

STOLEN DREAMS

Text adapted from

Stolen Dreams: Portraits of

Working Children by

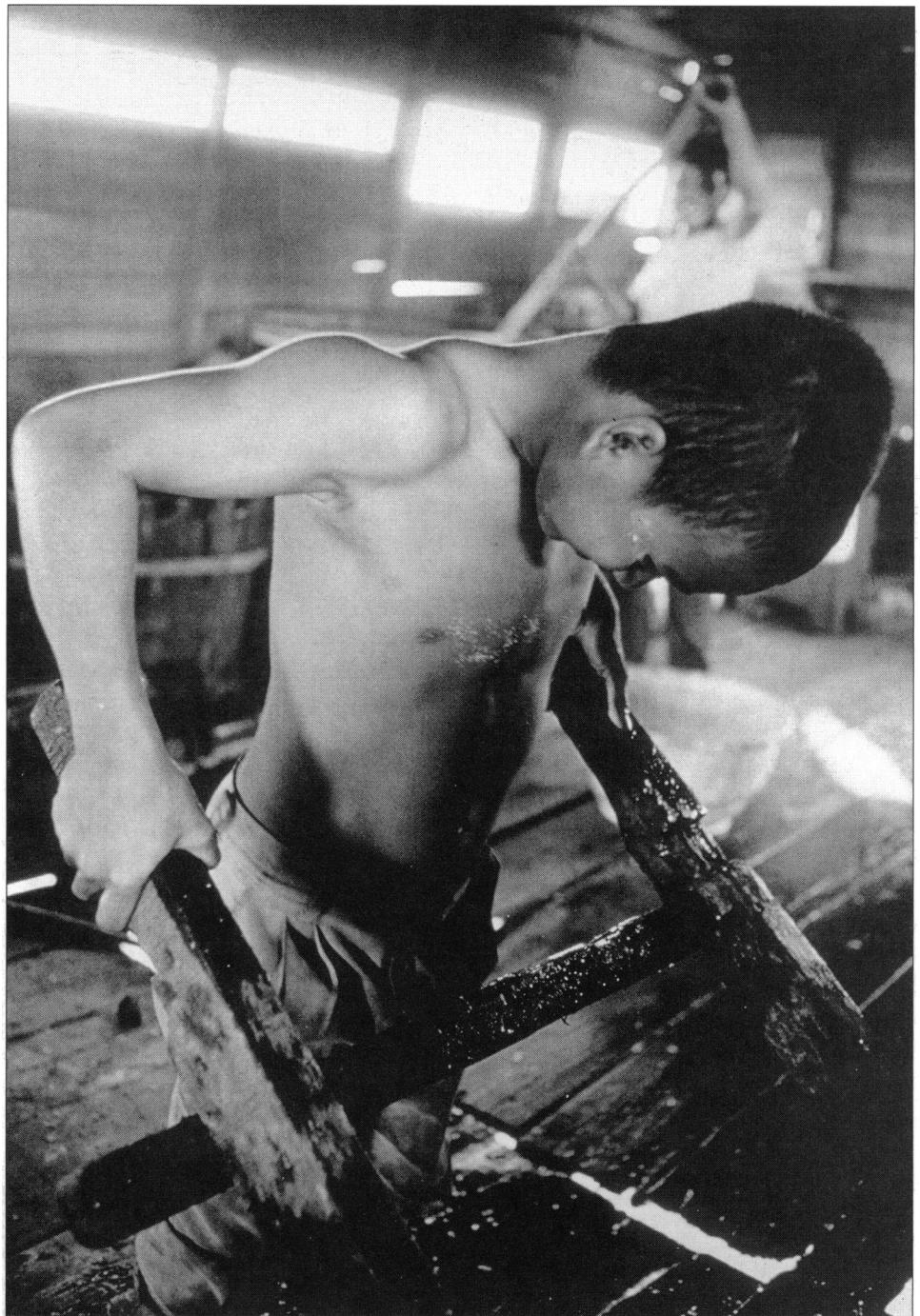
David L. Parker, et al.

