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Labor Series

JAMES E. BAKER

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Assistant to President Kirkland

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Baker]

Shea: Good morning. Today is Wednesday, March 20, 1996, my name is Jim Shea and I am here with my good friend Don Kienzle and we are conducting an interview with the Oral History Program of the Foreign Institute of the State Department and today we are interviewing my old friend and colleague from Europe, Jim Baker, who was for many years the representative of the AFL-CIO in Europe. Good morning Jim.

BAKER: Good morning.

Shea: Jim, would you like to tell us how you got your start in the Labor Movement?

Kienzle: A little bit about your family background and your education, how you got in the Labor Movement?

BAKER: I was born and raised on the West Coast and graduated from high school in Springfield, Oregon.

After high school I worked at various jobs. Worked in a temporary job washing dishes, tearing down carnival rides, worked in a food processing plant. Then I had a longer-term

job in a small nonunion wood turnings plant, made table legs and pieces of chairs and other materials out of hard wood that were turned on a lathe and sanded etc. I was also politically active during that time, including a stretch where I worked for Senator Wayne Morris on his 1972 campaign after his defeat in 1968 [Ed: Senator Morse served from 1945 to 1969 and died in 1974.] I then worked in the Legislature in the 1973 session endorsing and enrolling bills and then worked at a Ford assembly plant in California and was a member of UAW Local 560.

I left that plant in 1974 in the Spring to work on the election in the Northwest with an organization called Front Lash which is funded by the AFL-CIO. I worked closely with COPE (Committee On Political Education) with the understanding that I would go back in the plant on the Monday following the Tuesday election. Unfortunately, my plant closed for a year-and-a-half and later closed permanently so I was never able to go back.

Then from there I went to work as Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO which was mainly work lobbying the legislature in the 1975 session. I researched and wrote speeches and various other things. Then I was fired by the AFL-CIO Executive Board as a move to dump our President at that time who was defeated about three months later at the convention.

Then I went to work for Community Services after a period of unemployment and worked for the Labor Agency in Portland. Then I was hired as a Field Representative for the AFL-CIO Movement in California. I worked there in the Department of Organizational Field Services and then was appointed Regional Director by President Meany for the nine western states. Then I was asked by President Kirkland to go to Europe to be the Deputy European Representative for Irving Brown and I then succeeded him as European Representative when he fell ill.

Kienzle: When did you go to Paris?

BAKER: In the end of May, 1982.

Kienzle: And you became the full representative when?

BAKER: In 1986.

Kienzle: Then you served until 1991?

BAKER: I came back to be AFL-CIB Assistant to President Kirkland.

Kienzle: Where shall we back track with that long experience in the Labor Movement?

Shea: Where was that plant in California?

BAKER: Right outside of San Jose, about 7 or 8 miles from San Jose. In the Bay Area.

At the time we had a bunch of auto plants in the state and there was only one left and we must have had five plants under contract, assembly plants in California.

Shea: Did you ever serve in the Armed Forces Jim?

BAKER: No, I had 296 in the lottery. [Ed: Late in the Vietnam War the Selective Service created a lottery for the draft. The first numbers were drawn in December 1969 for service starting in 1970.]

Shea: After high school did you go on to college?

BAKER: No, I had no college education. That was back when that was possible, people didn't look at that.

Kienzle: Were you an elected representative of your local union?

BAKER: No, I was a foreman, I was active in the local. I went to the local union meetings and I was not an officer, no. I guess I owe whatever I've done to a plant closure.

Kienzle: So, there is a rainbow at the end of the storm I guess. Did you have any contact with international labor leaders before you went to Paris or was that an entirely new area for you?

BAKER: It wasn't an entirely new area, but I hadn't had a great deal of contact. At that time when I was Field Rep and Regional Director in California, we had occasional visits from foreign labor leaders and I would meet with them from time to time. At that time the international visitor's program, programming for labor leaders was done by the Department of Labor. They would send visitors around the country and that was almost the only contact I had. Before I moved to Europe I had only been there once for a week for a conference, a Young Leaders Conference, under an exchange program, in which there were two labor participants. But I didn't meet with any labor leaders at that time. So my experience was quite limited.

At that time on the West Coast there was still a lot of activity from people who were opposed to the foreign policy of the AFL-CIO. So it was necessary for me to learn about our positions and the reasons for them in order to represent the organization and respond to the criticisms from the left of our policies. So that was what really got me involved to some extent in international affairs. At that time the Organization of Field Services was responsible for working with State federations and local central labor camps. So if there was a resolution condemning the policies of the AFL-CIO in some part of the world or another, or our refusal to recognize Soviet Trade Unions or some such issue, it was my job to try to explain the policy and try to keep the state and local central bodies in support of the policy or at least not take positions against it. Otherwise we'd have 700 foreign policies instead of one. Rather than to try to just shove it down their throats and enforce the rules that say they are supposed to respect our authority on national and international

issues, my method was to try and explain it to people since they never heard our point of view and try to win some support or at least neutrality on these issues. I think that's why President Kirkland and his assistant, Dale Goode, who was also a former Labor Attaché, who could see that I was working on those issues I suspect that that's the main reason why they thought of me going to Paris.

Kienzle: What time period was this Jim?

BAKER: I was appointed as a Field Representative in '75, Regional Director in '79. So it would have been from '75 until '82 until I went to Paris.

Kienzle: I take it you were generally supportive of the AFL-CIO position on all these issues?

BAKER: Yes, I was sincerely supportive of the AFL-CIO position. Even if I hadn't been, I was on the payroll, I was there to represent the organization. The only issue that I recall of any major importance in which I was not in agreement with the AFL-CIO on international affairs was on Vietnam and that was before my employment in the AFL-CIO. So it wasn't a real issue anymore when I came on in 1975.

Kienzle: The Vietnam issue had been pretty much resolved?

BAKER: Yeah, '75 was when we withdrew so it wasn't really an issue inside the movement anymore and that was the only area that previously I had had any real reservations. That was an interesting time. You had a lot of activity by people opposed to our policies. In my view, was somebody needed to break the monopoly on information, somebody needed to explain why the positions were what they were. The only reason I knew, for example, that there was a European Office and that a fellow named Irving Brown existed was because I read about him in *People's World* which was the Communist Party paper on the West Coast. They used to talk about Irving Brown and I'm sure that's the way most people, if they knew anything about it at all, that's the only place they would hear about it.

Kienzle: Were you active politically at that point?

BAKER: No, not really, not at that point. I was active in COPE (Committee on Political Education) when we were trying to get our candidates elected. As a matter of fact, in 1976 I was assigned to work full time in Leon Panetta's district when he was first elected [Ed: Panetta, a Democrat, was elected in the then California's 16th Congressional District.] I put together a COPE program down there. I was down there for about 2 1/2 months. It was in context to COPE. I had been active previously in Oregon to some degree in the Democratic Party in several different campaigns, but as a representative of the AFL-CIO I concentrated on my COPE activities rather than Party activities.

Kienzle: Now, when you went to Paris did you know Irving Brown in advance?

BAKER: I met him at the convention in 1981. At that time the Deputy Director of my Department, the Organization of Field Services, was Don [inaudible]. Don said, "Have you ever met Irving Brown?" I said, "No, I just read about him in *People's World*."

He said, "Would you like to meet him?" I said, "Sure." I saw meeting Irving Brown as an opportunity to pick his brain in terms of my own efforts back home to represent the organization and make sure that our positions were expressed as well as I could. So I sat down with Irving for what must have been a couple of hours and spent most of the time just asking him questions. It was a very enjoyable meeting and stimulating, very interesting, thought provoking and I was impressed with the fellow. Then I was about to leave the convention the last day. I ran into Irving in the lobby and he gave me a book that he had talked to me about called *The Soviet Worker*, an interesting book. Then we shook hands and he said, "See you in Paris."

Kienzle: Did you know what he meant?

BAKER: I thought I knew what he meant because Ernie Lee, who was then the Director of the Department, had earlier during the Convention asked me if I would be available to go on a trip sponsored by the European community to several countries and he'd mentioned Paris as one of the stopovers on the trip. So I thought, well, of course, Irving would know what Ernie is talking about and he knows I might be coming this fall. I had said to Irving when he had said, "See you in Paris," "Well, maybe." So this was in about October or November, I don't remember the exact dates of the convention, of '81.

In 1982 early in March I came back for a Regional Directors meeting here in Washington. Lane was speaking at the National Press Club so all the Regional Directors went over to hear him and as I was leaving he grabbed my arm and said, "I'd like to talk to you, how long are you in town?" I said, "About a week." So he said, "I can get a hold of you through Allen Kistler," who was the Head of the Department. I said, "Yeah." So I walked back from the National Press Club to the building thinking of everything that I might have done in recent months that might have offended some international union or got me in some kind of trouble. I was fully convinced that there were some toes I had stepped on that caused me some kind of problem. I went to his office and that is when he asked me to go to Paris. So that's the story of how I ended up in Paris.

Kienzle: What about your arrival and orientation in Paris? Did Irving give you training?

BAKER: Oh no. Irving was not that formal. We went there, we had a little boy who was three years old at that time, he is sixteen now, and my wife was pregnant with twins at the time we moved over there. We went to Geneva because the ILO was in session. I think I followed the Resolutions Committee that year and learned a bit about the ILO. Then went back to Paris and got a place to live and did that sort of thing.

Unbeknownst to me, when I got over there Lane was appointing Irving as Director of the

Department as well as European Representative at the same time. So this was all a part of the same move. I was to go over there to help in that office with him and with Paul Barton and [inaudible] in the office and at the same time he had been made the Director of the Department which meant that he was spending a lot of time in Washington. So to the extent that I had training, I guess some of it was good, it was mostly from the other people in the office. They were extremely helpful since Irving didn't have a lot of time initially. It wasn't until about my second year there that Irving, his own schedule and everything straightened out, so that we started spending quite a bit of time together.

