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Promoting Social Justice, Human Rights, and Peace

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## **DOLLS AND DUST: Committee for Asian Women**

(Sept. 1998: 60 min.)

Transcribed by Darrell G. Moen

**Narrator:** For the past three decades, the powerful agencies of the North have been propagating that integration into the global free market economy will bring about a high growth rate, efficiency, the best use of resources, and "development" for all.

**Caption insert:** The states in the South hope to attain economic advancement by joining the global assembly line in export-oriented industries.

**Narrator:** As more and more states in the South compete for direct foreign investments, various tax-free incentives are offered to the foreign investors. Cheap labor became the most crucial attraction. The employment of women's labor has been identified to be the most profitable to global capital. How do women workers fare in the free market globalization process? Let's have a look at Sri Lanka, Thailand, and South Korea.

### **SRI LANKA**

**Narrator:** Sri Lanka used to have a protected economy. People led simple lives with rich traditions and cultures. But in 1977, the new Sri Lankan government sought to achieve higher economic growth by looking up to the "four dragon" economies. As "aid" recipient, Sri Lanka was forced to open its economy as advocated by donor governments and agencies such as the *World Bank* and the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)*. Sri Lanka became the first country in south Asia to adopt the full package of the *Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)* of the *IMF* to integrate into the global free market.

**Caption insert:** Global free market for whose benefit?

**Narrator:** To attract foreign investment and to make Sri Lankan goods competitive and cheap for export, the Sri Lankan rupee was devalued. To liberalize the market, all

subsidies and price control measures on essential food items were stopped. Food prices shot up by more than 100%, but real wages only increased by 24% to 40%.

**Pooranam** (tea picker): I'm the only person working to support my family. With a daily wage of only 83 rupees, how [are we] to survive?

**Narrator:** Since state enterprises were considered as hampering free market operation, the *World Bank* and *IMF* advocated privatization. Maximum profit making became the most important objective.

**Saratha** (unionist): Before privatization, the management demanded 16 to 18 kg. of tea leaves per worker. After privatization, the company demands 20 to 22 kg. Sometimes, even 25 kilograms!

**Narrator:** The Sri Lankan plantations, which were earlier managed as state enterprises were privatized; probably the largest privatization of plantation estates in the world. The 80% of the small farmers engaged mainly in food crops cultivation were seen to be the biggest obstacle to rapid economic growth. Various subsidies provided to small farmers were considered [to be] hampering the free market economy.

**Sarath Fernando** (*Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform*): These types of subsidies cannot be maintained. That's the *World Bank/IMF* policy. But the country must subsidize the big companies in a very, very big way. And these are not recovered [by society]. They are given a complete tax holiday for 15 or 20 years.

**Narrator:** Without government subsidies, thousands of small farmers became dependent on big companies which supply all the inputs for cash crop cultivation. Eventually, the entire sector of agriculture, which historically produced food crops, was changed into value-added, export-oriented, cash crop production. As more and more land was cleared by big companies for cash crop plantations, the environment was destroyed.

**Dayavathi** (farmer): We spray pesticides all day long. Then we suffer from nausea, chest pain, dizziness.

**Podinona** (farmer): When we came here in 1974 there was plenty of rain. We gained high yields of rice and corn. We had enough to eat. After the land and trees were destroyed for the sugar cane plantation, we've had very little rain since then.

**Narrator:** To ensure a sufficient supply of irrigation water for big plantations and their big investment in cash crops, a "water property right" was enforced.

**F. Sarath (MONLAR):** In simple terms it means that all of the ancient irrigation systems that we have had should be sold to the private sector at dirt cheap prices! Now, when the private sector [controls the water], they will sell it at the highest price to the highest bidder, so that bigger investors, bigger companies, bigger farmers will have the right to the water. And the small farmer will be pushed out.

**Narrator:** The sturdy peasantry is increasingly being transformed into an army of landless, seasonal TNC-owned (transnational corporation) plantation laborers.

**Heenmenika (cane worker):** Those who work on the plantation suffer so much. I know this because I also worked there. It's better to put your head on the rail track to kill yourself and die instantly rather than to work [to death] on the plantation.

