

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Labor Series

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MEMOIR

I joined the State Department's Division of International Labor, Social, and Health Affairs (ILH) in February 1945. The Division was then new; it must have been set up in 1944, or 1943 at the earliest.

By that time there were already three claimants to the still clouded title of first labor attaché: Sam Berger in London, Dan Horowitz in Santiago, and John Fishburn in Montevideo.

I was told that our Embassy in London had been embarrassed when the Labour Party took over in 1945, because none of the Embassy's 5 career cookie-pushers had good contacts with its leaders. Berger, who had developed such contacts as labor adviser to our lend-lease mission in London from 1942 to 1944, filled the gap, and his reports launched him on a long and highly successful career in the diplomatic service. (I don't know what title Berger had then, or what his status was whenever he entered the Foreign Service.)

In 1943 Horowitz had begun doing labor reporting on Chile, and Fishburn on Argentina and Uruguay. Both were what later came to be dubbed (by Jim Taylor at the 1970 Labor Attaché Conference in New Delhi) "ersatz" labor attachés, that is, career Foreign Service Officers (FSO's) who had started at the entrance level and later turned into labor attachés. Both came to ILH while I was there; I worked first for Fishburn and later for Horowitz.

The broader labor attaché program grew out of the realization by State that labor was becoming a major political force in many European countries and that our Embassies generally, like the one in London, lacked officers on their staffs with the background and sympathies that were needed to win the confidence of, and extract political intelligence from, influential labor leaders. A little later, labor leaders came to play major roles in the independence movements of several African nations. Labor was also becoming important in Australia, Canada, and parts of Asia and Latin America.

In addition, the labor attaché program reflected a broader realization by the Foreign Service that its traditional generalist officers needed to be supplemented by specialists. During the 1940's the State Department contained a whole miniature government, with its own specialists duplicating those in the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury, etc. The rationale for this set-up was that waging total war required all these specialties, and that for security reasons they had to be handled by people with access to highly classified data.

The various specialists in the State Department were demanding to from our Embassies reports that they were poorly qualified to supply, so that the diplomatic service had to be

fortified by the mid-career recruitment of Auxiliary (FSA) officers. The labor attachés were part of this broader development. The FSA category was later renamed the Foreign Service Reserve (FSR).

Otis Mulliken, the chief of ILH, was faced with the difficult job of recruiting labor attachés in a tight labor market. Most of the best prospects were too busy during the War to be available. As a result, the original cohort of labor attachés comprised a very heterogeneous lot, in terms of both their backgrounds and their abilities.

In the selection of labor attachés Mulliken was advised by those in charge of international affairs in the federations — Bob Watt of the A. F. of L. and Mike Ross of the CIO. The two maintained cordial relations despite the rivalry of their federations and met jointly with Mulliken and Cleon Swayzee. Swayzee was the original labor attaché “backstopper” on Mulliken’s staff, who handled their personnel matters and fielded their requests for information.

Mulliken told us that Watt and Ross kept complaining that State was hiring too many “intellectuals” and not enough trade unionists. He would reply that he preferred unionists, and asked for nominations. By and large Watt and Ross were unable to meet the challenge.

It was understood that the A. F. of L. or CIO could veto any proposed labor attaché, but I never heard of anyone being blackballed from admission to the corps. So far as the assignment of particular people to particular posts was concerned, the A. F. of L. and CIO did seem to have an intermittent interest in who went where, but this was not put in writing, and nothing but unverifiable rumors ever reached me.

The Labor Department was not much in the picture during my time at State (1945-1947).

The FSA appointments were originally envisaged to be for a single tour overseas, after which the specialist would leave the Foreign Service. This is what happened to most of the first cohort of FSA labor attachés. Some failed to do well; others didn’t want to stay; and the Foreign Service didn’t want the rest to stay because, if they converted to career FSO at mid-level, they would reduce promotional opportunities for career FSO’s who had earned promotion by having started out by doing humble jobs at out-of-the-way posts.

Quite a few of the early labor attachés did, however, continue at that specialty at more than one post (Correll, Fried, Hammond, Rowell, Simpson, Weiner, Wiesner, and Lloyd Wright). A few others remained in the Foreign Service but went on to non-labor assignments (Berger, Handley, Kocher).

At one time I naively expected the labor attachés to invigorate and democratize the whole Foreign Service. They certainly have not done so. The Foreign Service has been democratized, but by the recruitment of women, minorities, and others outside the traditional elite. Within his Embassy the labor attaché, as the only officer with any

interest in or sympathy for labor, often felt isolated. To the extent that he adapted to the prevailing pattern, he ceased to exert an exemplary influence.