Then eventually we became quite close and worked together very well, but at the beginning it was a little tough because he was always on the road. But, fortunately the other two people in the office were very good and very helpful and very knowledgeable.

I also had to learn French when I went there because I didn't speak any French. That took some time.

Kienzle: Do you want to describe your general responsibilities in the Paris Office at that time?

BAKER: Well, initially a lot of it was just learning. I would sit in meetings of ILO and try to learn what was going on and reading materials and studying French and that sort of thing. Occasionally I would represent the AFL-CIO in meetings, but not right at the very beginning. By the time I was in my second year there I was doing a lot of what Irving would have done himself before, going to the meetings, representing the organization in various forms and then it started to be quite interesting. Talking about training, I mentioned that I had met with Lane Kirkland who asked me to go over there and at the time when he proposed that I said, "Well, I hope you don't have any illusions that I know anything about international affairs? I don't know anything about international affairs really. Very, very little and I don't have any languages." Lane said, "I really don't care very much about that, you know a lot about our trade union. You are a good trade unionist and you will learn the rest."

Of course, the dirty little secret about international labor affairs is it's not really all that tough if you've got experience in the American Trade Union Movement. It's not that hard to learn what you need to know to work in any international trade union. It does take some time, but Lane's feeling was that it was easier to take somebody who know what the trade union movement was all about and train them in the skills and the knowledge that they needed than it was to take somebody with languages and academic background and try to explain to them what the trade union movement was. There was an easier process and I'm convinced he's right. I still believe that's the case.

At any rate, in all honesty, I probably spent most of the first year learning more than anything else and then of course learned after that, but really didn't do much representation in the organization until the second year I was there.

Kienzle: Who was in the Office?

BAKER: Paul Barton and Simone Frocotti, Secretary. Simone is still there. Paul died a couple of years ago now. Paul basically handled all the economic and social work of the Economic Social Committee of the ICFTU. He took me to a lot of the meetings at that time and he was an expert on Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He was originally from Czechoslovakia and he had done some phenomenal studies of forced labor in the Soviet Union. The camps that were set up under Stalin, this sort of stuff. As a matter of fact, [inaudible] was even impressed with Paul's work. He mentioned when he got out how impressed he was some of the stuff that Paul had done on that.

So when the changes started happening in Eastern Europe in '89, before that, but particularly in '89 when things really started moving, Paul was invaluable. Because he had this background and understood better than anybody I think in the trade union movement that I know. He understood better the mentality of the people, the system under which they were operating and the peculiar structure and functions of the official trade unions. That made him, frankly, not just an invaluable resource for the AFL-CIO but for the entire trade union movement. He was very involved in working on developing the policy and approach of the ICFTU, for example, the changes in the East, and I think everybody viewed him as a tremendous resource. We were quite fortunate that he was around at least for some of that period.

Irving also was alive long enough to see the beginning of it although he wasn't able to play much of a role.

Kienzle: Do you want to describe Irving's role, how you view him in sort of a historical perspective in the labor movement after World War II?

BAKER: Well, Irving used to explain it better than I can. Essentially his role when he initially went over there was, it's hard to explain because the times have changed so much, was really to provide the linkages necessary for free trade unions to develop and in a context of resisting communism.

There were two interwoven elements. One was the need to bring back prosperity in post World War Europe. In those days they thought it required social and economic development to go hand in hand. It required building democratic institutions. It required workers having some power and rights, strong trade unions and that was viewed as a positive, as a good thing for economic development. The second element was recognition by the powers that be that communism would have its greatest appeal to misery. So if there was a process of development in which workers interests were ignored that would offer all kinds of possibilities for the communists just as similar sorts of misery in some countries offer opportunities for the Islamic Fundamentalists.

A cynic could say, I suppose, that had the communists not been around, this good stuff might not have been done, but I don't know how you separate the two out in the context

of the time, they were so interwoven. So with Irving I would divide his contributions into a few major elements. One would be the resistance he had to the Fascists but was also resistance to Communism, from one resistance to another. In both cases he was concerned about strong and free trade unions able to represent their members instead of being dominated by anybody else.

The second, which was important to him, and I think historically will be important in terms of the American Labor Movement, was his hostility to colonialism and his activities in that area which you have to put into the context of the time. Now of course, everybody would be against colonialism. But if you go back and look at the old records and talk to people, there were many European Unions that had reservations to say the least about the decolonial process particularly at the beginnings of the '50s.

Kienzle: Late '50s early '60s?

BAKER: Yeah, even earlier than that I think. Moroccan Independence must have been early '50s and Tunisia came a little later. So he was really engaged in it from a fairly early period of time. Algeria, of course, was one of the most difficult issues.

The third function was where I came in. It was the representation function. Now you are not helping European Unions in terms of giving them the wherewithal and so much the role of exchanging ideas and helping in their growth and development. You are dealing with equals in a relationship where they are helping as much as we're helping. We're working together. So he made that transition and that was where I came in. That was the role of that office and quite important.

With Irving's blessing I developed another aspect which was a much more active role for the AFL-CIO itself, dealing with multinational companies. In the '80s you had a tremendous surge of European investment, all foreign investment, European, Japanese, massive surge of investment because of interest rates and other reasons in the American companies. So our affiliates were dealing with a volume of ownership changes which they had never seen before. They were reaching out to their Trade Secretariats, to us, and we worked with those Trade Secretariats and with the National Centers and others to help on specific company things. Now, we had previously been involved in a general sense. Paul particularly was involved in developing the [inaudible] Declaration of Principles [inaudible] and had worked, Paul and later myself as well [inaudible] in the OECD process on multinationals. [Ed: The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development is an intergovernmental economic organization with 38 member countries, founded in 1961.] So we had been very active in developing good practice codes for the conduct and we occasionally had done some help here or there usually in the context of the OECD on particular companies where there were difficulties.

What we did in the later years was expand that. We used the freedom association procedure of the ILO (International Labor Organization) on certain companies, the most recent was Food Lion, also on BASF, on a company called BNI, a number of companies

where we use that process, we use the OECD process. We also try to help get breakthroughs directly with the companies through unions and interventionary unions. Another role for me, probably 50% of the work in the office on average, explaining to European Unions and occasionally directly to European companies what the American labor situation was, what the labor law was, what the context was because the collective bargaining practices and the legislations are so different.

It was hard to get through to a company because it's so different in the United States. We don't really want to deal with it. They let the American manager or some consultant they hired take care of it. So, in order to address a serious problem or address a behavior of one of their subsidiaries you really have to spend quite a bit of time explaining how this works. To do that you have to know the situation in Country X and Country Y. To give just one example, all over continental Europe, and including Britain and Ireland, you don't have to prove majority status before you are recognized. So a lot of American Trade Unionists will assume that the rest of the world works like this. You don't have the situation where it's hard on first [inaudible] for most Europeans trade unionists or company officials to understand there is a significant differential in wages and benefits between union and nonunion. If you have collective bargaining that's industry wide, everybody's going to get a better collective bargaining agreement whether they join the union or not. That's the notion of a union shop and nonunion shop; differential and wages etc. is very different. So one of the most valuable roles we were able to provide for our affiliates, and for the IGSs frankly, was to navigate those waters and explain for example that agreements procedure is really the equivalent of your labor court, but there's no labor court here.

You have to negotiate on vacation because there's no legal requirement for any vacation. This is what union shop is all about. So you get in a situation where you may have issues like contracting out, union shop may be an issue in negotiations, or seniority in terms of layoff and that sort of thing which is not the same. So one valuable contribution was to communicate well enough how a system works in terms of people understanding how it relates to their own system so it can actually be effective in helping us. So if a union official goes in to see a company official and says we have a problem here and here and the company official says bang bang bang and the union guy is not familiar enough with the system to respond, the union person may get snowed. We often used materials, like union busting materials, which most Europeans found shocking.

I remember a meeting we had with, it was a private meeting at the time, but it's no longer private because the company broke their agreement. We had what was supposed to be a private agreement with some top management, not the CEO, of Electrolux in Sweden. We showed them the International Metal Workers Federation, myself, the Swedish Metal Workers Union. We showed them a film that their subsidiary had been showing and they were shocked.

Shea: Is that right?

BAKER: They were saying this can't be true, this can't be true. It just didn't register. That had certain a shock value to get people. We didn't win that particular campaign but in the long run it may have affected the behavior of that company. There was a lot of that kind of work that had really never been done to any great extent before our office got into it. Now we have a lot of people, it's a continuous effort, but we have a lot of people in Europe who have a pretty good understanding of the American system, how it works etc., which is quite useful when you have a problem. Even if our office doesn't get directly involved, but the fact that you have people who are sensitive to that and can respond and understand it makes it easier for one of our internationals who gets directly in touch with them or through an international trade secretariat. So where I came in was the representation function, the third phase if you will, of Irving's contributions and then what I added on was a much more active case by case activity related to multinational companies.

That was also built on Irving's reputation. One of the reasons we had a relatively easy time with most French multinationals in terms of communicating with them and having access was because he had established such a reputation. We had access to people because there was a lot of respect. We built on that and that's why the location of the office in Paris turned out to be quite a great asset and I hope that it stays there because we essentially built on that history, built on that respect to get in doors where we probably otherwise would have been shut out.

Kienzle: Examining the third phase, the representation phase, was there sort of a second part to that with the program in Eastern Europe?

BAKER: Yes.

Kienzle: Was that directed out of the Paris Office largely?

BAKER: Irving got sick in 1986 on D-Day [Ed: June 6, 1944] and he was still working, but there were limits to what he could do.

Kienzle: He had a stroke, was it?

BAKER: It was sort of a stroke. There were other health problems in addition, but it was essentially a stroke that sidelined him, hemorrhaging, and so there were limits on what he could do. So basically that's when I became the European Representative and he became a senior advisor, president or something, I forget the title. Paul and I essentially worked very hard in Central and Eastern Europe together. After the initial period the Free Trade Institute was able to get some funds, initially from NED [Ed: National Endowment for Democracy], and then later on I think after I left they got AID [Ed: Agency for International Development] funds as well. So we had activity through the Free Trade Institute and through the Department here in some of these countries as well and we were able to establish offices, like we have an office in Warsaw and we have an office in Moscow. Now our office in Paris never did anything to my knowledge in the former

Soviet Union. I may be wrong. We concentrated on what was really Europe minus the European part of Russia and the former Soviet Union was dealt with more by [inaudible].