**Narrator:** By impoverishing the rural sector, an abundant supply of cheap labor is provided for the industrial sector.

**Siriyalatha (weaver):** My village was once famous for its handloom industry. After the *FTZ (free trade zone)* was established, the whole industry collapsed. Many girls left the village to work in the *Free Trade Zone*.

**Narrator:** Other local industries which used to provide some means of livelihood, particularly to women, were also destroyed.

**Nona (coir worker):** Those days we used to twist coir ropes in every household. But not anymore, after the *FTZ* garment factories were built.

**Caption insert:** There are about 100,000 women workers in three *FTZs*.

**Sunila (DA BINDU):** In the *FTZs*, workers have to find their own boarding places. Usually in a room fit for two, the landlord squeezes five to six persons. This overcrowding affects their health adversely.

**Nilu (FTZ worker):** In one boarding house, there are 150 girls but only four toilets!

**Vigita (FTZ worker):** We don't have enough water in the boarding house. We have to walk some distance to a public well. If we don't get there by 4am, there won't be any water left.

**Narrator:** With such limited housing facilities and a poor public transport system, it's a mad rush to get to work on time. Those who are late suffer pay cuts or public humiliation.

**Ranayaka** (*FTZ worker*): We are punished to stand in front of our assembly line. Because we are poor and come to do this job, we have to endure such physical and psychological abuses.

**Rathna** (*FTZ worker*): In the Korean-owned factory where I worked, one worker was refused permission to use the toilet. In desperation, she urinated at the entrance.

**Narrator**: Many restrictions are imposed on their work contracts. In a letter of confirmation of employment at the Korean factory, Young An Lanka, item 14 stated that "... if you are a female employee, you shall agree to resign when and if you get married." This new labor force of women workers are paid the lowest possible wage rate to reap the highest possible profit.

**Sujata** (*Women's Center*): After working 1.5 year, the monthly pay is 2,200 rupees. After 10 years, the pay is only 3.000 Rs.

**Narrator**: Targets are set very high. In a sample survey of 1,300 workers, 45.8% could not reach their required work quota.

**Janake** (*FTZ worker*): It's difficult to meet the target of 800 tobacco leaves per hour. Often, my fingers are cut. Also, I get scolded in the office.

**Halima** (*DA BINDU*): The factory where I worked made jeans, jackets, panties. The owner feared the workers would steal panties. After work [each day], their skirts were lifted for inspection.

**Sirimathil** (*FTZ worker*): We are poor and feel so helpless working in the *FTZ* factories.

**Narrator**: The community at large also tend to regard these young women as easy prey and morally cheap.

**Chandra** (*DA BINDU*): At times we work from 7:35am until 7:45am the next day!

**Narrator**: With night shifts and forced overtime, and without proper transport facilities, many women workers fear having to walk long distances in the dark before reaching their boarding places.

**Anura** (*FTZ worker*): On December 25th, I was raped and also robbed of my necklace. Because of serious injury to my throat, I had to be hospitalized for over a month.

**Caption insert**: March 1997. *SINOTEX* sweater section is closed down. 410 workers are sacked, many with 15 years of service.

**Perera (FTZ worker):** We can't find new jobs. We are rejected as too old! We have sacrificed our whole life, our youth, our labor to this factory.

**Prianika (FTZ worker):** When seeking new jobs, they asked where we worked before. When we told them, they rejected us as "strikers"!

**Narrator:** The government often emphasizes the benefits brought by free trade zones to women workers, in particular, their ability to contribute to their family and to save for their dowries. Meager savings are often only possible by sacrificing their own health. In a 1994 survey by a women's organization, *DA BINDU*, 55% of women workers are underweight. Only 5% of the workers get more than 2,500 calories per day. According to the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, workers in the free trade zones have the right to form and join a trade union. However, recognition of such unions by employers is not regulated by law.

**Samanmalie (DA BINDU):** Although *FTZ* workers have the right to form trade unions, in practice, it is difficult to do so because they fear thuggery. Workers and unionists have been intimidated, dismissed, assaulted by police and soldiers. Some have even been disappeared.

