many demands on their employers: the plant can always relocate to Asia. . . .

DILEMMAS AND CONTRADICTIONS

The semiconductor industry presents its Southeast Asian women workers with short-term dilemmas and long-term contradictions. Jobs which seldom last longer than four years can bring profound changes into their lives for years to come. While the newness of the industry in Southeast Asia means there are relatively few veterans of semiconductor employment, it is essential to consider what will happen to these workers when their time in the electronics plants is over.

For the short term, the tens of thousands of jobs the electronics industry has brought to each Southeast Asian country have created new economic roles for women, potentially raising their status and undermining the patriarchal structure which often makes families oppressive for women. At the same time, however, by stressing Western versions of feminine passivity, the companies have been able to prevent the workers from realizing their potential for independence. . . .

Particularly common is dissatisfaction because families have become so dependent on their daughter's income that they resist the daughters' wishes to marry. After marriage, the women either stop working or use most of their income to set up a new household.

Industry personnel policies which encourage Western manners and consumption habits often make it difficult for women workers to fit into their communities and families. Thus when their period of employment in the semiconductor factories end, they face serious questions about their ability to find other jobs or marry. Church organizers in South Korea, where electronics industries are over ten years old, report that many former electronics workers have no alternative but to become prostitutes to support themselves.

While their new economic roles actually bring women workers into an international system, the companies deliberately work to prevent them from recognizing their own importance. The stress on foreign images of femininity fosters the illusion that consuming Western products makes a woman part of an international culture. The stress on competition and individuality makes it difficult for women to cooperate with each other in the same plant, much less develop links with women working in the same industry in other countries.

The ramifications of the electronics companies' manipulation of their women workers reach into other "female" industries as well. Semiconductor firms have divided their workers from those in other industries by requiring more education as a condition for hiring and creating an image of superiority among them. Throughout Southeast Asia, workers and observers report that women

3 Days of Mass Hysteria

Without strikes, without unions, without collective bargaining, Malaysian workers have regularly shut down factories for hours and even days at a time with spontaneous outbreaks of possession by spirits affecting hundreds of workers. "Spirits" provide Malay women with one of their few culturally acceptable forms of social protest. Their culture does not condone expressions of anger and strong emotions by women.

A possessed woman becomes "hysterical," going into contortions and often taking on a totally different voice and personality. In one possession I witnessed, ten adults were needed to restrain a very slight teen-aged girl. In another, a worker who was possessed in her hostel began to shout that she hated being there, hated working in the plant and wanted to go home to her mother. Afterwards, she and others went to great pains to explain that it was not she who was speaking but a spirit who was speaking through her. Hence, she was not responsible for what she had said.

Mass possessions in the factories usually occur during times of high production pressures, changes in the production process or other generally recognized tension. Incidents commonly begin with one worker seeing a spirit in her microscope, often that of her mother. The vision sweeps through the factory floor, and suddenly several hundred women are hysterically weeping and writhing. Though management personnel try to remove the affected women from the floor immediately, the outbreaks frequently close the factory down in a subconscious wildcat strike. One American manager openly acknowledged the connection between possessions and working conditions: "If people believe management cares, there are no problems. Hysteria doesn't occur." Affected workers always receive a paid two-week medical leave in a further, implicit admission that possession is linked to working conditions.

Women and management alike offer many explanations for the epidemics, usually revolving around unhappy spirits or ghosts. According to one theory, the spirits are ghosts of prisoners of war killed on the factory sites by Japanese during World War II. Management efforts to end the outbreaks have ranged from importing industrial relations experts from New York to hiring local spiritual healers, on a monthly stipend, to exorcise the spirits. But the possessions continue.

in other industries view electronics workers with both envy at their style and apparent freedom and contempt of their flaunting of alien lifestyles. Such divisions make it difficult for workers to cross industry lines to organize themselves or even understand their common position as workers and as women. The industries' manipulation is

particularly effective in Southeast Asia, because industrial work in general is so new there. Few women have been "toughened" by experience in wage labor, and few have begun to feel the long-term contradictions which their present work implies.

Nonetheless, resistance is beginning. Regular reports of protests, sit-ins, and work stoppages come from established factories in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea. Worker militancy in Hong Kong during the late 1960s discouraged further foreign investment for several years and may have been the catalyst in the decision of many semiconductor firms to locate new factories in other Asian countries. Even in these newer factory posts, resistance is taking shape. In the Philippines, for example, workers in one U.S.-owned plant are developing a union despite heavy government restrictions on all labor organizing. Workers periodically halt production for short periods to press demands in all Southeast Asian countries.

A major aspect of organized worker resistance—in the Philippines, South Korea, and Hong Kong as well as in California—is the investigation of their particular roles in international production. As they challenge the companies, workers find they must understand this inter-

national structure if they are to be successful in organizing across national and eventually industry lines. . . .

NOTES

Unless otherwise cited, interview material was obtained during a fact-finding trip to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines from November 1978 to January 1979.

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