Kienzle: That was Dick Wilson?

BAKER: Dick Wilson, Paul Somogyi. All those folks over there. We had very close cooperation and communication and there still is. Physically it was a small office, it was already difficult to do what we needed to do before the changes. My travel schedule was horrendous the last couple years I was there, I was just gone all the time. I was in Hungary and Poland and Bulgaria and all these places in addition to the normal duties in terms of the international organizations based in Europe and the relations with all those Western European National Centers. So Jerry's task was equally horrendous after I left.

So we didn't try and do anything in the former Soviet Union. We did do work in Central and Eastern Europe and I think that was important also in terms of the way in which these organizations related. Not that we were able to do as much as we would have liked to have done out of that office but remember the context of the times. Central and Eastern Europe had been artificially separated from Europe by the Soviet Union ever since the War or just after the War. What they wanted more than anything else was to be part of Europe. We are Europeans and they wanted to reassert that they were Europeans and part of Europe and that was very important. From my point of view, it was also very important that they be integrated into Europe as soon as possible because of the need to reinforce democratic tendencies and to undermine, if you will, any kind of military and authoritarian tendencies, not only those which were implanted in the Soviet dominated period, but also those prior to the Soviet domination. You did not have a lot of history in some of those countries of democracy and so it was certainly very important to make that linkage. In terms of the relationship of the AFL-CIO it was quite helpful that we had a European office that they could relate with that was relating to other European organizations. So I think we played an important role and it would have been less successful if it had been handled exclusively out of Washington.

Kienzle: Did you help in deciding which organizations in Eastern Europe the AFL-CIO would go with?

BAKER: Yes. It was a process in which a lot of people were involved and Lane Kirkland, of course, made the ultimate judgment in practical terms of who we worked with. That's not such an easy question.

Kienzle: Were there differences within the AFL-CIO? Groups that sufficiently had proven their bona fides?

BAKER: I wouldn't say differences in terms of the AFL-CIO staff and officers among our affiliated unions. I think there have been different attitudes to some degree or another. I guess I could give two examples that probably indicate the difficulties and indicate nuances.

One is the Czech Republic, what was Czechoslovakia, now there are two separate Republics. These were official unions. These were part of the communist structure and there was a general strike. Even though it was a short general strike, it was a pivotal part of the velvet revolution. You had leadership arising at the local level all over that country to take over those official unions. So they took over the official unions rather than set up independent unions on their own.

That's a judgment call, to what extent did they really take it over. Paul Barton played a very important role in that because he was part of the Czech trade movement. He had seen what happened in '68. In '68 in the Prague Spring what nobody ever writes about, because nobody's interested in what happens to workers, it would be interesting to go back and look at State Department cables, but it was really amazing because workers did rise up as part of that Prague Spring. They had the room to move with the Reformed Communists and they took over the unions, I mean just all over the place. After, in '69, after the Soviet tanks were sent in, there was a general strike in the metal industry against the Soviet occupation, and yet I wouldn't guess too many of your experts even know that because people weren't really informed what was happening to the workers. It was recent enough that it was still in the memory at least of the old workers that they had taken over those unions. I think that was why it was easier in Czechoslovakia to have this phenomenon of taking over the official union which of course would have been the best way to do it in every country had that been possible.

We had to make a judgment call as everybody else did in the Free Trade Union Movement, is this legitimate, is this really a reformed organization or isn't it? Should we deal with them? Should we recommend them for ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) membership? We went to Elaine (ph) and I and others went to Czechoslovakia not long after those changes and met with a lot of people and it wasn't just formal meetings. They were real serious discussions, how does your union function, that sort of thing and the sense that we had in particularly in Prague, but also in [inaudible] was that these were legitimate unionists, they cared about workers, they came from the ranks, you didn't get the feeling they were [inaudible] at all.

As I was saying, a union movement with a few pockets of the old crowd, you know where the revolution hadn't hit or whatever then you contrast that with Hungary. My diagnosis of that organization at least in the early days was sort of the mirror image. You had an organization that essentially was still an unrepresentative official union with pockets of progress where people had taken over their unions. So those were both cases where they are judgment calls. It was another example in my view of Lane's wisdom in thinking that trade unionists ought to do international work for the trade union because I don't know how somebody without a trade union background would go into a plant like I have done for example all over Hungary, go into plants and meet with union officials and be able to smell which ones are rotten and which ones are ripe.

Of course, the interesting phenomena during the communist period is the official unions

in many cases, not all cases, but many cases have become essentially company unions. Of course, some people argued they always were company unions, but they were company unions with a special feature which was the communist party nomination. So you had a situation where you have a plant, you'd have a personnel office, you'd have a communist party office. You'd have the union office and they were interchangeable parts, but it was the party that drove everything. So the party was picking people. You could go from the party to management to union position. I met a number of people who had done that and essentially they didn't understand the differentiation of functions. It was just a totally different system. Now you pull the party out of that structure. The party effectively disappeared in Hungary for example in terms of its presence at the workplace. They closed all of those party offices, their role became much more a traditionally political party role. What do they do, what do these people with interchangeable parts do in the context of a situation where the party has lost its power and management is gaining power as these enterprises become autonomous and to some degree self managing or independent and later become privatized. They are used to taking orders from somebody and the tendency is to take the orders from the plant manager or management rather than from the party, but it still doesn't give you independent trade unionism. Some of those people you find on occasion, for whatever reason, had some notion of what a union should be even when they were operating unions that weren't. A few of those people were able to make the changes. For the most part, either the union would have to be replaced or the leadership of the old union had to be replaced by people who rose up. So it was a fascinating period, but very different from one country to another.

Hungary in some ways is the most difficult country because they didn't have a revolution. It was nothing like '56. This was a transition engineered by the communists themselves. One of the few places that I'm aware of where the communists actually decided we're going to have a parliamentary democracy. They understood that even though they were going to be voted out of power that in the long run their best chance of surviving was to initiate this process themselves. So you had an evolution there which ironically blocked the kind of cataclysmic activity that would actually overnight change the leadership with the Union like what happened in Czechoslovakia. So it has been a very difficult process for the AFL-CIO and for our friends in the Free Trade Union Movement to try to decide which ones are bona fide, which ones changed, to what degree is it changed, and it's also been a difficult process for the ITSs to decide whom should we work with, who should we take into affiliation? We have tended to be more cautious than some others, just to say, "Okay let's not get into a hurry to affiliate." Although ironically on the Czech one we'd been there and seen with our own eyes, it was a very interesting board meeting with the ICF because we were saying, "Okay, this is a good organization. They really ought to be part of the AFL-CIO ICFTU we need to integrate them into the Free Trade Union as quickly as possible." I remember the then President of ILO Sweden was a little more prepared to accept some of these official unions than we were. He said, "Now wait a minute, we don't really know that much about these folks." So that was a case where we were among the first to say let's take them, but I think we have been a little cautious to say, "Look it's not the end of the world if you don't take them in the affiliation, let's monitor the situation, let's do missions, let's try to see if we can get other kinds of

information so we can make the right judgments. We don't want to get into a situation where we're in effect giving a good housekeeping seal of approval to organizations that don't represent their members."

Shea: How about your contacts at that time with Ike Herman (ph) and with the metal workers and other representatives of Trade Secretariats?

BAKER: The Trade Secretariats were very involved in that process. Herman for a while, but Herman left and [inaudible] became General Secretary. He's a very good guy.

Shea: He's Swedish Italian right?

BAKER: Swedish Italian, very decent, good trade unionist and most of the ITSs, major ones, were very heavily involved in the ICFTU process. We had agreed among ourselves, all the major affiliates in the ITSs, that we should try, the changes were happening so fast in so many countries, that we should really try for sheer information and we had meetings that were fascinating. I would love to actually have recordings of them now. We had early meetings where ICFTU staff had gone into these countries and had actually been sent out on staff missions, you know very quickly to meet people and report back on what was happening. Sometimes we forget how rapid those changes were. It was a very short period of time that those changes were taking place.

Shea: Johnny [inaudible] was -----?

BAKER: At the beginning of that program Johnny was General Secretary. Some of us also were traveling with affiliates, ITS people, and we would then get back in and share our information. They were fascinating discussions with little bits of information. People would be reaching out and it was a very exciting period of time. During the first year or year and a half of those discussions and changes there was very little disagreement because we were all amazed at what had taken place. Those people who had had relations with the official unions realized more than they ever had before just how rotten they were.

Kienzle: Most of the Germans had been active?

BAKER: Oh, a lot more than that. The Italians, a lot of them had been active but you have to make distinctions. Most of the organizations who had contact with the official unions and the phony unions recognized that they were really unions. They thought there were other good reasons to reach out and make those contacts, but it was the minority who would consider them legitimate unions or real counterparts. We had a serious talk with most of the people who were involved in these activities, they would tell flat out. For example, Christoffersen, Head of the International Department of EGB, you'd sit down and talk to him and he'd have extensive contacts. He would make no bones that these were not unions as we know them. He still thought it was a good idea to have the contacts but he didn't have any illusions that these were free trade unions. Few people

did.

Shea: How do you see it Jim?

BAKER: It's a little complicated that they do not leave a lot of authority in the hands of the General Secretary in the International Department. Everything comes before the International Affairs Committee of the General Counsel and they generally have a pretty open context policy, in other words everybody. Yet, I would say the people I've known who seriously worked on the TUC were not terribly shocked that it was revealed that these unions were not legitimate. The most profound effects were probably on the Germans because of their own reunification process. I mean you talk to leader after leader after leader who had been heavily involved in various exchanges and dinners and all the rest of it but who then actually had to go in due to reunification at the plant level and you would just get story after story, "I had no idea it was so rotten".