**Caption insert:** President Chandrika promulgated the *Workers' Charter* on Sept. 2, 1995. But the *Charter* remains to be implemented.

**Anton Marcus (Joint Association of Workers and Workers' Councils):** Most of the investors, as well as the *IMF* and the *World Bank*, have met with government officials and threatened them [by saying] that if the government is going to implement this *Workers' Charter*, the investors are not going to come to Sri Lanka. So in that way, the *IMF*, the *World Bank*, and investors [multinational corporations] are the people who really decide our labor policies.

**Samanmalie (DA BINDU):** In a peaceful procession by workers from Ansell Lanka, many women workers were assaulted by the police. One worker was shot dead.

**Narrator:** Despite the *World Bank*, the *IMF*, and the TNC-dictated state domination in the industrial sector, women workers are resisting and organizing themselves in the form of peoples' organizations with the support of women's organizations, NGOs, and trade unions outside the free trade zones.

**Sujata (Women's Center):** We get women workers to take part in various workshops, discuss problems in factories, and build awareness.

**Samanmalie** (*DA BINDU*): Manike wrote a poem on her hard life in the FTZ. She was sacked after her poem was published by *DA BINDU*. Through local and international pressure, she got back her job.

**Caption insert:**

My name is Manike  
I work in the FTZ  
My mother is not aware  
How much I suffer...  
I go in the morning  
and return at night  
I suffer pain in my body  
I thought I'd die working  
at STAR Garments factory...

**Narrator:** In 1994, the government introduced the *Workers Councils* which confined the dealing of workers' grievances within each factory. However, some women workers managed to form and lead the *Joint Association of Workers and Workers' Councils of Free Trade Zones* comprising 30 organizations to act as a united front.

**Daya** (*Women's Center*): Through our *Joint Council*, we have won in many struggles. Our ultimate goal is to form a trade union in the *FTZ*.

**Caption insert:** After two decades of free market economy process, government debt has shot up to 90-95% of GNP! Malnutrition among children below five years [of age] is 60% (1995)!

**Sarath Fernando** (*Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform*): The disaster of this process is that we are trying hard for the last 19 years to bring a few big investors, hoping that they will come and provide jobs for everybody, develop industry, develop agriculture, and reduce poverty. It did not work! It completely worked in the opposite direction during the last 19 years.

**Caption insert:** 10% of the population gets 50% of the national income.

**Narrator:** To many alternative pathfinders in Sri Lanka, besides taking steps to seek for justice in the industrial sector, the key to overcoming the crisis is the rebuilding of the rural agricultural economy.

**Karline** (farmer): As an alternative, we build awareness through women's organizations and practice organic farming.

**Kanthil** (organizer): On our organic farm, we train farmers to use neem and marigold instead of chemical pesticides.

**Anita Fernando** (*Community Education Centre*): We are convinced that if thousands and thousands of farmers gradually take to this kind of sustainable agriculture, we can offer an alternative to the mono-agriculture that is being promoted in our country.

**Narrator**: Alternative agriculture is seen as a strong base for realizing Sri Lankan peoples' values and ethics.

**Sarath Fernando** (*Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform*): And we also require political process to organize and educate our people. Then we'll require an organized process of getting policies changed. We have to convince our people and also people outside that the *World Bank* is not the only economic authority in the world. They have failed.

## THAILAND

**Narrator**: For a decade, Thailand experienced an export-oriented industrialization boom. The 8% to 10% annual growth rate dazzled the world. The boom created millionaires and billionaires. Thirteen Thai companies were included in Asia's top 100 companies. However, the boom also resulted in Thailand being ranked the 5th among "developing" countries with the worst [income] disparities.

**Caption insert**: About 12 out of 60 million people still live in poverty.

**Narrator**: Much of Thailand's export-oriented growth had depended on 2 million low-paid, women workers. In seven out of ten leading export industries, 80% of the workforce was female.

**Wilaiwan** (unionist): After working for over 20 years, my daily wage is only 161 baht, just 4 baht more than the minimum wage!

**Caption insert**: Even with overtime work, we still can't earn enough to eat! [song lyrics]

**Narrator**: Even though the official minimum wage could hardly cover a worker's daily expenses, many major industries employ subcontract and casual labor to avoid paying even the minimum wage and to avoid observing other labor laws.

