

Pollution, Politics and Foreign Investment in Taiwan: Lukang Rebellion (Special Report)

James Reardon-Anderson

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Lukang is a sleepy provincial town on the east coast of Taiwan. The Lukang "rebellion" was a series of wellorganised mass demonstrations in 1986 and 1987 to block construction by the DuPont Corporation of a titanium dioxide plant nearby. If this protest had occurred just a few years earlier, no doubt it would have been crushed by a powerful government determined to promote development at any cost. If it had been a few years later, it probably would have passed unnoticed. But it came at a time just when environmental consciousness in Taiwan had reached a critical mass and as the government was introducing political reforms allowing unprecendented scope to new forms of civil action. In this atmosphere, a handful of determined, capable activists, bent on keeping a giant multinational corporation out of their "old home", focused the attention of the entire island on Lukang, raised the national consciousness about threats to the natural environment, and challenged the rules that government officials and industrial leaders in Taiwan had come to take for granted. The Lukang rebellion was one of those small events with large consequences that make for interesting and significant history.



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