In March 1947 I was kicked out of the State Department and went to Japan as a civilian employee of the Occupation. That assignment was followed by an extended “sabbatical” and then by two years (1954-1956) on a technical assistance assignment in Turkey. Thus for the period 1947-1956 I ceased to have as much inside information on the development of the labor attaché program, though I continued to follow it with interest as far as I could.

During this period I heard that ILH passed through a prolonged time of uncertainty and decline until it was finally abolished as part of the dismantling of the State Department’s miniature government, which had lost its rationale with the end of the Second World War. ILH functions and personnel, including the labor attaché function, were scattered among various offices in State. Mulliken had been transferred in 1947 to International Organization Affairs, where he remained until his death. Other staffers left the government. Swayzee went to work for the Ford Foundation.

Labor attaché affairs were handled for awhile in the 1950’s by Dan Goott. Goott had joined ILH in 1947 and after its demise ran a one-man operation out of the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of State. In 1962 Goott was sent to Paris, and Phil Delaney and his deputy, Arnold Zempel, in a new office reporting directly to the Secretary of State, handled, among other things, labor attaché assignments. Both were strongly receptive to AFL-CIO “guidance”.

By 1957, when I began work in the Labor Department, responsibility for the labor attaché program had become divided between State and Jim Taylor, an official in the Labor Department who had developed a proprietary feeling about the program. The Labor Department wrested its share of responsibility for the labor attaché program out of Taylor’s hands in the 1960’s and since then has divided it with State.

There have been some arguments between the two Departments over particular assignments, plus a running feud over State’s increasing reluctance to make any more FSR appointments. To maintain the supply of labor attachés, the Labor Department has had to train career FSO’s in a course run for many years by Harold Davey of its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). The AFL-CIO seems to have gradually lost interest in, and influence over, the labor attaché program.

Most of these ersatz labor attachés have had less interest in and less sympathy for labor than the lateral entrants had had. Some were attracted to the labor specialty by the fact that the Selection Boards that meet annually to recommend who gets promoted have been loaded in favor of labor: the Labor Department was on all Boards, and on some of them AFL-CIO representatives sat as public members.

For this and other reasons the State Department has been inclined to perceive the international labor community in State, AID, and Labor as a group of pro-union partisans

and mutual backscratchers who support each other, right or wrong. There is some truth in this. Most FSA and FSR labor attachés have indeed been pro-union (the only exceptions I can think of were Dick Eldridge, Cliff Finch, and Herb Ihrig), though most ersatz labor attachés have not been pro-union.

Yet, so far as solidarity is concerned, the “labor community” has been a remarkably quarrelsome lot. In any overseas post where there were both an Embassy labor attaché and an AID labor technical officer, the two could be counted on to get into a jurisdictional fight. In Washington ILAB has chronically quarreled with its colleagues in State and AID.

Some comments follow on labor reporting, a special interest of mine as an “end-user” in Washington.

During the 1940’s reporting was the main job of the labor attachés. This was true of the Foreign Service generally in those days. Each specialist in State’s miniature government demanded a one-time basic report, supplemented by despatches (later called airgrams) and telegrams. The volume of reports pouring into Washington continued to increase for a few years after the war, reaching an all-time high around 1948. Since then the volume has gone way down, as the reporting function of the Foreign Service generally, and of the labor attachés in particular, has been de-emphasized.

The other principal users of labor reports were in the Department of Labor -- its Office of International Labor Affairs (later the Bureau of International Labor Affairs), and the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions (DFLC) in the Bureau of Labor Statistics. DFLC wanted mainly unclassified economic data to be used to answer queries, in BLS publications, and in country monographs done on contract for other agencies.

Washington’s interest in labor economics goes way back. From the beginning to the present it has focused on the question of comparative labor costs as a factor in the flow of international trade. In 1878 State sent a circular instruction on labor to all consular posts in Europe. This was followed up in 1884 by a world-wide circular, issued “at the solicitation of the leading trade and industrial associations of the United States” and asking for wage data on over 150 occupations, the cost of living, labor relations, safety, female workers, emigration, etc. The results were published by the Bureau of Foreign Commerce in three volumes, which are available in government libraries.

It is interesting to compare these early reports, prepared by amateurs, with those sent in by the modern labor attachés. The consular officers visited workers to collect wage and cost-of-living data. Some officers even worried about how families could make ends meet on such meager budgets.

The modern “labor” attaché, by contrast, has never gotten to know any workers in the host country, aside from servants, drivers, and bartenders. Instead, he has typically cultivated a few influential labor politicians by offering them free drinks, free trips to the United States, and other material rewards, in exchange for bits of political gossip which

he has transmitted to Washington in classified airgrams and telegrams. Some of these labor politicians had in turn lost contact with workers, spending their days in a round of parties, conferences, and conventions.