**Caption insert**: Facing danger at work: 1993 - 156,548 workers; 1994: over 20% increase (official government figures). The prevalence of abnormal levels of lead in the bodies of women electronic workers is as high as 36%!

**Rawan (worker):** When my child was born, she was not normal. She often suffers from colds. Her hair is thin. She is a slow learner.

**Caption insert:** Ms. Rawan worked in the soldering section of an electronics factory for 11 years. She suffers from lead poisoning. The authorities denied that she is an occupational health victim.

**Rawan (worker):** Why does the government believe only the employers? Why believe that the workers only pretend to be sick? We have gone to so many hospitals to seek treatment and still cannot recover... At present I am unemployed. I have no money. No money to buy medicine. What am I to do?

**Narrator:** In the Northern Region Industrial Estate in Lompoon, 12 workers and two of their children were reported to have died mysteriously.

**Caption insert:** After working for four years in an electronics factory, Ms. Mayuree, a grade-A worker, suffers from alumina poisoning.

**Mayuree (worker):** While working, we had neither masks for the face nor gloves. We had to use our bare hands to clean the circuit boards. When my fingers bled or were burnt by the hot circuit boards, I used my palms to clean and rub like this.

**Narrator:** Ms. Mayuree filed a court case to claim compensation from the Japanese-owned factory.

**Mayuree (worker):** During the court case, some people did not understand. They accused me as [being] a radical against investments!

**Caption insert:** Despite the testimonies of four well-respected doctors, mayuree lost the court case. Wongdeun and Yupin have died but the government doesn't care.

**Narrator:** Over the past ten years, byssinosis, a respiratory disorder caused by inhaling cotton dust has affected 30% of the female workers in the textile industry.

**Karaket (worker):** My work involved cleaning spinning machines. In my workplace, it was hot and very noisy. It was also very dusty.

**Caption insert:** After 18 months of work, Karaket fell sick and almost died. Many doctors misdiagnosed her sickness as influenza. Finally, she managed to consult a specialist in Bangkok.

**Karaket:** The doctor informed me that I suffer from an occupational disease: "byssinosis." 70% of my lungs have been destroyed.



**Caption insert:** Although still in her twenties, Karaket can no longer work. In 1993, Karaket campaigned on occupational health issues. After many difficulties, she became the first "byssinosis" patient who successfully claimed compensation from the state-managed *Workers' Compensation Fund*. [newspaper headline: Workers bitterly criticize the *Compensation Fund*]

**Karaket:** The compensation I have received is nothing compared to the damage to my lungs and health.

**Karaket's mother:** If I had known my daughter would suffer from this disease, I would have stopped her from working at the factory. It's better to live in poverty than to suffer from this disease!

**Caption insert:** Ms. Somboon, a worker from a textile factory found herself suffering from byssinosis in July 1992.

**Narrator:** With the help of *The Friends of Women Foundation* and other NGOs, Ms. Somboon and her group of occupational health victim friends founded *WEPT (Council of Work and Environment related Patients' Network)*. Now, there are 300 members.

**Caption insert:** Despite many difficulties throughout the past six years, about 200 members of *WEPT* have received compensation. *WEPT* joined the "Forum of the Poor" to demand that the government overcome occupational health problems at the policy-making level. In April 1998, *WEPT* launched a campaign to collect 50,000 voters' signatures to push for the *Occupational Health and Safety Protection Bill*. [song lyrics: Against suffering and hardship we march forward to unite.]

**Narrator:** In 1992, the government's safety officers inspected 4,306 factories. 64% were found to be violating some safety regulations. However, as few as five were prosecuted.

**Caption insert:** In 1993, the KADER toy factory burned down. 188 workers, mainly young women, lost their lives. 469 workers were injured. Many died simply because the fire doors were kept locked and because the poorly-built structure collapsed in 15 minutes.