Shea: Disillusionment?

BARKER: Yeah. Even the ones who thought these are not really unions as we think of them, they operate as vacation centers, they didn't see them as evil, they just saw them as not really union and just performing sort of a social welfare function. What they didn't realize was just how very rotten that was and how the workers hated them and how they served no representative function, how tied in they were with the party and the police and all that kind of thing.

Kienzle: That's part of the control mechanism?

BAKER: Yes, that's part of the control mechanism. I don't think that people realized that so much. I remember somebody from the metal workers who was working almost full time on this telling me the leadership's going to all have to be new; there's almost nobody we can save. They are just so bad. So that process I think was something the Germans became much more intensely aware of. It became a domestic situation. They all of a sudden inherited huge numbers of members. They had to move very quickly to make sure that they could make changes so that they would be legitimate DGB unions [Ed: German Trade Union Confederation, or Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund] and that their structure essentially would cross into the East rather than trying to merge with these organizations. They had to work very hard to make sure the workers saw as soon as possible what a union was about. What its representation function was etc., or they would have lost enormous members. They did lose members, but not the enormous numbers they would have had they not done a good job of getting out and trying to change things very quickly.

Kienzle: Would you like to characterize the unions in the other Eastern European countries we haven't touched on yet? Bulgaria, Romania and Poland?

BAKER: Well, Bulgaria and Poland I can talk about; Rumania is a total mystery to me. I guess a mystery to most people, but Bulgaria I was particularly active. I went to the first

Congress of [inaudible] when the old communists were still in power before there had been any free elections. That was quite an impressive experience and not one which I had ever imagined before and cannot imagine it happening since. We went in, a few foreigners, to this first convention, someone from the ICFTU, someone from the WCL [Ed: World Confederation of Labor], someone from the CFDT [Ed: French Democratic Confederation of Labour, or confédération française démocratique du travail] in France, the FO [Ed: Force Ouvrière, or Workers Force] in France, myself and I think one other person. It was a small group of people and the deliberations started and they had them in, I think it was the symphony hall, a very quiet event, seemed strange in the morning. We got up and all spoke briefly. At the end of the morning session, I remember getting up there to the podium and having people standing up and chanting "USA, USA" which was not an experience that I had in Western Europe. People were always very receptive and polite, but they were chanting "USA" as almost an attack on communism. It was a very strange thing, being subjected all these years to propaganda and the response was just phenomenal to all of us. Everybody pledged support. That country which had been practically a pawn to the Soviet Union, they even had Russian television on their channels, so they were very, very close. In fact, that's what started the changes in Bulgaria, watching the news about the Paris strike on Russian television.

That changed the Congress. At first it took us a long time to figure it out because we came back to watch the afternoon session and all of a sudden it became very lively. People were standing up telling what was wrong where they worked and somebody then came up and told us, "You see how you changed this discussion?" But they were still sort of afraid to get up on their feet and talk about much. The people who had been willing to stand up had suffered a lot for it. Dr. [inaudible] had been in prison, although it had been for standing up for Turkish minority rights that he was in prison for. A lot of them had different experiences of being watched, experience with the repressive regime and they felt somehow safe by the fact that there were foreigners here and that somehow that was going to protect them. Then the Congress boomed and it was fascinating. I remember one of the representatives from the CFDT stayed in a hotel that was quite a ways away from where the Congress was meeting. When the cab drivers saw his name tag they refused to let him pay a fare. There was such support for this effort which again like in Poland was a lot more than a trade union. Whole Turkish villages for example would sign up as members and this was before they had any structure or dues, but they had money pouring in. I remember going to their office and they had huge barrels full of coins that people would just contribute, and it was a tremendously exciting period of time. Spontaneous strikes going on, it was really exciting.

Shea: [inaudible] and Sofia?

BAKER: Yeah, and Sofia. The cab driver wouldn't take his money, he kept trying to pay every time he came in, "Oh no, no," different cab drivers, "for you it's free."

Kienzle: A symbol of hope?

BAKER: They broadcast the Congress on radio which was also something of a breakthrough and we were all interviewed. We were on TV, radio, press. They interviewed all of us. I gave more interviews than I ever had in my life. The delegates kept coming up and asking us to sign their convention program thing, a little paper thing, and we had to all sign. We were doing autographs, hundreds of them, of their convention programs. I remember going to the airport, some of us shared a cab and I was talking to the people in the back seat. I was in the front seat, and this guy kept listening to me and he said, "Are you Jim Baker?" I said, "Yeah." He spoke a little English. He said, "You spoke to the Congress?" I said, "Yes, were you there?" He said, "No, the radio, I listened to the whole thing on the radio." So it was really quite an experience.

Then I remember sitting around with some of the leadership. I think we were having lunch and they were talking about Labor Day and that this was a communist holiday and the official unions were going to do this, that, and the other thing. I remember saying to them, "Why don't you do something on May Day?" They said, "What?" I said, "Yeah, why don't we do something on May Day?" I said "You know, a long time before the communists, May Day was the workers' holiday and actually it originated in the United States." We talked about it a little bit and there was a guy from FO there and he said, "You know FO is very anti-communist, you know our history and we never gave up, we still got red flags, we still call each other comrade and we still have May Day. May Day's our holiday." So I said, "Why don't you do something?" They thought about it. I said "How about this? The workers take back their holiday." That's what they decided to do. They had a May Day celebration. They had 120,000 people out in the square and this was before the communists left and it was a huge success. I was supposed to speak to that and missed my plane. They even had posters out around the town saying I was going to be there. I got to the Paris airport, Orly, 25 minutes before the plane left. The plane was right there, but they had just instituted for security reasons a requirement that you check in 30 minutes before and nobody could get me in. I don't think to this day they would ever believe that that was what actually happened. They assumed it must be political, it must have been some decision.

Kienzle: That was a French decision rather than the Bulgarian pilots?

BAKER: The airport authorities had instituted this policy a week earlier. I just didn't know about it. The year after, when they had about 70,000 people a year later on May Day, I did get down.

Shea: Who were some of the other people on the delegation?

BAKER: Luke Demarai was there from the ICFTU, John Pierre [inaudible] from the CFDT. There was a guy from the metal workers, I don't remember his name.

Shea: How about the WCO?

BAKER: I don't remember who WCO sent. It was quite a memorable event.

Kienzle: Do you want to turn to Romania and your confusion on that?

BAKER: Well, I never spent any time in Romania other than being in the airport a couple of times. All my meetings with Romania trade unionists took place outside of the country. I had a number of them, but I think part of my confusion is related to the confusion about the revolution, the nature of the revolution, and was it a revolution? To this day you talk to different people in the Romanian unions and there are arguments whether there was really a revolution or not, or was this just a way of making sure that there wasn't. There's still this intense distrust in Romania which I think is eased in most of the other former communist countries. You had a tradition of distrust because you didn't know who was watching you. And as it turned out in East Germany one out of three people at one time or another had been working with this [inaudible]. So people knew that they had to be very careful and so there was a distrust, a sort of a stress in life. I have the impression that that's continued in Romania.

People just aren't sure what's going on and it was such a ruthless regime and such a poor regime and on such a large scale. A lot of that tradition and a lot of this question as to what degree there was a revolution has affected trade union development. You had from the beginning a number of organizations, you had some change, some come, some go and they all claimed to represent the same people. I never really had much feel as to who really represents whom and what they collect in dues or anything like that. Something like [inaudible] you could see after they developed their structure, they had real membership, real power and I never really got the sense except for the truck drivers' union which obviously had some real support and strength because they were in a key sector.

The people we were working with, the ones we initially thought were probably the most legitimate, were those drivers. A guy named Mitria, I think his name was, was the head of that union. That organization has since merged with the official unions and the official union head who I also spent some time talking to, was sometime back denouncing the founder of the Free Trade Union for being too close to the Communist Party. So it's just totally bizarre and then that guy subsequently left them. In discussions I had, it was most difficult for me to figure out what was really going on.

An American, Don Slayman, was there working for the ICFTU after the revolution. He was there a month later and was there for a couple of years and he really lived that. He learned to speak the language and he was up 'til wee hours helping them organize and he really would be an interesting person to interview because he could give you the whole flavor of it. They were very dramatic times. He's now a Field Representative for us based in Ohio. But because of the election I don't know where he will be assigned. He later was in charge of the ICFTU's Office in Moscow and so could give some good information on that. He's a real dynamic guy. I remember when he was appointed by the ICFTU we had a meeting and some people asked some questions about whether this guy was the kind of guy we need to go into Romania and Stephan [inaudible] from PTTI at that time, now

retired, took the floor and said, "This guy was an organizer in Houston; if you can do that you can work anywhere."

Kienzle: Was [inaudible] active in Romania at all?

BAKER: Yes, but with all the same problems everybody else had. I mean the way I'm describing in terms of confusion is not just a personal defect. It was confusion. I'm not sure where he is now. Since I left Lane's Office I'm not as much up on some of these things as I used to be. They were working with an organization I know called the BS End which I think most of the Europeans are also working with, but with some contacts with the others off Cartel and the new merged organization. I think everybody's had problems with Romania trying to figure out what's going on.

Shea: [inaudible] across Romanians, Spain and Italy, you know Romania the language is very similar? I never had any problems communicating, they were from a different world.

BAKER: Poland was a totally different situation; they are all different situations. I was a baby boomer, grew up in the post war period. When you were in school or were looking at the newspaper or television, Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it was all one color. You knew there was Britain and that was different from France, France was different from Germany and that was different from Spain and they all had their individual cultures and traditions and histories and the rest of it. But beyond the Iron Curtain it was just all one color. I think we all had it in our heads stupidly, at least those of us who didn't have a lot of formal education, that there was all one place, undifferentiated. Then you go into those areas and discover you've got these deep rich cultures and tremendous differences, ethnic differences and other differences. Life gets a lot more complicated when you have to discover that what you thought was just all one thing is differentiated by country, region, ethnic group and everything else.