The emphasis has been on political rather than economic reporting because that is what the Embassies and the State Department have been interested in. Nearly all the Embassies were divided into political, economic, and consular sections, and nearly all the laborer attachés were put into the political section, where labor politics has been viewed as one aspect of political developments in general. How well he did his political reporting was the key to a labor attaché's advancement within the Foreign Service.

A few did so well that they were promoted out of the labor specialty into higher positions. Hardly any specialists were content to remain specialists, aspiring only to become, as Tony Luchek put it at New Delhi in 1966, "the best damn labor attaché in the business".

In addition to political reporting, the labor attachés had several other functions:

- to provide basic data for DFRC to incorporate in its country labor monographs,
- to provide wage and other labor statistics to enable Commerce and Labor to answer queries from multinational corporations seeking lower labor costs overseas,
- in the absence of a labor technical officer in the post's AID mission, to draw up a technical assistance program (Barney Taylor, Saigon, 1962), or to offer ad hoc technical assistance,
- in the absence of a labor information officer in the post's USIS office, to provide information on the American labor scene and to facilitate fraternal contacts with American unions.

Because of these considerations, attempts were made to get the labor attaché out of the political section in key posts such as New Delhi and into a new position of Labor Counselor reporting directly to the Ambassador. After years of bureaucratic struggle with the Foreign Service administrators, a few such positions were established.

I am afraid that most of this material is marginal to the main focus of the project. The term "labor diplomacy" is novel to me. As a Washington bureaucrat, I had never particularly thought of labor attachés as diplomats. In trying to decide what, more concretely, the expression might mean, I can imagine several possibilities:

- influencing the labor policies of the host government, by virtue of having achieved special rapport with union officials and Labor Ministers who later became top political leaders (as happened in Australia, Mexico, the United Kingdom, etc.),
- influencing other government policies,
- promoting free trade unions,
- fighting the Cold War on the labor front.

For me, these are all empty boxes, but the labor attachés ought to be able to come up with some examples.

The term “labor diplomats” could also refer to Ambassadors who came from the ranks of the labor attachés (Berger, Stephansky, Handley, Condon) or from the AFL-CIO (Woodcock). But, to the best of my knowledge, none of these people made any special labor-related contribution as Ambassador. In fact they probably had to lean over backward to prove that they were not labor partisans.

To me the record has on the whole been rather disappointing.

In general terms, the labor attachés were supposed to make the State Department and other agencies aware of the importance of labor abroad. But during the period of the program’s existence, the importance of the “labor factor” has gone way down, above all in Africa, but in most of the rest of the world too.

The labor attachés did try to promote and celebrate free trade unionism, a cause for which enthusiasm reached its ecstatic peak in George Lodge’s little book, Spearheads of Democracy (1962). But communist and Third World dictators have suppressed free trade unions as so many countries that they have become hard to find outside of Europe. Along with their suppression the political influence of labor has also declined, and along with that the demand for politically-oriented labor attachés.

The labor attachés are not to blame for this development, but most of them could be faulted for having focused so narrowly on trade unions and labor politics, to the neglect of other important aspects of the labor scene, such as the ILO, Labor Ministries, manpower development (I still like the old term “manpower”), labor factors in international trade, the welfare and attitudes of workers, and so on.

The AFL-CIO has been interested only in unions and the Cold War and has cared little about these other aspects, and its tunnel vision has been adopted by those labor attachés who came out of the AFL-CIO to and by its yes-men in government agencies. As a result, once free trade unions and labor politics lost importance, the labor attaché program was stranded, although many labor developments have continued to be significant.

I fear that the labor attachés have had little influence on the countries to which they were assigned.

It is true that the Soviet Union rejected the proposed assignment of Walter Galenson to Moscow in 1945 on the ground that he was a Trotskyite. (I do not know whether or not he had once been a Trotskyite, an epithet that the Stalinists used loosely.) Galenson had to go instead to Norway, a smaller country. That episode indicated at least a fear of influence, but it was unique. (It was also our only attempt to put a labor attaché in Moscow.)

We might gain a perspective on the question by asking what influence the foreign labor attachés in Washington have had on American labor. They would not rate a mention, even a footnote, in American labor history.

This negative verdict may result from the fact that I have never been a labor attaché. I hope that those who have been can prove me wrong.

James Hoover
Aug. 14, 1992

The following remarks supplement my August contribution to the labor Attaché Oral History Program. The August piece had been written before I had seen the suggested outline, and before I realized the scope of the program; this one tries to fill in the gaps. In order to save the expense of transcribing a tape, Morris Weisz proposed that I put it on paper.