**Tumtong (survivor):** I survived because I jumped and landed on my friends' bodies.

**Teinruen (survivor):** I still have nightmares. When I hear loud sounds and smell smoke, I get frightened.

**Boon (survivor):** The employer has insurance for the dolls in the factory, but no insurance for workers! The lives of workers are less valuable than their dolls! When there is a fire, the workers can die for nothing!

**Caption insert (song lyrics):** Oh, dolls! Women workers! You are treated like dust while enriching the employers with your sweat and labor. It is so unfair!

**Narrator:** Paradon, a workers' band was formed in 1993 after the Kader tragedy.

**Band member:** We sind to build awareness, to entertain and motivate workers, to become involved in workers' struggles and social issues.

**Caption insert:** Committed NGO support contributed much to leadership development and organizing of women workers. With such support, women unionists have joined together in the "*Women Workers Unity Group*" to form an independent network across all organizations.

**Wanpen (unionist):** The *Women Workers Unity Group* builds awareness among women workers of their rights and campaigns for legal changes. One successful activity was the campaign for the 90-day full-pay maternity leave in 1993.

**Caption insert:** After a long process of awareness-building, many women workers are organizing for change. In Sept. 1996, workers from the Mizuki factory went on strike to demand a 50 baht increase in their cost-of-living allowance [as well as] other benefits.

**Wilaiporn (unionist):** On the 15th day of our strike, the company sent a letter threatening to relocate the factory to China unless we stop the strike immediately.

**Caption insert:** The strike went on for several weeks. Many workers from other factories gave moral support.

**Wilaiporn (unionist):** Through this strike, the 1,000 workers have been able to gain strength and learn how to unite.

**Caption insert:** While the Mizuki workers managed to secure some of their demands, 400 laid-off workers from the Eden factory continue to face many difficulties.

**Weldao (worker):** We negotiated many times but the employer only sent representatives who have no authority to make any decision. One day, many trucks came to move goods out of the factory. We decided to block the three factory gates. We formed three blockades with 50-60 workers per group.

**Caption insert:** Eden was a case of a "runaway" company. Adam Lisowski, the Austrian employer disappeared owing 33 million baht in compensation to the workers!

**Narrator:** With the support of activists from the *Justice and Peace Commission* in Thailand, some retrenched Eden workers formed the *Retrenched Women Workers' Group*.

**Jaruay (worker):** After the retrenchment, we got together as a savings group. Now, we have 15 full members.

**Weldao (worker):** Now, we are able to do cutting, sewing, and screening work. We have also set up a revolving fund.

**Tiphawan (worker):** We hope to have job security, medical, and other benefits.

**Caption insert:** Workers' positive initiatives are now being undermined [by the heaviest mass layoffs in decades].

**Narrator:** In July 1997, Thailand turned from a "tiger" into a sick kitten. What happened to the "miracle growth"?

**Caption insert:** Lured by the stock and property markets, many Thai and foreign bankers and financial institutions invested recklessly in the stock market and in real estate to reap speculative profits.

**Narrator:** Not adding anything positive to productivity and competitiveness, these speculative activities resulted in an inflated or "bubble" economy.

**Caption insert:** From January 1996, currency speculators attacked the baht. The central bank spent US\$23.4 billion to defend the baht. The hard-earned reserves of the past 15 years were drained.

**Narrator:** The government was forced to float the baht on July 2, 1997.

**Caption insert:** Thailand had to seek an *IMF* loan of US\$17.2 billion. The *IMF* loan came with many strings attached.

**Narrator:** As a loan recipient, the people of Thailand are now forced to swallow the *IMF's* bitter medicine.

**Caption insert:** The baht has been devalued. Foreign capital is flowing out. Banks are failing. [Thai] companies are going bankrupt. About 3 million workers have lost their jobs.

**Supensil (activist):** In Thailand, there is no unemployment benefit. To survive, many retrenched workers have become hawkers selling sour papaya salad [on the streets].

**Saneh (worker):** The workers are suffering "under the feet of investors." The harsh *IMF* conditionalities are killing innocent workers.

**Narrator:** The workers felt the urgent need of amendments to the social security law to include unemployment benefits.

**Caption insert:** Now women workers have to struggle even harder not only to nurture collective action at the national level, but also to counter the negative forces of globalization.