Poland was obviously critical to all changes in the East. I don't think it would have taken place without Solidarity. I don't just mean the revival of [inaudible], I mean first in '80 and '81, martial law and that whole history. That was the only event really recent enough that everybody knew about it. '56 in Hungary was too long ago. '68 in Czechoslovakia would give people at least some idea that something had happened and at least they had the idea that they could take over the unions. There were at least some workers I mentioned earlier, a lot of them are retired, but they talk to their children and other people who work in these factories. So there was some notion that something could be done which was very helpful in Czechoslovakia. But in Poland even young people knew about that because it was so recent and so even though they were subjected to martial law, the very fact that all those people had risen up, joined together, formed a union, had changed history and there was no way to put that genie back in that bottle. No matter how many tanks you had, no matter what you did, there was no way to get that genie back in the bottle. So the revival of Solidarity, even before it was re-legalized, was really a key political event which demonstrated in a perverse twist on history that there is some validity in some situations to the domino theory because that did set the dominoes to

tumbling.

Gorbachev is obviously not very popular now, but his contribution more than anything else was to decide not to send the troops in and that was the crucial combination. The dominoes started to fall and rapidly spread through that region, which again revealed the weakness of those societies, revealing that there really was no ideology any more that had any value in the people's minds. It was just simply a matter of repression and protecting the privileged to become very rotten corrupt societies.

It couldn't have happened with so little bloodshed without the decision having been made and signals having been sent to those countries that if you do make changes we won't send troops in. So it all started in Poland. I went into Poland first. I tried to get into Poland for several years but couldn't get a visa, none of us could, Lane couldn't get a visa. We couldn't get in. In '89 I went in as part of an ICFTU. We had a series of seminars for Solidarity. It was the first time we'd done this and it was very successful. I thought it should be a more general model for how you could organize training and training instead of the usual model in the Third World where we go in and do a training seminar on collective bargaining and three weeks later another country does one on collective bargaining and the Norwegians come in and do one a month after that.

The ICFTU worked out with Solidarity, with their Education Department, what other subjects were of key concern and what subjects related to the upcoming Congress. So this was part of a process which led to them reexamining their own structure and how they functioned at that particular Congress which was in 1990. Instead of doing it the classic way, we had teams of people from various countries talking about collective bargaining in one seminar and I did structure and administration and organizing. Participants came from all the regions in Solidarity. Women workers could sit there and compare systems and then they'd go off in workshops and try to pull out the elements that were more useful in terms of Solidarity.

The ICFTU had asked us to stay a second week and to go around and visit with people. They would take each seminar delegation and send them to different places. In the process of this series of seminars, almost every city of any importance, even some of the smaller towns, had been visited by some foreign delegation and had spent some time with the local leadership. The enthusiasm and response of the people in the seminar and after the seminar was incredible. It would just knock you over, I mean people were so interested in picking your brain. "How does this work?" "What do you do if you have a health problem in your plant and you're working in the United States?" "What do you do if the company says they don't have any money, but they won't give you any information to prove they don't have any money?" You got a chance to talk with local leadership, Polish workers, you'd stay up until 2:00 - 3:00 in the morning with a plate of ham and a bottle of vodka. It was just an absolutely fascinating time.

Then I was able to go back a couple more times in 1990. There were some good things and there were some bad things too that you could see already at that time. There was a

bit of an aversion to what we would think of as organizing or what we could call in the States internal organizing. In their structure all organizing is internal because you don't have the union shop -- which was genuine and sincere and understandable, but was a difficulty in building membership and probably still is to some degree because with the old communist unions you had to be a member. You had no control over those organizations, but you had to be a member.

They felt that since everybody lived through all those years, if they went out and actively asked people to join the union and pay dues that people would react by saying, "Well, it's just like the old union, you want our dues, you want blah, blah, blah." So they were very reluctant, and this I found all over the country and other brothers and sisters from AFL-CIO and other unions went around and discovered the same thing. There was a reluctance everywhere to actually go out and recruit members. Instead the idea was we are going to make sure everybody knows what we are doing and we are going to provide good information in newspapers, bulletin boards, all kinds of information. We are going to make sure everybody understands what we are doing so if there is an action or if there's a strike or some other kind of action, we are going to get the word out what we have done and then they'll join. Well, a lot of people won't join until you ask them to join.

But that certainly in Poland was a problem. There was a double whammy part of the existence of Solidarity. People had been forced to join the communist unions and then when Solidarity first came into existence spontaneously they joined. So they'd been through a successful thing, they had 10 million members overnight without having to organize. Then they were banned and martial law was imposed. People for a second period of time felt coerced into joining a union even though it wasn't technically the same union. So that increased the sensitivity of going out and recruiting and pushing for membership. So even though they got a very significant membership it's not nearly what it was in that period of '80-'81.

The second phenomenon, which you can generalize because this is generally true, was the faith in the so-called free market and the belief that it was going to transform, by itself, this economy. It was incredibly naïve and there was a tremendous disservice done by a handful of American intellectuals who misled a lot of people into believing that would be the case. They talked about some sort of textbook economics that had no basis in reality.

I'll give you a concrete example. We were going back in January of 1990 when they had just introduced economic shock therapy. People told me and other members of the delegation that there was going to be a big increase in unemployment. This was January, mind you, but people said that they'd be back to full employment, with some difference of view depending on who you talked to, the most pessimistic thought was that full employment would be achieved in May of that same year. The more optimistic were talking in terms of March or April.

Kienzle: When was this?

BAKER: This was January of 1990. I was telling them that there's no country in the West which has had longer experience with the market economy that has ever had that kind of miraculous recovery to go to heavy unemployment and then to no unemployment in such a short period of time. I said that we had mechanisms already built into a market, but they still had to build those institutions and so it seemed to me that their danger of high long term unemployment was even higher than for Western countries. They would explain, usually speaking slowly so I would understand, that it's different because here we have a captive economy that is going to be liberated by the surge of market forces which will so transform things that it will magically wipe out the unemployment and we are going to have a labor shortage. They really believed that this was so powerful a force that it would have that kind of effect and they weren't putting me on. They had been told that by people who were academics and had no experience.

I remember the last discussion, this same argument, and finally I said, "You know you are going to make history a second time. You are going to be the first country in the world that freely votes the communists into power if you keep up with this nonsense." That ended the meeting because they all said, I was a lunatic because I didn't understand how much people hated the communists. But it turned out they were. It did put them back into power and the reason was exactly that, economic insecurity, unemployment, all those factors. They had this tremendous faith in the market and all the free trade unions in the East essentially were rejecting anything that even sounded like communism. They were rejecting all that initially and they believed that all those things were going to happen. So it was interesting to see that all of the free trade unions their positions have changed radically or evolved to the point to where they are now focused much more on protecting workers and what kind of transition, how can you negotiate change, how can you protect people, and the faith in the market of doing all that stuff is gone.

I remember meeting in the OECD where a business leader from the [inaudible] delegation told an economist from Celadon, "No, No in the real world it doesn't work that way." Because this guy was much more of a free market radical than other businessmen. I found that a fascinating experience but it was true everywhere. It was true in Poland, it was true in Bulgaria and Hungary. You had this illusion of what the free market was going to do. I'd say it was true all over the world which is the reason why we didn't do what we should. It was something much more resembling the Marshall Plan, not the same thing, but conceptually, the notion okay we are going to move in with Western Government funds, significant Western Government funds.

Tape 2, Side 1

BAKER: Use public investment to bridge the pain of the market so you're not going to have 20% unemployment. You are going to go in and say, "Okay we are going to redo the highways and the track beds and we're going to do pollution control and clean up these horrible poison wastes and the land and the water and the sky and all this tremendous amount of work that needed to be done." If you are going to do that simultaneously with

your privatization of enterprises and the development of the market and development of banks and function of the banks and the stock market and all the things that you need and a system of regulation that you need to make that market function.

I think had we done that they would be much more prosperous and we would be much more prosperous. It would have been a great way for us to get out of a long and deep recession, unless you think there may be some extraterrestrial Marshall Plan's going to come down and save us all. You had to reach out beyond the existing developed world to see potentials of developing the economy. It would have a very beneficial effect like the Marshall Plan did in terms of Western economies and it wouldn't involve a huge amount of money and I think could have had a tremendous impact. It could have had a tremendous political impact so that you would really have buried the old communist apparatus that's now reviving in different forms. You now in many countries have a situation with the same people who dominated the country for years, now running privatized enterprises and having all the wealth and still exerting authority. It's very bizarre; these very people who were rebuked are running a lot of countries and a lot of companies.

The other thing that I found very hard to communicate on was the very question of privatization. They assumed that number one there would be such a surge of activity from the free market, number two that there would be investment from overseas. Most of them over-estimated the possibilities for investment from overseas and so the answer to all their economic problems was the free market plus privatization. But the concept that you can't just sit and wait until some foreign company comes in and buys the public state enterprise was missing in most of the countries. Hungary was a little better than that, but to talk to people including managers about: Well, why don't you just try to make this company function well and not worry about who owns it yet because nobody is going to buy it when it is such a disaster. So why don't you try to make the necessary changes to make this a functioning and profitable company which can provide good employment for people and then at that point it doesn't matter so much whether somebody buys it or not but at least somebody might buy it. But, then you have a functioning, profit making company so you are not under so much pressure.

We would, not just us, but trade unions from other countries would say, "But look at Britain. Mrs. Thatcher had a program of privatization. She couldn't privatize things until she made them function. She had to take companies, change management, restructure those companies, make them profitable before anyone wanted to buy them. So why do you think it is going to be any different here?" That sort of notion. I think they lost a lot of time during that period of time. They were looking for outsiders to come in with a public investment and helped them reorganize these enterprises as part of a process in which they would be privatized, even the ones that were privatized would at least function efficiently. We all missed an opportunity that we'll be paying for for a long time, and they've lost what little good things they had in the old system. They lost economic security. I mean, as horrible as the communist system was, there was a bottom you couldn't fall through. You may be low but there was a bottom you couldn't fall through.

