

the Philippines has recently had to import welders for construction projects following shortages caused by the export of Filipino welders to Japan and Taiwan. In some cases whole regions are being integrated into international labour circuits as the traditional frameworks of life and work are broken down.⁶⁹

The structural dynamic at the core of this phenomenon - the unevenness of capitalist development throughout the region - has, in itself, created significant tensions within and across the its major states as indigenous elites and workers confront the growing diasporas of labouring migrants. This has increased specific tensions on issues of ethnicity, religion and national identity, issues that have proved so volatile and dangerous in other areas of the world and have the potential to do so in a rapidly changing Asia/Pacific. The disaster wrought by the economic melt-down in the region, has enhanced the probability of large-scale violence in this context as host countries and immigrant populations clash over fundamental issues of identity and security in areas vital to our regional foreign policy.⁷⁰

Tensions of another kind have arisen over the ecological disaster that has accompanied the dispersion and dislocation of peoples and societies in the Asia/Pacific. In this context the top-down models of high-speed, export-led industrialisation which have made possible rapid rates of economic growth, have also brought large-scale pesticide poisonings, air pollution, falling water tables, unregulated waste disposal, depletion of forest and oceanic resources and land degradation. In South Korea the sulphur dioxide content in Seoul's air is the worst in the world, causing close to 70% of the rain falling on the city to be so acidic as to pose a hazard to human beings. In urban Thailand, the problems are equally disturbing with the dangerous levels of air pollution impacting most severely upon children in Bangkok who now have among the world's highest levels of lead in their blood.⁷¹ In China, a relatively late-comer to export-led industrialisation, the problems of rapid industrialisation are becoming all too visible. And while one could detail a litany of the devastating effects of high-growth, export-oriented strategies of industrialisation from Seoul to Bangkok to Jakarta, it is Taiwan which has represented arguably the worst example of environmental degradation, to the extent that one estimate has 30% of Taiwan's rice crop now tainted with heavy metals due to

⁶⁹See Karp, *Ibid.* 1995: 43

⁷⁰Most recently in Thailand involving Burmese workers, but see also J. Lie, "The Problem of Foreign Workers in Contemporary Japan" in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 26; and D. Chew, "Illegal Workers Face KL Fury" in *The Jakarta Post* April 27, 1996: 1(3) 1994: 3-11

⁷¹See W. Bello, *Perils and Possibilities: The Pacific in the Post-Cold War Era* op. cit. 1992 p. 56