## **SOUTH KOREA**

**Narrator:** South Korea was the 11th largest economy in the world; one of the glittering examples of "East Asian dragon economies." Led by a military government in the 1960s, South Korea pushed for an export-at-all-cost development strategy through its unique state-chaebol alliance.

**Caption insert:** "Chaebol" refers to the Korean family-owned conglomerate.

**Yoon Woo-Hyun (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions):** Ten chaebols control 70% of South Korea's production. Thirty chaebols control 90% of the total sales value. That's why the Korean economy is called the Chaebol economy! Chaebols gain their wealth through collaboration with the authoritarian regime. In return, the chaebols provide bribes and corruption.

**Narrator:** The success of Korean products on the world market relied on the authoritarian control of labor. Despite severe obstacles, women workers of South Korea made history in the labor movement of the 1970s.

**Caption insert:** On November 13, 1970, a worker named Chun Tae-il protested against violations of labor laws by committing suicide [by self-immolation] at the Peace Market, shouting while burning to death: "RESPECT LABOR LAWS!"

**Ms. Lee So Sun (labor activist):** Ms. Lee So Sun, Chun Tae-il's mother, refused to collect Chun Tae-il's body unless the Department of Labor met his demand for the formation of a labor union in the Seoul Peace Market. On November 27, 1970, the Peace Market Workers Union was officially established. A labor education class was formed. The seeds of a real labor movement began to grow.

**Myung Hee** (labor activist): When I realized that there were, in fact, labor standard laws, I got very angry. None of the clauses to protect workers had ever been practiced!

**Narrator:** *Dong-il Textile Union* was known for its first woman president in the 1970s.

**Caption insert:** In 1976, *Dong-il* women workers went on hunger strike. Male workers were instigated to act against women unionists in 1978.

**Chong Gak** (*Dong-il* unionist): Ten minutes before the election, male workers suddenly came. They threw shit at us and shouted, "Bastards! Let's see whether you can carry out representative election!"

**Caption insert:** In 1979, Ms Kim Kyong-Suk of the *Y.H. Wig* factory was killed in a confrontation with the riot police. Ms. Seon Soon from the *Won Poong* factory was brutally beaten.

**Seon Soon** (*Won Poong* unionist): I said to the gangsters, "I won't kneel down to you!" I won't resign my position as women workers representative even if you kill me!"

**Caption insert:** Under the military dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan, all the 17 women-led democratic trade unions of the 70s were crushed. [song lyrics:] Gathering our workers' pride and tears, We'll sprinkle it on that land of equality...

**Young Soon** (*Control Data* unionist): Women workers have become conscious of their rights. Women workers' struggles in the 1970s laid an important foundation for the trade union movement in South Korea.

**Narrator:** In the 1980s, the government pushed for industrial restructuring towards heavy and chemical industries; male-worker dominated industries such as automobiles, shipbuilding, and iron and steel began to take the lead in exports.

**Caption insert:** Repression against democratic trade unions persisted.... [song lyrics:] We've been repressed for a long time... With arms around each other's shoulders - Unite! Struggle! Along with a nationwide movement for democracy, between 1987 and 1989, workers waged 7,000 struggles and gave birth to 4,600 democratic trade unions.

**Narrator:** Since 1987, workers have been blamed for their frequent union struggles, for pushing up wages, and for weakening South Korea's export competitiveness. However, the other more critical factor tends to be overlooked: the domination of the South Korean economy by the United States. South Korea's protected domestic market was forced open for U.S. corporations, especially in the service and agricultural sectors.

**Caption insert:** Consequently, the agricultural sector was destroyed. Seven million farmers were forced to the brink of bankruptcy.

**Narrator:** The Korean currency, the won, was forced to appreciate to make South Korean goods less attractive to American consumers. By the 1990s, South Korea began to fall into an export crisis. Labor intensive industries like textile, garment, and footwear, were dismissed as "sunset" industries. The government encouraged offshore relocation and business transfer.

**Caption insert:** Pusan (2nd largest city). Massive relocation of the shoe industry has led to the collapse of this once "sneaker capital" of the world!