A first attempt to stick to chronological order led to complications, so I have instead arranged the material in four sections: Japan, Turkey, workers' education in general, and jobs in Washington. Only the first two could be keyed to the interviewer's outline, and even for them I had to scramble the numbers.

My interest in labor began during the exciting days of the New Deal and the CIO. I received a B.A. in sociology from Haverford College in 1937 and an M.A. in economics from the University of Wisconsin in 1938. Although I never took a course in international relations, I followed with interest the equally exciting events in Europe during the 1930's.

After leaving Wisconsin I spent three years with the Workers Education Bureau in New York. The Bureau (which later metamorphosed into the Department of Education of the A. F. of L.) was, under the direction of Spencer Miller, Jr., pretty much of a paper organization and my job a make-believe job, but the three years there, which seemed wasted at the time, looked good on the record and turned out to be helpful in getting government positions.

I came to Washington in 1942 and worked three years as an economist with the War Manpower Commission. Since this was a temporary agency, I thought that it would be prudent, as the war was drawing to an end in 1945, to transfer to a permanent agency.

Otis Mulliken, who was staffing up the recently-formed Division of International Labor, Social, and Health Affairs in the State Department, hired me to be area specialist for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the basis of my general background and the fact that I had begun to study Russian in evening classes.

Before the Cold War started I was already strongly anti-Communist as a result of the teaching of Professor Selig Perlman at Wisconsin, plus my activities at the War

Manpower Commission as a disruptive element in the Communist-dominated United Public Workers' Union (CIO).

Japan

After two years in the State Department (see below), I had been slated to go to London in 1947 as Assistant Labor Attaché under Sam Berger when a temporary freeze on hiring was imposed, followed by a RIF of 200 State Department employees. I was one of them and, lacking permanent Civil Service status, had only 30 days to find a new job before losing what status I had.

On the 28th day I went to see Arnold Zempel, whom I had never met, at the Labor Department. While I was sitting in his office, Ted Cohen, then chief of the Occupation's Labor Division in Tokyo, dropped in on home leave and consultation. He told Zempel that he was looking for a workers' education specialist. Zempel pointed to me. Cohen hired me on the spot and told me to take a cab to the Pentagon to get the papers started.

That lucky meeting set the direction of my career. Although I cared little about Japan at the time, the job turned out to be the most interesting one that I have had.

Since I had gotten the job in Japan without help from the A. F. of L. or CIO, I was under no obligation to either. My relations with them remained cordial.

The position in Japan came through so fast that there was no time for training. I landed there without having been "oriented" and knowing nothing of the language.

The conservative government was very amenable to Occupation guidance. Communists and left socialists (whose relations were roughly analogous to those of Togliatti and Nenni in contemporary Italy) worked together to constitute a political opposition and to dominate the labor movement. There was also a smaller right-wing socialist faction with its own trade unions.

The economy was a wreck. At that time the Japanese were pessimistic about their economic future. The rambunctious unions made things worse by frequent strikes, although there was little to be squeezed from their employers.

The Occupation didn't have to worry about any Japanese Government objections to our dealing with opposition groups. We worked with the right-wing socialists; with the rest it was largely a matter of mutual avoidance.

Japanese nationalists had been temporarily stunned by their defeat in the war, and the Occupation squelched anything remotely suggesting a revival.

Human rights were enforced by the Occupation and docilely accepted by the Japanese.

The Occupation's original strategy (which had been worked out in Washington rather than by MacArthur in Tokyo) had been to prevent a revival of militarism by breaking up the military, the big business combines, and big landowners, and by fostering democratic institutions, including trade unions. Thus the Occupation's policies were openly and actively pro-union.

By 1947 it became clear that the more immediate threat to democracy came from the Communists in Japan, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia, and the Occupation's policy shifted accordingly.

Much could be said about the labor policy of the Occupation. Whole books have been written on the subject, including an oral history project: a Japanese professor interviewed me and everyone else whom he could round up and then wrote a book based in part on these interviews (in Japanese; not translated). Ted Cohen also wrote his memoirs. I won't try to cover all that ground again.

My immediate boss, Dick Deverall, and I were supposed to help the unions to develop their education programs, but the top leaders resisted American-style trade unionism. Even the right-wing socialists, though friendly, looked more to Western Europe than to America for their model. Since all the parties and the unions were legal, we had to counter them indirectly by encouraging trade unions free of any political domination.

As premature anti-communists, we welcomed the 1947 shift in Occupation policy and continued to promote free trade unions as barriers to both militarism and communism.

We also worked closely with the new Labor Ministry, which had a labor education program run by (genuinely) enlightened conservatives.