People now, in some countries, are reaching for that security. I think in the long run those economies will function. But there was a lot of pain and suffering and political impact to that and an impact on the trade union movement which has not grown like it should have because of all these economic developments.

Kienzle: Do you find that the Embassies and Labor Attachés were helpful in trying to communicate this assessment of developments in Eastern Europe?

BAKER: Well, you have to remember in the beginning we didn't have many Labor Attachés in Central and Eastern Europe. You didn't have that so you had the luck of the draw with Embassy officials and how sensitive they would be. There was early on a Labor Attaché in Moscow who everybody told me was excellent. He wasn't a Labor Attaché; he was an Economic Officer. This fellow worked with our people when they first went in. Everybody said he was excellent, but his responsibility for labor was added to it. He did have some sensitivity to the very issues we've been discussing. I do think that the absence of Labor Attachés may have contributed to what I think were policy mistakes. It varied a lot from country to country, and at the beginning we had no Labor Attachés there and not a very impressive record in some cases.

Certainly the U.S. Embassy in Poland during the original uprising and the martial law period was, to put it mildly, not on top of things. The attitude when they questioned the Ambassador about "Did you know this was coming?" He said, "Well what do you think we are supposed to do, go out and talk to a bunch of people in a shipyard?" Professional diplomats did not really see their role as finding out what was going on with workers. So here you have probably one of the two or three major historic events of the century that brought all this fundamental change to the world and yet the traditional version would be, "No, we deal with government officials, we're not here to know what social forces are in this country and what's happening." They effectively missed one of the biggest changes.

I noticed that the problem didn't stop there. There was an attitude, I'm not being negative towards the people, but if your constant daily contact is just with Government officials it's bound to wear you down. It's like the water that drops on a rock. You come away believing that Solidarity was no sooner crushed by tanks than it was dead for all time and it is never going to come back. This was buried and buried and buried. I would bet you that that would be the verdict of probably most of the Embassies that were based in Poland at that time, not just our own. If you are only talking to the official people and they were saying, "Well, you know there were lots of problems with the communist system and we've got these new unions now, we recognize that we made changes and everybody was saying [inaudible] was a liberal and the journalists and everyone else so there was a new class consensus that again prevented anybody from predicting the second uprising because you are not talking about those folks. I guess it's easier to assess the value of a Labor Attaché by looking at what happened in the absence of one. That information just wasn't being fed into the mix.

Kienzle: In your supporter work in Paris what was your experience with the Embassies

and the Labor Attachés, did you work closely with them?

BAKER: With a number of them I did. It varied a lot. You had some really top notch, good, professional, sensitive Labor Attachés who cared about what they did. They were of tremendous value to me because I was trying to follow all of Europe, all of the ITs, all of the international organizations based in Europe that we had any dealings with.

Not all by myself, but there were only three people in our office. So the three of us were trying to do all that and a Labor Attaché was following developments in one country day in and day out. So there were many things that a Labor Attaché would pick up, not just in the course of conversations with people, but also with reading the newspapers and monitoring what goes on in that country. And that provided me with information that would be useful in terms of being effective as the AFL-CIO person that I would not have obtained anywhere else. If I had a good Labor Attaché, something might come to my attention, I'd hear something and I wouldn't really understand it, some piece missing, I would pick up the phone and say, "I understand this is the case, what does this mean?" But to do that you had to have a Labor Attaché who cares enough about the job that you can trust their judgment. That means people who are trained or have background that makes them open and sensitive to what trade unions are all about so that they can make some sense of what's happening.

Frankly, the Attachés who didn't care that much about Labor or were even hostile, it didn't happen often, were not useful. I would get much more from my own direct contacts with those unions than I could ever get from some Labor Attachés because they just didn't understand what was going on. So the presence of Labor Attachés can be extremely useful in terms of the work of the AFL-CIO if those people are really good, trained well and dedicated to it, and they understand what their contribution is. More important than what the AFL-CIO gets out of it, much more important, is that I don't understand how you can make policy sensibly without having the mix of the right information to come up with a policy. If you are going to have a narrow band of information limited to this high level government to government type contacts and you are going to base decisions on that you aren't going to understand what makes anything work, what makes a country tick. What are the dynamics, what even are the limitations on the political issue? You can't learn that by just talking to a few people or even talking to a few political leaders. They have their own axe to grind. When you can get out and deal with the people representing the people on the street who don't have any particular reason to lead you one way or another in terms of American Government policy, you can get another perspective, another way of looking at things which should contribute to a better overall picture coming from that Embassy which should contribute to better decisions being made by the U.S. Government.

That to me is the most vital role of the Labor Attaché. The contribution they make to us is secondary.

Kienzle: Are there particular Labor Attachés that sort of stand out in your mind?

BAKER: Oh yeah, there was, Bob Sensor in Germany was an exception. In fact in Germany we've had a number of good Labor Attachés. I'm not sure why that is, but Jim Madsen (ph) was excellent. Bob Sensor was excellent. I'm trying to think, I don't think there was a bad Labor Attaché in Germany. There were nothing but good Labor Attachés in Germany in the time I was there from '82 to '91.

I got there in '82. I remember Bob set up a series of meetings for me. I went to Germany for a week and he started working on it about three or four months before I got there, traveled with me and set up meetings with almost all the major unions across the DGB which was extremely useful because I just got to know all these people. This was when I was still in that learning stage I was describing. I had the time to do that and I did that in a number of countries which enabled me to reach beyond the top leadership of the confederation and get to know some of the individual union people. Some years later, when I started working more on multinationals than we had before in that office, all these contacts I had made in individual unions who were key players in the ITSs turned out to be very valuable. You had new people and you could talk to them beyond just the people in the federation and the confederations.

Bob did a first-rate job in putting that all together. Also remarkable with Bob, and it was true for a lot of other Labor Attachés, I would normally really not feel terribly comfortable having a discussion with a trade union leader with a Labor Attaché sitting there. If it's a serious discussion about something, you think it shouldn't be someone from the U.S. Government sitting there even if they may be friendly. Sensor was so close to the people, he had such a relationship that you never felt a moment's discomfort. If you hadn't asked for him to be there, they would have asked for him to be there. They felt that comfortable. I don't know if that may be partly related to his own trade union background on the newspaper guild, but he related very well to people. I was a little concerned, what's it going to look like with my first extensive trip in Germany and you already got people who think we're working too much hand and glove with the Government. After the first meeting I realized this wasn't going to be a problem because Sensor was so highly regarded. So that worked quite well.

I would say that that's one thing that would generally characterize a good Labor Attaché not just a question of being committed, understanding the role, understanding the movement, but also developing personal relationships which are genuine. Not personal relationships that you are just using to shake information out, but genuine relationships where you can be useful to that person and that person can be useful to you and you develop friendships. It was clear to me with a number of good Labor Attachés when we would meet with people that they had developed those friendships. I think that's very good for the United States if major leaders and an important part of the politics of the country feel very comfortable personally and close to somebody who is after all representing the U.S. Government. That's quite important in terms of what their attitude is and what their image of America is.

Kienzle: Did you work very closely with the Labor Attachés or Counselors in Paris?

BAKER: The role was different because the people in the individual countries around Europe who are good Labor Attachés could give you lots of good information, could give you their judgment of what was going on. In Paris, because we were physically located there in the office, that role was virtually not existent because the mere fact of being there means you are reading the newspaper. Even if you are traveling you are coming back in and someone in the office is telling you what went on or you have newspaper clippings on your desk and because we were physically located there we had a lot more contact with the French Union. So that role was not totally nonexistent but much less important. There would, of course, be occasions where particularly the Labor Attachés who got out and would travel around would give you some idea of what was happening in a region X or region Y in France which otherwise I wouldn't have had, but in a way the Labor Attaché in Paris played a role more like an overall liaison with our office in general.

I thought the most valuable role of Attaché was that that person was reading cable traffic and was following what was going on in the whole world of labor and you could discuss with him things beyond Europe. If it was in Europe I would deal directly with the unions and if it was a good Labor Attaché I would talk with the Labor Attaché from time to time to keep up with what was going on. To a great extent the ICFTU also would keep me informed about what was going on in the other parts of the world. If you had some event going on like a major strike in Country X, which was not one of my areas of operation, you could always talk to the Labor Attaché and say, "Tell me, there's not much in the newspapers about what's really going on over there?" "Is it true that so and so and so and so?" So it was more that kind of a role that was useful for that Paris Labor Attaché. It was a way for me to benefit from the fact that he had some knowledge and access to information to know what was going on beyond Europe.

Kienzle: Going back to Irving Brown, at one point some Labor Attachés felt that he had favorites among the Labor Attachés and that those who felt a close identity with Jay Lovestone, that group certainly had an inside track. Is that a fair evaluation? What was your perspective or did you come after most of that business?

BAKER: Yes, he had his favorites, but I don't think it was politically based in terms of people who had relationships with Lovestone or Brown. Irving had strong likes and dislikes, and it was much better to be in the first category than the second category, but at least when I came on I never saw that.

Kienzle: What about Yugoslavia?

BAKER: I went into Yugoslavia, I guess it must have been '92 with Jack O'Tare and Stacey Heath from the International Affairs Department. We did a tour for about 10 days which was fascinating. We didn't get into Macedonia but we got into I guess everywhere else. One of the more memorable parts of the trip was Sarajevo. I remember having lunch with the leadership of the official unions. Most of Yugoslavia had nothing but the official

unions and we were doing it on an informal basis. When you had a question mark you'd make it an informal or nonofficial sort of discussion. There were only a couple of pockets that I would call real genuine free trade union activity. You had the journalist union in Serbia, you had the railroad engineers in Zagreb, and in Croatia you had a number of different organizations. You also had clearly independent unions like the local one of engineers who were trying to change the official organizations. Slovenia you had some independent groups and you had an unofficial group that was obviously in some stage of reform. In Titograd you had some very early stages of reform I thought. This was my perception. The trip was actually sponsored by USIA or somebody. At least Jack's was paid by an Amparts or something and I just went with him.