**Sin-Mi (Tae Yang unionist):** In Pusan, between 1985 and 1987, one out of five persons was involved in the shoe industry - one in each family!

**Caption insert:** Between 1990 and 1993, 582 factories closed down.

**Narrator:** Some factory owners demolished their factories and built apartment blocks [in order] to reap higher profits in the booming property market. Many Korean sport shoes companies [such as Reebok] relocated to Indonesia, Thailand, China, and Vietnam. 90% of the workers in the Pusan shoe industry have been retrenched.

**Caption insert:** The number of workers dropped from 164,000 in 1988 to 16,700 in 1996. Most of the workers retrenched were middle-aged women. Many middle-aged women workers protested against unfair retrenchment.

**Sin-Mi (Tae Yang unionist):** On the 4th day of our strike at *Tae Yang* shoe factory the police came to assault us. 200 workers were injured and ten were arrested.

**Chang Jin-Mi (Pusan Women's Association):** Many middle-aged women after being retrenched face severe difficulties in making a living.

**Narrator:** Most of the middle-aged women had to seek reemployment in small, substandard, subcontract sweatshops or as home workers.

**Caption insert:** The *Masan Free Export Zone* was established in 1973, an electronics manufacturing center with Japanese capital. The *Zone* had 36,000 workers in 1987, but only 14,000 in 1997.

**Lee Mi-Kyong (Masan Women Workers Association):** Cheap labor is the major concern in the *Masan FTZ*. Whenever the companies feel it is not profitable enough, they just withdraw their capital. So workers in the *Masan FTZ* face acute job insecurity.

**Narrator:** The managements use job insecurity as a tactic to crush democratic trade unions.

**Jong Hyon**(*unionist*): The *Sanbon* company accused our union of not obeying orders. So they threatened to close down the factory.

**Youn Ok** (*Masan WWA*): The ideology of male worker as the family breadwinner is used by the company to destroy democratic unions.

**Caption insert:** Male workers at *Sanbon* were mobilized to attack unionists.

**Su-Im** (*unionist*): Male workers knocked our union secretary's head against the wall. She had to be hospitalized for over a month.

**Narrator:** As tougher management tactics were used in industrial restructuring, women workers experienced more severe labor exploitation and suppression.

**Kyong Wha**(*unionist*): Now, one worker has to carry out the work of two or three workers. Labor has become more intensified.

**Caption insert:** In 1991, Ms. Mi-Kyong, a 23-year old factory worker jumped from the top floor of her factory in protest against intensified labor control.

**Hyun-Shil** (*Pusan WWA*): On Mi-Kyong's arm was written these words: "Please bury me in your heart, not in the cold, suppressive land."

**Caption insert:** In 1994, at *LG Corporation*, all the 45 workers on an assembly line fell victim to solvent poisoning.

**Yun Hee** (*LG worker*): The diagnoses show that our ovaries are barren. Our bone marrow and blood cells are badly damaged. [doctor's report: premature ovarian failure and bone marrow failure]

**Caption insert:** For two years, the women workers struggled persistently to make the company accountable for its negligence.

**Mi-Lee** (*LG worker*): We decided to open this center of occupational health victims to pressure the LG Corporation to fulfill the terms of our collective settlement and to assist other workers suffering similar problems.

**Narrator:** The state-chaebol dictated development model seemed to have produced a "miracle dragon economy" during the 1980s. In the 1990s however, the "dragon" is in distress.

**Caption insert:** By October 1997, eight top chaebols have gone bankrupt. The currency collapsed from 800 won per US dollar in Dec. 1996 to 2,000 won in Dec. 1997.

**Narrator:** The once formidable dragon now must bow down to the *IMF* for a record-breaking US\$57 billion (\$57,000,000,000) bailout package.

**Caption insert:** The *IMF* dictates that the South Korean government: 1. End state-chaebol monopoly; 2. Allow 100% foreign ownership in the banking and financial sectors; 3. Legalize layoffs.

**Narrator:** By March 1998, the number of unemployed has reached 1.4 million.

**Yong-Joo** (bank unionist): Women are the first to be fired during layoffs. Women would not be employed as full-time workers anymore, reinforcing women's low-pay position and job insecurity.