It is difficult to assess the effect of our workers' education activities, but, generally speaking, I would be reluctant to recognize the present Japanese labor movement as a child of mine. On the other hand, the Japanese Government in general, and its Labor Ministry in particular, have retained the Occupation-sponsored laws and programs much more fully than many people had expected.

Deverall made wild charges, all false, about pro-communists in the Labor Division, which created serious difficulties for them during the McCarthy era. Three voluntarily left the government; Ed McVoy was cleared and stayed in. I'm ashamed to say that I got along with Deverall and escaped his attacks.

The A. F. of L. had been unhappy about the radicalization of the Japanese labor movement in 1946 during the excessively hands-off policy of the Labor Division under Ted Cohen. In March 1947 Cohen was kicked upstairs and replaced by Jim Killen, a former vice-president of the A. F. of L. paper makers' union. Relations improved greatly after that.

In 1948 Killen resigned after losing a dispute with the Government Section of the Occupation over the rights of government employees. This episode has been discussed in the press and elsewhere; I was not involved and have no particular inside information to contribute. Chester Hepler, who was already in the Labor Division, succeeded Killen as Chief.

The Taft-Hartley Act, passed while I was in Japan, embarrassed us, and the A. F. of L. made things worse by calling it a "slave labor law". We tried to explain it as a response to conditions peculiar to America and not applicable to Japan. We did not press for a Japanese Taft-Hartley Act.

We Occupation officials ignored the American Embassy in Tokyo; I never went there. There was no labor attaché until 1950. What little labor reporting we did was through various "back channels" -- mine was to Phil Sullivan, who worked on East Asian labor in the State Department.

The CIA had not yet come on the scene.

The aid agency had no office in Japan until later.

I don't recall a USIS in Japan, although there may have been one.

No American companies operated in Japan at that time. The American bases had some disputes with their local employees, but I didn't get involved.

I don't recall any role of Congress.

The British had a labor attaché (seconded from their Labor Ministry), who worked so closely with us that we considered him an ex-officio member of the Labor Division.

Japan could not yet join the ILO. The ILO sent the Labor Division a TDY advisor to help with the drafting of labor laws that would be in line with international standards.

Turkey

I was in Turkey from April 1954 to June 1956 as a labor education specialist for the Foreign Operations Administration (whose unfortunate name was soon changed to "International Cooperation Administration").

This was in the McCarthy era. After I had cleared the FOA security check, the State Department (which had hired and given me a top secret clearance in 1945) balked at issuing an official passport because of a suspicious pattern of subversive associations: I had once been a registered member of the American Labor Party in New York; I was active in the United Public Workers, a Communist-dominated union; I belonged to the Washington Cooperative Bookshop, which was on the Attorney General's list; and I was on the mailing list for the Information Bulletin of the Soviet Embassy.

I pointed out that:

- The ALP had originally not been a Communist-dominated organization, but when it became one, I left, along with those who later founded the Liberal Party.
- I was active in an anti-Communist group in the UPW, which wasn't on the Attorney General's list anyway.
- I had innocently (heh, heh) joined the Bookshop in order to buy books at a discount.
- I had received the Bulletin at the office (ILH) while I was working on the Soviet Union, and with the permission of my boss.

Since FOA's security office had already cleared me, its reputation was at stake. With its backing, I got the passport. From then on I had no difficulties.

The assignment to Turkey developed slowly, and, while waiting around in Washington, I asked FOA to arrange for me to study Turkish at the Foreign Service Institute but was told that it couldn't be done.

At that time Turkey was a temporary democracy, gradually reverting to a mild dictatorship. The Democratic Party had won a free election in 1950, ousting the previous mild dictatorship of the Republicans. But then Prime Minister Menderes himself gradually became dictatorial. (In 1960 the Army stepped in and hanged him.)

An important part of the economic scene was that most of the country's mines, factories, and transportation facilities were state-owned. Many have subsequently been privatized, but at the time this set-up limited the scope of collective bargaining. The managers, however, were not particularly anti-union and didn't much act like capitalists.

Prior to 1947 the law had required groups of workers to elect from their ranks representatives to deal with their employers. While this system fell short of international standards, it worked out well: it developed leaders from among the workers who, when unions were legalized, metamorphosed into union officials. These then got together to organize city councils, national unions, and a confederation. In that way the Turkish labor movement came to be led by ex-workers rather than by outsiders, a state of affairs rare in the Third World.

The 1947 law legalized unions and collective bargaining, but strikes continued to be outlawed. (They have since been legalized.) Officers of the recently formed unions were inexperienced in such elementary matters as running meetings, keeping books, collective bargaining, and handling grievances.