In Sarajevo, at this big table at lunch, there must have been 10 Yugoslavs and they were explaining you had Muslims, Serbs, Croats and everybody that made up Bosnia represented around that table and they all told us what their ethnic or religious background was. They were extremely proud of the fact that regardless of what other problems they had, and they had economic problems and were going through the change and everything, but they were proud of the fact that they didn't have ethnic conflicts. They insisted on giving us a walking tour of this old part of Sarajevo which was very pretty, but they kept emphasizing that the world could learn from Sarajevo. One guy said, "This is the Jerusalem that works." "People really do get along and they have gotten along for hundreds of years, it works here." I said, "But don't you think that the tensions from other parts of Yugoslavia might spread here?" I remember one of the guys saying, "I don't know how it would be, because people are so intermarried here, that you know you are talking about splitting families."

So I remember Lane and I after I came back over here I had a discussion one time with a then Foreign Minister from Bosnia who was over to the States and came by to see Lane and I sat in and in the course of the discussion I said, "You know I had this crazy lunch in Sarajevo," and told him what I just told you and I said, "Now tell me what were they smoking?" He said, "They were right." "He said, "There's 48% of the people are intermarried in Bosnia, there was a peaceful tradition that went way back and was very deep." "People were close to neighbors that came from a different ethnic group." "There were many neighborhoods that were interethnic, and this was part of the drive for a greater Serbia." "These are Serbs from outside that started this trouble and it took them a long time but eventually we got some of the Serbs involved from Bosnia, but this was an outside event disrupting our affairs." "It wasn't an indigenous problem." "Had we been left alone by our neighbors; we would have been alright." So I found out very fast a little piece of history. But you could see the tremendous diversity in that country.

I remember walking at night in Titograd. This was before capitalism had come and you could still walk at night in these places. Now you would get pickpocketed. But Titograd had all these unemployed young people hanging out in the street. That was their social life. They didn't have enough money to go have a beer or coke or coffee. They had this huge unemployment. Then you went to a place like Slovenia and in Ljubljana you felt like you were in Austria or Germany, bustling and people were well dressed and seemed

very European. So I guess my impression of Yugoslavia from that one trip, and God knows 10 days makes me an expert, is that it's hard for me to conceive of it ever having been a country. Because there are just such differences.

Kienzle: Anything about Spain or Portugal you would like to relate?

BAKER: Jim could give you a better run down on Spain. Let me just say we focused largely on the UGT [Ed: Unión General de Trabajadores] and the Basque unions and the relationship was quite solid with the Basques who have an extremely effective union. We helped them with some assistance. They had a computer program that they had developed with the CSC, the Christian Union of Belgium. The ELA-STV [Ed: Eusko Langileen Alkartasuna-Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos] is one of two ICFTU affiliates, the other is affiliated with the WCL and the Belgian CSC is I guess the biggest affiliate of the WCL. So they had cooperation and the CSC had helped them develop a computer system to track their membership and to track also the grievances under the Spanish system and then we financed it. I don't know if we financed all of it or if we financed part of it. This was an extremely impressive system.

As Jim knows if you file a grievance you have to go through a tribunal sort of process and it has steps and so if you are a day late in filing this you lose it and so the ability to keep track of the steps and keep large numbers of cases moving simultaneously is a tremendous advantage for a union. That's one of the reasons you have a union to represent you. They had every day a lawyer who would go into the office, print out of that computer which would tell them take care of case X, you need to file this procedure, you have two days left to do this, you have three days left to do this, on all their cases. Whereas people who were in the [inaudible] were sometimes losing their cases because somebody just said, "Jesus I was working on this other thing." This was so organized. They are so dramatic in a lot of ways, but very precise, organized. They could give you exact membership every month and if somebody was late on paying dues there was a letter that automatically shot out of that computer reminding you with a nice general reminder that you need to pay your dues and if it didn't come in the next month there was a letter that went out to the union representative, the equivalent of a steward, and that person would contact you. They were able to a higher degree than most unions in that kind of a system to maintain their membership and, of course, they were tightly knit because of the nationality, they did have Spanish members. It wasn't restricted to Basques, but that did give them a certain strength. Some of the most wisely spent Government funds that we got were things that we spent in the Basque country. One was the computer program which enabled them to do their trade union work so much better and more efficiently.

The second thing was a series of training programs for their local union representatives which were quite impressive and were very good programs. They did all the work, we just helped with the financing. It wasn't terribly expensive, but they were very well done and very good and gave people the equipment to deal with the problems of members. The other thing that I thought was fascinating was the attitude of ELASTV and particularly

the President, which was: we really appreciate your help and as soon as we don't need it anymore we will let you know. He called me up one day and said, "Look, looks like we are going to get our part of the properties that the Franco Government had taken and I just wanted to alert you so that the money can be cut off." Then he called two or three months later when they actually had an agreement and said, "Well, we can use this money for education, we don't need your money anymore." It was great.

The accounting that they did was so impressive. It was just such an above board, honest operation you could see very easily what they did and there was no sloppiness in it. Like I said, they really did appreciate the relations, they appreciated the fact we helped them out, they wanted us to be able to use money elsewhere to help other people as soon as they were in a position.

The UGT, I must say that Redondo who was the leader for many years, ever since Franco fell, was not too heavily involved in international affairs because he had his hands full domestically. He did go to ICFTU meetings, he did get somewhat involved. He and Lane had a good relationship and he and I always had a good relationship. He was a good solid trade unionist and there was warmth there on a personal level and I thought he was a good guy. We had an international affairs confederal secretary, Manuel Simone, who was a different sort of person. Redondo was pretty much a down to earth guy, you could talk to straight. Simone was a very bright guy, more of a diplomat. You know he was more, you weren't exactly sure. He was in some ways very good but I always felt the relationship between the AFL and UGT did not get as close as it should have been because he was sort of keeping all the balls in the air and I like him very much personally. I don't think he really wanted it to get a lot closer.

His successor came from a different sort of a background. He had been a general secretary of the hotel/restaurant union and very much a frank speaking guy, down to earth. I got in many more arguments with him than I ever did with Manuel Simone, but the relationship was closer because there was a genuine desire. He wanted to have a close relationship with AFL-CIO and all the other free trade unions. He thought we were all part of the same family and he wanted to have as close a relationship as he can and maybe that meant disagreeing at times but at least you knew where everyone was. So for me when he came in even though there were more sparks there was in reality a closer real relationship and I think that was more in keeping where Redondo was. He seemed to be very happy.

Shea: Inaudible

BAKER: Yeah, Sofia. He was a good guy too. He was quite a good fellow. So that relationship is still pretty solid and pretty good. The Portuguese, you know, we really, I think played a fairly significant role in helping the UGT, particularly at the beginning. Not just us, but we played a major role. I think that the FES also helped them some, the Norwegians also helped when they were first starting and taking on the communists. The Norwegians I think helped them a little bit later, but most of the support in the initial fight

when they split from the CGT came from us. And from what I've been told by Irving and others, I wasn't there at the time, [inaudible] was no longer the General Secretary but was the General Secretary for a long time in Portugal.

Frank Carlucci I think was the Ambassador there at the time that the change was taking place and apparently he was very accessible to them and they felt that he was a good support. They gave him a lot of kudos.

Shea: Do you recall Dale Povenmire?

BAKER: Yeah, but that was before my time. I know they had very positive feelings about the Embassy and felt that they really did get some help, had some support, and there were some tough times there in the beginning and that was important.

Shea: A lot of people felt that that

BAKER: Yeah, it might fall apart and go back to dictatorship. Even Spain, you know, remember when that nearly happened.

Shea: My impression of my years in Europe, European unions are not as big on dues as say we are, but the strength probably depends on how many people they can turn out on a particular issue. How do you feel about that?

BAKER: I think it's hard to generalize on that issue. We think the real strength compared to American unions is the fact that they are part of the system, that you have collective bargaining which is generally industry wide except for Britain and Ireland, but I mean the continent is generally industry wide which gives them clout where you are negotiating essentially with associations. You've got all kinds of structures in the countries which means there is a role in some cases managing the social insurance system or the social security system. In the case of France the system that's essentially an industrial tribunal [inaudible] they elect people to that, they elect people to enterprise boards, so they are part of the system all over France and Belgium and other places. So you can't do the kind of union busting because you wouldn't know where to start because they are everywhere. So there is a power unrelated to membership, not entirely but largely unrelated to membership.

That's why for example you can have a country like France. It has a membership level as low as our own, but the unions are still basically consulted everywhere in the process and when they don't you have a huge strike like you had in December when there wasn't proper consultation. So they can mobilize the people under those circumstances just a part of different acceptance of unions. On the other side, if you look at the comparative strengths and weaknesses, I would say we probably have, well before I get down to the dues question, the Southern European unions tend to be more laissez faire about dues more imprecise about numbers you have etc., whereas the Northern Europeans, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, the Germans, they can tell you how many members they have

and they do it pretty systematically. There is a regional difference there. The French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Italians, that's another story.

The second difference is that the trade unionists that we have in this country I would say a larger proportion of them are really tested in fire. In other words, there is a commitment there because of the nature of the system and the nature of the labor laws.

Tape 2, Side 2

BAKER: [inaudible] when I was Lane's Executive Assistant from time to time. I'd say, "We Americans are peculiar, we associate like rabbits procreate." "Every time something needs to be done you get together with your neighbor and you go to City Hall or you form an organization."

The organization might last for a week, but you get together and form something and you do something about it and that's the kind of active democracy we have. It's not just that you got the institutions but you got people who freely associate and they come together whether it's for building a sewage plant or getting something done with the parks. Whatever the issue is people will come together and employers come together very quickly very easily to form organizations to do what they want. The only area, and we do that more than anyone else in the world, where there is an exception is in the organizing in the unions. All of a sudden you have to go through this hoop and that hoop and that hoop and prove that you got a majority. Otherwise, in America it is the easiest place in the world where freedom of association is more protected than in any other country in the world except when it comes to workers organizing. Then it is made harder than almost any other free country in the world. One of the lines in my speeches is "forming a union ought not to be an act of heroism, it ought to be an act of democracy. We are in a country where you do have a different structure, where unions are part of it, it is a simple act of democracy.