**Caption insert:** 500,000 women who newly joined the labor force in 1997 were employed as part-timers.

**Narrator:** Many women workers, especially in the finance and service sectors, are dismissed simply because of their gender.

**Myong Sook** (*Women Link*): We've formed a task force of five labor activists and 11 lawyers to take legal action against employers who lay off women workers unfairly.

**Narrator:** In view of the deteriorating employment conditions and job security, the *Korean Women Workers Association United (KWWAU)* gave support to some retrenched women workers who organized themselves into cooperatives.

**Hae-Ryon** (*Han-Bak Coop*): In our cooperative, we have daily production meetings, monthly skills training programs, and regular trainings on the operation of cooperatives.

**Mi-Suk** (*Ocknuri Coop*): With experience and control of the means of production, a better foundation for workers' cooperatives will be built.

**Caption Insert:** Cooperatives and alternative trading are also seen as entry points to question globalization and counter the forces of transnational corporations (TNCs).

**Narrator:** With the threat of massive layoffs under the IMF regime, the South Korean workers are facing a long battle ahead. Nevertheless, their spirit of struggle persists. Many still have hope in a strong democratic trade union movement.



**Woo Hyun** (*KCTU unionist*): South Korea's democratic trade union movement has developed through struggles from the barren soil. This is a bottom-up, grassroots movement by workers. This democratic trade union movement has the capacity to overcome any difficult situation.

**Caption insert:** [song lyrics]: With the flags of democratic trade unions... With the spirit of the workers... Forward! Forward!

**Narrator:** Sri Lanka is a classic example of an economy which liberalized, privatized, and deregulated itself fully, as advocated by the *World Bank* and the *IMF* in favor of foreign capital. However, the outcome is a crippled and chained economy. Thailand and South Korea are now under the intensive care of the *IMF* with Structural Adjustment and cuts in health, education, and welfare. The so-called Asian boom economy has gone bust.

The real beneficiaries of the *IMF* bailouts are the TNCs (transnational corporations) and the transnational financial corporations that had invested for speculative profits [in hedge funds, currency speculation, mutual funds, pension funds] or had loaned recklessly to banks, investment houses, and corporations in Asia. The real burden of repaying the huge *IMF* loans actually falls on the poor taxpayers and citizens of the debtor countries.

**Walden Bello** (Focus on the Global South): This is now what is called the complex of liberalization and globalization happening. Now, non-Asian capitalist groups, particularly from the United States, are being reinvigorated for a new stage of repenetrating Asia.

**Caption insert:** Power of Speculators: 1995 daily foreign exchange dealings: US\$1.3 trillion; 1995 global foreign exchange reserves: US\$1.2 trillion

**Narrator:** These TNCs and transnational financial corporations are in the very powerful position to destabilize countries by withdrawing capital or through currency attacks.

**Caption insert:** Speculation vs. Production: In 1977, trade in goods and services represented one third of global exchange transactions; in 1995, it dropped to 1.5%.

**Walden Bello** (Focus on the Global South): In the age of globalization, capital functions globally. Unless we match that, in that our perspectives also become global and our solutions become global, we'll be outmatched.

**Wang In-Soon** (Korean Women Workers Association United): The globalization process has an enormous impact on women workers' daily lives. We need educational programs to build awareness on globalization.

**Narrator:** More and more women workers are beginning to network and take action at the regional and international levels.

**Demonstrator:** "Boycott blood-stained toys!"

**Narrator:** The *Kader* fire representatives from Thailand, together with supporters in Hong Kong, confronted the *Kader* owner in Hong Kong. Each year, Hong Kong workers and supporters also initiate protest campaigns during the International Toy Fair against health hazards and fire accidents affecting women workers.

**Narrator:** With the transportation support of Japanese workers in 1997, South Korean worker representatives from the *Sanbon* factory staged a demonstration at the headquarters of *Sanbon* in Japan. International advocacies and campaigns help to bind women workers together at the global level. In this era of rapid globalization and internationalization of capital and labor, women workers are working out viable strategies and alternatives, to act both at the local as well as global levels in their battle for justice and equality.