The government believed that there was room in Turkey for only one ideology -- Atatürk-style nationalism -- and didn't want its workers to be exposed to internationally-oriented ideologies such so as communism, socialism, or Islamic fundamentalism. The model of American non-partisan trade unionism was viewed as a lesser evil, despite the independence and militance that went with it.

Consequently, when Leon Schachter proposed an ambitious workers' education program, the Turkish Government accepted it. (Schachter, from the butcher workmen's union, had been the first labor specialist in Turkey.)

The project called for six-week labor schools in five cities, to be financed largely out of counterpart funds. Four Americans were to describe how American unions function. Turkish Labor Ministry officials and university professors were to teach the rights and duties of workers under the labor laws, etc. The students, on leave from their jobs, were to be paid their regular wages.

The Turkish Government had some misgivings about the project: the Americans had to write out their lectures in advance and submit them for clearance. But the government proved to be remarkably tolerant. Not a word in our proposed lectures had to be changed. The lectures were followed by free-for-all discussions. We could even tell about strikes.

After the five schools three of the four Americans went home, but union officials who had been left out wanted more schools to be held, so it was decided to run 16 abbreviated evening schools, and I stayed on to help with the second series. These schools were run by the Labor Ministry's employment service, an odd but happy choice. The employment service was an efficient organization with a network of local offices. Attached to each office were an employers' advisory committee and a union advisory committee, which came in handy to secure understanding of the schools and to help select the students.

The A. F. of L., the CIO, and the AFL-CIO seemed to be satisfied with the staffing and operation of the project.

Our students complained about the labor policies of the American Tobacco Company, Socony-Vacuum, and other American firms, but we didn't get involved.

The project was undoubtedly successful, mainly because we were able to take advantage of the various unusually favorable circumstances noted above. The students were interested and very friendly. After I left, the project went on until it must have reached just about every union official in the country. Many "graduates" of the schools started educational programs in their own unions, and summaries of our talks were widely printed in the labor press.

The unions have reportedly survived the subsequent political upheavals despite continuing splits along political lines.

The chief of the FOA Mission gave us a political briefing in which he said that the first objective of the U.S. was to keep the Dardanelles and Hellespont open. Our project could contribute little to that. The promotion of free trade unionism had low priority for both countries and was tolerated, but without much enthusiasm.

I have called Turkey at the time a mild dictatorship because, although press, trade union, and other rights were not secure, the attempts by the government to restrict them could usually be successfully defied.

The Turks were strongly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist.

There were two major parties: the Democrats (in) and Republicans (out). Each had partisans among the labor leaders; both were included among the students in the seminars. In 1956 the Turks got into a row among themselves: the Labor Ministry objected to the use of Republican professors and a Republican labor leader as teachers in the seminars, but its objections were successfully defied.

We were unaware of any CIA presence in Turkey.

As indicated above, the higher-ups in FOA/ICA in Washington tolerated the project.

Overall coordination between the Embassy and the FOA/ICA Mission in Ankara was secured by having the DCM, Owen Jones, double as assistant director of the mission. Jones was interested in our project and treated us as members of the diplomatic family. (We held temporary FSS classifications.)

There was no labor attaché in Turkey until 1960. Labor reporting was being handled on a part-time basis by an economic officer, Sid Sober, with whom we were on good terms. I contributed some unclassified "Notes on Labor Developments in Turkey, July-December 1955".

The USIS supplied films and pictures and helped us to maintain our equipment. There were no jurisdictional problems.

Turkey was an ILO member. While I was in Turkey the ILO sent a manpower adviser and was assisting a handicraft development project. In our schools we explained the workings of the ILO.

We showed the excellent labor films of the National Film Board of Canada.

There were no other bilateral aid programs and no third-country labor attachés.

There turned out later to have been some students with anti-American attitudes, but their hostility did not surface at the time.

We had no contacts with Congress or Congressmen.

The A. F. of L. and CIO merged while we were in Turkey. We recommended American labor as a model for the Turks, whose unions were splitting along political lines, but were unsuccessful. (The 1947 law had barred unions from engaging in politics, but politicians

could legally dabble in union affairs, and their machinations led to splits along political lines, beginning at the city council level.)

The American director of the first phase, Berry Lethbridge, was a pain in the neck, and I don't mean neck. He frustrated the other three Americans and managed to get into a row with his amiable Turkish counterpart. These troubles appeared important at the time but after so many years hardly seem worth going into. For a few months in 1955 I ran a one-man show, but a Labor Technical Officer arrived later in the year -- John Barrett, an apprenticeship man. We got along well.