(Lerner Publications; 1997)



PHOTOS BY DAVID L. PARKER

Around the world, many children are employed on the street or in cottage industries. Children recycle garbage or make and sell small goods for the wholesale market. Some of these jobs, such as newspaper and candy sales, are familiar to most travelers.



▲ There are between 1200 and 1500 fishing platforms surrounding the islands of Sumatra and Java in Indonesia. Platforms stand on stilts from 1/2 to several kilometers out in the ocean.

Boys are taken out to the platforms to help fish for krill. Once there, they are held for up to six months. They live on a diet of rice and fish; fresh fruit and vegetables are a rare treat. Fresh water is scarce. Three to six children sleep on the floor of a shelter that may be no more than six feet by ten feet in size.

They have little shelter and no protection from falling into the ocean. Often the children do not know how to swim. Even for those who can swim, waves make it difficult for a child to get to safety.



The contortionist epitomizes life as a circus performer. Children work long hours and practice dangerous acts. One circus may have dozens of small children working.

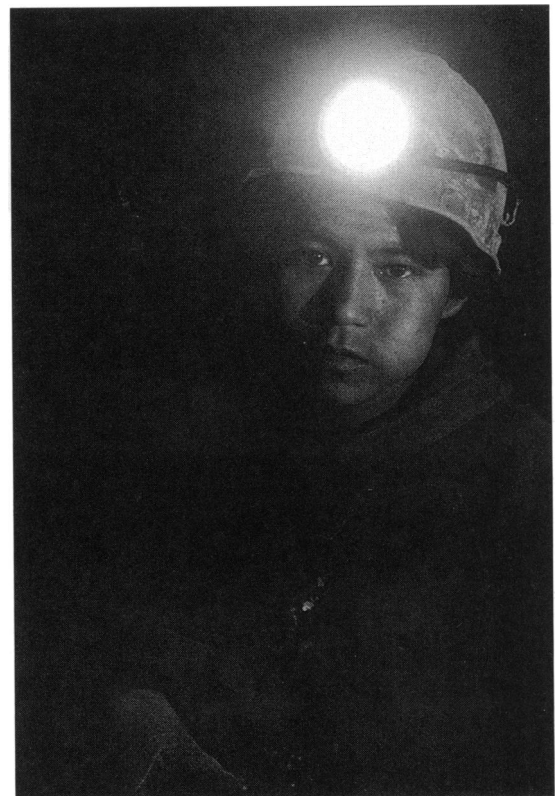


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There are more than 300 entrances into a centuries-old maze of absolute darkness. Filled with thick choking dust, the blackness hides the history of 450 years and the lives of millions. Today there are 7000 workers mining tin in Potosi, Bolivia, 1000 of whom are children. It is estimated that 40% to 70% will develop silicosis. ▼

▲ Throughout much of the world, bricks are made by hand and left in the sun to dry. Dry bricks are carried to the kiln for firing. In India and Nepal, bricks are stacked in enormous kilns, covered with dirt, and then fired by dropping fuel down small stacks scattered about the top of the kiln. After firing, bricks are carried for shipping or storage. Each brick weighs between one and two kilograms (2.1–4.4 pounds). A small child may haul more than 1000 bricks on his or her head or back each day.

The work is dusty and dangerous. As bricks are removed from the kiln, occasionally one falls onto the bare foot of a worker. Workers carry their loads of bricks across fields of stone and broken bricks.



Young girls often begin work at an early age. They stitch, spin, and weave and are usually deprived of an education. The money they earn is used to pay their dowries when they are married, which often occurs at the ages of 14 or 15. ►



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Many countries have large migrant communities that follow the agricultural seasons. In the United States, migrant communities may start in Texas and gradually work their way to Minnesota's Red River Valley or the vegetable canning plants in LaSeur. In Turkey, entire communities move from the eastern part of the country to central Anatolia to pick cotton, dig potatoes, or harvest vegetables. Common to all these communities are low wages, poor sanitary facilities, and children who often receive only a meager education. ►