It's your decision, I want to be a member of a union, I want to be active in a union, I want to do it, but the union's there. You don't have to go through hell. You don't have to walk over shattered glass, hot coals to set it up. It's a simple act of democracy just like joining a political party or voting or anything like that. Here it's a test of endurance, it's do you have the psychological fortitude to take that kind of abuse, can you run the gauntlet, can you put up with the threats of being fired, can you put up with actually being fired, is your wife or husband willing to support you enough so that if you lose your job you have something. There are all these. Forming a union is a crisis situation in most situations here. It is a crisis for your family, it's a crisis in the workplace, and it's something that really tests your intestinal fortitude whereas in a lot of European countries it is not. It's what it should be, just a simple okay this is the way we get democracy on the job. This is the way we participate in what we do. So it's easier actually in terms of getting people together. I think our people don't have to be provoked as much to come out like at a solidarity day then you would have to do for the French or some other group of people because here you have a group of people who already have gone through enough hell that

they will be the first out the door to be there. So I think our procedures have some advantages.

The second difference that changes a little bit the nature of the union is that you have these grievance procedures in Europe outside of the union structure itself. So European union members in general, even though the union will help him with his problem, tend to think of the union more as a collective institution. This is something that protects my salary, my job, negotiates my wages, my conditions, etc. and represents me in greater society to make sure my interests are protected. Whereas an American union member, although that's also part of being a member, also tends to think this is the organization protects me with my problem on the job because the grievance procedure is a private operation where you are going to go to your shop steward, shop steward is going to try to resolve it with a foreman, and then it goes up to the next level of the union to management. It's very much more something connected in a person's mind to the union, whereas even if you have the union represent you in a more formal legalistic labor court or tribunal system you are going to end up very soon in that process if not immediately talking to a lawyer. Whereas our process, the first one you are going to talk to is somebody you work with every day, who is the shop steward.

Now, some European unions do tend to resolve a lot of grievances without a formal procedure, they do do it that way, but routinely in this country, virtually every contract has a grievance procedure and they go to the union and the union means not just you but that guy over there was unjustly fired and he got his job back and it was the union that did it. So I think the identification of the individual worker with the union is of a slightly different nature in this country than it is in a lot of European countries.

Shea: More immediate?

BAKER: More immediate and personal, yes. My rights, you know, taking care of my rights, they can't push me around. It's also tied up with your dignity as a worker as a person because you are not protected universally, you are not protected either by collective bargaining agreement or a legislation that protects you from various abuses and pressures by the employer. So a lot of people like me, I worked in nonunion jobs before I worked at Ford, and I could make the comparison. You could stand up on your hind legs and tell the foreman to go screw himself. I felt like I was a free man for the first time in my life because that person didn't have the power to send me out the door for any reason. If that foreman came up to me and used every off-color word he could and told me what he thought of me and my family I could give him back the same thing, and I did. The day after my probation period ended, this foreman heard a 90-day accumulation of thoughts of his character and everything else and that to me was more important than the fact that I had a good salary and I had all the other benefits. The fact that I didn't have to take that abuse. I remember working on this nonunion job when the guy, about once a week, would bring a couple of unemployed people and he'd stand there and explain close enough so you could hear what you were doing. I'd been unemployed for months before I got that job, effectively unemployed except for odd jobs, and you know that was tremendous

pressure on you. The pressure was there everyday and you were breathing dust and developing coughs and all kinds of problems, but you weren't going to say or do anything about it because you had to have that job.

If somebody was unfair and told you something that wasn't right and treated you unfair you just had to swallow it. Then to be able to come into an environment where I could, not only outside the plant if somebody gave me some crap on the street I could give it back, but I could actually tell my boss, that was phenomenal. The very existence of the union changes the climate in which you work. I mean it's a much more dramatic change than some sort of labor management cooperation program. Even if you don't have any of those programs, the very fact you have a collective bargaining agreement in a union changes the nature of work. When I was on my probation period I had a foreman who liked to harass the new hires, he enjoyed doing that. The people who worked around me would harass him so much he would run away. He would come and start picking on me a little bit. They would give him such a bad time that he would leave me alone. Because they were free to do that where in a nonunion place they would have been sitting there working, thinking how awful this is but wouldn't have opened their mouth because they didn't have the freedom to do that. So that's where I discovered the real meaning of unions, not necessarily what's in the contract but [inaudible]. I think that's where we are probably stronger than other organizations is that [inaudible] aspect, the fact that people have a union and don't have to take any crap that they shouldn't have to take. That changes the way people have to treat you.

One concrete example: I was putting steering assemblies on Ford Pintos and Mustangs and I had one that wouldn't connect. It was too short. So I marked it with yellow chalk, which is what you were supposed to do, and I told the foreman. This car went all the way off the line and this guy got in to drive it to the lot and it had no steering and it ran into a pole and totaled the car. The guy wasn't hurt but it totaled the car and the general foreman came and screamed at me, "How could you do that?" I never met this guy. There were over 5,000 people working so I never met the general foreman. He came screaming, "How could you do this, destroying a car, do you know how much that cost?" After he settled down I said, "Well, if you crawl under that rack you'll find more yellow chalk on that car than you've seen on any car." And I said, "If you talk to that asshole you call a foreman, and he tells you the truth, he'll tell you that I warned him about that car." So about a half hour later this guy came back and he apologized. He said, "Look, I'm really sorry I should have checked that before I came to you. The chalk was there. The foreman admitted that you had told him and he had forgotten to do anything about it. So I'm really sorry."

The same plant without a contract I don't think he would have said that. I think he would have left me steaming for however long I was steaming, let me think that they still thought that I'd destroyed that car, but the fact that they felt to treat you with a certain decency made this guy come back and say, "Look, I'm sorry, I made a mistake." That ended it for me. As far as I was concerned that was great and I'd been vindicated, but you wouldn't have that in a nonunion set up.

Kienzle: Are there any final comments you'd like to make before we conclude?

BAKER: Not really, other than expressing some unease on a broader scale on the question of Labor Attachés. Is the U.S. Government focusing yet what its international role ought to be? I have some misgivings about whether we're not becoming much too mercantile and seeing our Government's responsibilities too much as promoting the interests of American business overseas, or seeing the embassies as too much to serve those business interests. Are we losing track of the fact that building strong democracies ought still be what this country's all about? And the economic interests of this country are not automatically what the preferences are of its largest corporations and that we should have reached the point where we understand what's good for General Motors is not necessarily good for the whole U.S.

I do think it is quite important, and this is relevant to the question of Labor Attachés, that there be an accurate picture of what's going on in the world and a picture of what the interests of the United States are that does not confuse the interests of big companies with the interests of the United States. I see that as a real danger. This may be ignorance on my part. I don't understand frankly why you would have a major conflict, to use an example, between the United States and the European community over the tariffs on Chiquita bananas and yet that is a major dispute, has been a major dispute for I don't know how long. There's not any American workers employed in Chiquita bananas so why is this such a compelling interest? I guess Chiquita's headquarters are here but why is this such a compelling interest for America?

I think that the whole policy will be distorted if the elements that are not directly related to making money are not factored into it. I just sense that things are going more and more down that road. I mentioned earlier the importance of the competence of the Labor Attachés. If you have a good Labor Attaché you have to listen to what that person says and actually factor it in. Not if it is something irrelevant or something over here in left field but where it really does relate to the rest of the picture. If the function is not considered important it most likely will attract the type of people who will do a good job in it so I think there needs to be a revival of an important role. Frankly, the role is more important than it was during the Cold War period, instead of being less important. I think it is more important because these are going to affect the interests of the country much more than the simpler days when it was East versus West. I think if you are going to make intelligent policy decisions now, the economic and social considerations which come in as part of the Labor Attachés work are going to be more important elements of those decisions than they were when there were overriding political considerations which were on everybody's mind.

So I see I guess what you are looking at and documenting, the Labor Attachés and also looking at the future as being one small part of a much larger picture which is what kind of world we are living in and in whose interests these things are going on. At its basis, economic activity was always to improve people's lives. The cave man went out and

fished so he could eat. There was a relationship between economic activity and people's lives. The notion of separating the social from the economic and letting the economic run off on its own and the social being some sort of patchwork safety net, you know the ambulances that go out in the field, is a relatively modern notion. Historically, human development combined the two and now we've got something that says economics rules, everything serves the economic and, oh yeah, there are some social concerns. Let's somehow patch up something to help those people who fall through the cracks. Some kind of protection as opposed to saying, "Okay when we make decisions about economic activity those decisions aren't going to be made by faceless unelected people who are running big corporations. The Government is going to play a role in that, and they are going to make sure that as those things develop, and as they are implemented, and things grow, the social element grows with it." Essentially that was the concept behind the Marshall Plan and I don't think that there is any reason it is less valid than it was.

I like to remind people sometimes of the fact that the ILO was founded after the First World War when the revolution in Russia had just taken place. Their analysis was based much more on World War I and on previous wars in the European context. The reason they set up the ILO was for peace and they believed that denial of freedom of association, denial of rights of workers and economic and social injustice were causes of war. I think if you look at the postwar world you can almost say we are there again. You look around the conflict in the world at what's happening, the conflicts within societies and conflicts between countries and we are back in a situation where that wisdom is still there. So if you are going to deal with a world like that that means that basic notion behind the ILO then you have to deal with equalities and injustices and workers rights to organize. That's key to the future of peace and that's intimately involved with peace just as valid as it ever was. It's a higher priority now in the modern world than it was ever during the last 10 or 20 years.

Kienzle: Very eloquently stated. Thank you very much, Jim, for your interview.

End of interview