At the end of my tour, after two years of prudent behavior, I kicked over the traces and wrote a piece for a Turkish newspaper giving my assessment of Turkish labor leaders. I knew that neither Barrett nor the Turkish Government would clear it, so I didn't show it to them. Upon returning to Washington I found that the article had gotten me into warm water. Meskimen called me into his office for a pro-forma bawling out, and that was the end of it.

Neither the A. F. of L. nor the CIO helped me to get my assignment to Turkey, although it may have been cleared with them. I don't recall any communications with either.

Workers' Education in General

Later I worked on four temporary-duty assignments:

- The first, in 1957, was in the Office of Labor Affairs, then headed by John Meskimen, in ICA: I prepared a workers' education exhibit, manual, and kit for use abroad. The material was widely distributed to Embassies, ICA missions, and USIS posts, but I don't know how much use was made of it.
- In 1958 the Labor Department released me for three months to make preliminary arrangements for a workers' education project in Lebanon. It was a frustrating experience. The government was ineffective; the fragmented unions distrusted each other and Americans; and then civil war broke out and paralyzed everything. I got out before the U. S. Marines landed. The American technician who was to have followed me backed out, and the project was scrubbed.
- I went to Indonesia for three months in 1960 to make preliminary arrangements for a labor education center. Things didn't go much better. Communists, anti-Communists, and neutralists in and out of the government were pulling in different directions. The Indonesian who has to head the center proved to be an immovable object. But at least the center did get started after I left, and an American specialist arrived to assist it.
- In June 1962 I was on a four-man team that the Agency for International Development sent out to evaluate the Asian Labor Education Center at the

University of the Philippines. I don't have our report; all that I can remember is that it was unanimous, generally favorable, and suggested some minor changes.

The four TDY's were too brief to justify the full 28-point treatment, but they led to some general thoughts about technical assistance in workers' education.

The most striking difference between workers' education here and abroad was the much higher level of interest abroad. In the U.S. the big problem has been to interest workers, to coax them into taking part in any sort of program. In Japan and the Third World union officials were eager to learn about American unions and industrial relations and to get tips on how to perform their own jobs.

The importance of audio-visual aids, differed accordingly. Here movies, film strips, posters, role-playing, etc. had to be used to catch and hold the interest of students. But abroad there was no need to put on a circus; students were glad to sit through old-fashioned lectures, which are still, after all, the most efficient way to convey information and ideas.

A related question was about what facilities were needed for workers' education programs. The Asian Labor Education Center in Manila, financed by ICA, had its own building containing elaborate facilities for simultaneous translation, etc., much of which was unutilized at the time of our visit in 1962. David Levintow, an ICA technician who had helped to perpetrate ALEC, had gone ahead of me to Indonesia, where he had proposed a similar center, including a residence, car, and chauffeur for the director. The prospective a director was enthusiastic about the plan, but I had to disillusion him. On the other hand Murton Peer, another AID technician who had been in Indonesia, used to argue that workers' education could be g conducted on less than a shoestring: "by drawing in the sand with your toe". I agreed with Peer, but his approach lacked appeal.

These questions were part of a bigger issue about the relative importance of the technical and the ideological components of workers' education. The technical side of it was politically neutral and uncontroversial. The prudent American technician abroad could keep out of trouble by sticking to the technical. But then what he taught could be used equally well by any group, including the Communists.

In Japan we openly encouraged free trade unions in the hope that they would serve as a barrier to any future revival of militarism. The aid agencies also supported free trade unions abroad in exchange for AFL-CIO support for their appropriation requests, but the top aid officials in Washington and in the missions overseas were less than enthusiastic about carrying out this mandate.

In Japan and elsewhere those Americans whose minds had been poisoned by anthropology and sociology argued that we shouldn't be pushing American-style trade unionism because foreign cultures were so different that what was good for America could be presumed to be bad for other countries, which should be allowed to develop institutions in line with their unique traditions. I never encountered any distinctive

institutions. (Even Japan's famous "enterprise unions" turned out to be a recent innovation.) To me unions were a response to the conditions of large-scale employment, conditions that were much the same everywhere.

The opposition to American-style unionism came instead from Marxists, whose ideology was at least as alien to indigenous cultures as ours was.

Still another question in my mind was whether we should direct our efforts to the top labor leaders or to local leaders. Several Americans in the Labor Division in Japan spent a lot of time cultivating and trying to influence top union officials; their efforts came to naught when these officials subsequently lost their positions. I traveled around Japan talking at "labor rallies" in all 46 prefectures in an attempt to arouse local labor leaders to strengthen their unions.

In the aid agencies the view was that the success of the American technician abroad depended on his ability to establish rapport with his host-country counterpart, but too many of those or counterparts later lost their jobs as a result of political changes. As Burnie Merson of AID used to say, "If you don't leave an institution behind, you don't leave anything behind".

Finally, there is the question of how to evaluate the success of workers' education programs. Jerry Kaukonen, who had been labor attaché in Manila, argued that the Philippine program of the Labor Education Center had been a failure because, after hundreds of unionists had passed through it, the Philippine labor movement remained splintered and often ill-led. Our team in 1962 felt that he was expecting too much of workers' education. How much one could reasonably ask is harder to say; the answer would have to vary from country to country. In Japan Marxist leaders were entrenched before the Occupation got around to resisting them. The favorable conditions in Turkey were hard to find elsewhere. Little could have been expected in Lebanon or Indonesia. In the Philippines a better evaluation of the Labor Education Center would have required a before-and-after study of how local and national unions operated, a study that our time didn't have time to make.

Jobs in Washington

Most of my career in the international labor field was spent in Washington. In the State Department I was first an area specialist for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and later an economist on international trade. In the Labor Department I spent two years working on East Asia in the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions, about 14 years as Area Specialist in ILAB, and then two years on international trade.

Does all this fall within the scope of the oral history program? It can't be fitted into the interviewer's outline. I haven't a great deal to say anyway or much in the way of accomplishments to report for all those years.

To be an area specialist on the Communist bloc was largely meaningless because there was no distinguishable “labor factor” in Communist countries before Solidarity came on the scene. The position in State was abolished and never restored, while ILAB never had an Area Specialist for Eastern Europe. Only Ed Nash in DFCL was able to make a career in that area.

But for the rest of the world, the international labor field teemed with area specialists. Each geographical bureau in State eventually had a labor adviser and sometimes an assistant. Meskimen’s shop in ICA, when I was there, had two sets -- a group of trade union advisers plus a set of economists to do the work. The Labor Department also had sets in DFCL and ILAB, often with multiple staffs. I remember hearing Morris Paladino, the head of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, express an understandable bewilderment at the number of area specialists who were offering him advice.

These various specialists were paradoxically overworked and underemployed at the same time. On the input side, it was impossible to become a specialist in a whole region; the term is an oxymoron. Howard Carpenter told me that in OILA, before it became ILAB, he and Kaukonen had originally divided the world between them, while, decades later, I was trying to “cover” all of Asia for awhile. Within BLS each area specialist in DFCL was struggling to master the labor statistics for a score of countries (while the rest of BLS had several thousand people working on the statistics of a single country, the United States).

On the output side, each area specialist had only a part-time job. His pseudo-expertise was needed once in a while, but not forty hours a week. Much of the rest of the time we spent in reading the same incoming traffic and maintaining liaison with one another.

To make things worse, while we had a finger in everything, we had responsibility for nothing, so that at the end of the year it was difficult for me to say what I had accomplished. I described the futility of the position in a piece that appeared in the New Yorker on August 17, 1963. Commenting on it, the Public Administration Review said in its December 1963 issue: “Mr. Hoover is imprisoned in a huge and busy vacuum”.

My briefer ventures into the international trade area were also futile. The State Department in 1945-1947 was busily writing papers in connection with the projected International Trade Organization. ILH’s main contribution was a series of papers on the extent to which full employment was an objective of the trade policy of other countries. All this paperwork came to nothing -- the International Trade Organization never came into existence.

In DFCL we spent much of the time giving dubious answers to dubious questions. Multinational corporations would ask us to compare wages and labor costs in various countries, so that they could shift operations from the United States to the cheapest country. Why should we help them? Cross-country comparisons of wages and labor costs were technically very difficult to make anyway.

In ILAB, after becoming fed up with the Area Specialist's job, I transferred to the textile program. Commerce and Labor (enthusiastically) and State (reluctantly) collaborated in negotiating multilateral arrangements and bilateral agreements regulating international trade in fibers, fabrics, and clothing. The job was refreshingly tangible, involving actual negotiations, often protracted, over quotas. But this program too turned out to have an unduly large make-believe component. With all their complex provisions for swing, carryover, growth, etc., the eventual agreements were so full of loopholes that the American industries that they were supposed to protect kept going down and down.

Yet another discouraging element in the whole field of international labor is that it was doubly marginal. For the international agencies labor had a low priority, while for the AFL-CIO and the Labor Department international affairs had a low priority.

The field did have one compensation -- it was an unusually interesting scene from the spectator's point of view, combining as it did two lively subjects -- labor and international affairs. One couldn't say as much for most government jobs. I recall a luncheon group from Commerce whose work was so dull that they only wanted to get away from it at lunch. The group's rule was: "no shop talk". Such a rule would never have appealed to us in ILAB.

Nevertheless, I retired in 1976 as soon as I became eligible after my 60th birthday.

End of interview