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Labor Series

JESSIE CLEAR

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

Q: Jessie, would you like to begin with a little bit about your family background and your education?

CLEAR: Well, first of all it's my honor to be here, Don. We have been colleagues for long years and good friends. I guess what bound the Labor Corps together was our common experiences at the New Delhi conferences, which lasted for several years. They made the Labor Corps what it was. As far as my own case is concerned, I am from northern Colorado but I went to sea at an early age, both in the Navy and the Merchant Marines. I was in the Merchant Marines for a total of nine years and the Navy, four years, and I was an underground miner for two years. Of course, I had some union offices in those positions at the time. I was the on-board deck organizer at Ameritime, and I was a drift steward in the underground mining.

Q: Which did you do first, the mining or the Navy?

CLEAR: I was in the Navy, first, for four years, and then I came back to Colorado and did underground mining for two years until my lungs told me that this is not my profession. Then, I went back to sea with the Merchant Marines. I sailed on and off for nine years [while] all the time I was going to school at Tulane in New Orleans. I basically financed my education by sailing.

I usually sailed out of New Orleans but I had an organizing trip out of San Francisco one time. I sailed off the West Coast and off the East Coast, too, so I've sailed all over the world. That was basically my life, and I married a girl, Dottie, from New Orleans and my son was born down there.

Q: When did you enter the Foreign Service?

CLEAR: It was January 1969. I had a labor background coming into this deal and, oddly enough, when I took the Foreign Service examination, I did not know there was a Labor Corps. I had no idea about the Labor Corps, so I came in as an economic commercial officer. My degree was in business and labor economics. At that time, they would pre-cone you. You remember how the system used to work? They needed economic types,

and I think that was the year of the proletarian. They wanted people with work backgrounds. Of course, that fit me to a tee. Ambassador Randolph Kidder was on my panel, and he thought my background was very interesting. In fact, I'd just got off of an East African run at the time, and they couldn't shut me up. They finally had to turn me off in an hour or so.

Q: Where was your first assignment?

CLEAR: It was Recife, Brazil. It was supposed to be Rio [de Janeiro] but something happened on the way, so we ended up in Recife. But it was fine. At the time it was the second largest AID post in the world. As you recall, there was the Alliance for Progress, and they were worried about Communist nations on the South American continent. So Recife was going to be a big redoubt up there. It was a very large AID post. One of my jobs as economic commercial officer was to analyze the effects of the American sugar quota, both pros and cons, and how it was affecting Brazilian sugar producers. I also did a lot of consular work at that post, protection and welfare. It's called citizenship protection services now, I think.

That was my first tour, and then they got wind that I had this labor background. They said, "Why don't you take this labor course?" and I said, "Hey, wow!" By this time it was 1972, and I did go to the TUP (Trade Union Program) at Harvard, the correlative of the AMP (the Advanced Management Program). We used to do cross training and cross classes. It was very interesting. It was like a post-graduate school in business management on the one side and trade union management on the other side. Joe O'Donnell was still the executive director. .

Q: What category did Joe O'Donnell put you in? When I was there, you had to be either a German-American or an Irish-American.

CLEAR: That's a tough one because I'm a Russian. I guess he figured I was one of those unmentionable Slavs. I know I wasn't Irish. Joe knew that I wasn't Irish right away. I'm from South Russia where my ancestors are. That was my category. Libby was still the executive assistant. She really ran the show. Those were the good old days.

Q: Was that a one-year program?

CLEAR: It was a one-year program. Well, actually, the Harvard section of it was one full semester but we also had internships. My internship was with the steelworkers both in Pittsburgh headquarters and in Indianapolis. We had a lot of travel to unions, and I had the pleasure of reigniting my old acquaintanceships with the miners. I sought out the miners I used to work for and went to both of my maritime unions in New York and took the other trainees with me. One was the National Maritime Union and one was the Seafarers International, so we visited both unions.

Q: You and Lane Kirkland [later the President of the AFL-CIO from 1979-1995] visited them together?

CLEAR: I don't know if I want to go on record about me and Lane. We had our differences over the years, mainly about the rule of organizing the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) versus the constituent unions. He was out of Masters, Mates and Pilots but I think his total sea time was seven or eight months. I know I used to kid the guys on the seventh floor of AFL-CIO, when I was detailed there, that I had more time as a working stiff under union contracts than any one of them or most of them put together. It was true because I was with both the maritime and the mining and, of course, I was with the UAW for about a year or so.

Q: Do you have any other observations about the Harvard program you'd like to make?

CLEAR: The Harvard program was the binding glue. That, too, was one of the binding cords that tied a lot of the Labor Corps together. It was our joint participation in that program and with the union types, which created life-long associates It was really an excellent program for us. There were a lot of spin-off benefits as there always are that you don't even think about until a couple of years later you as reflect on what the effects were. You make these associations with foreign trade unions who then later become, in their own right, either hired labor movements or some of them break out into business and go into entrepreneurship or whatever. But you still know these people and, of course, I didn't have any specific classmate because I was the only State Department type that particular semester in early 1972. We all had experiences at different time frames and, of course, there's kind of a collectivity of interest. I think the Harvard program taught me that all management types weren't ogres, frankly. I was pretty stereotyped when I came into the Foreign Service. I was very much a labor union militant. I tried to keep it hidden from the powers-that-be in the State Department for obvious reasons. Actually, as I went on into the Harvard labor program, I found out that these guys are people, too. Their excesses are manageable. You can attack their excesses without attacking them. In the course, I found a few unions types that were not totally pure as the driven snow either. It all balances out.

Q: After Harvard, you were assigned to Labor?

CLEAR: After Harvard, I had to be re-coned–you know that ridiculous word--into Labor Political and that took some doing, apparently. I went back down to Brazil to Sao Paulo, this time as labor reporting officer. The labor post in San Paolo was 1972 to 1975. I worked as a lateral with Jim Sheahan in Rio, and I was labor reporter in Sao Paulo. That was an excellent tour, too. It was really very interesting. Sao Paulo is the economic machine of Brazil, so I had a hell of a lot to do. There were some very serious human rights problems with the Brazilian government at the time. They were conducting their pro-type dirty war basically from which the Argentines learned ten year later. I saw some stuff there that shouldn't go on this tape that was really horrifying. I had a human rights portfolio as well. We didn't have a human rights portfolio until 1979 when Patt Darien and Carter came in but we had something like it. I was very much involved in workers' rights. We had torture cases. We had all sorts of really evil stuff coming down on both sides. The MRA, which was the Communist [labor union], were ruthless killers but the

government itself used tactics which were probably worse, if you want to balance the two. The trade union situation in Brazil was very rudimentary. There were a good number of straight-up-and-down honest trade unions, and there were a lot of shysters, what they called *pilagos,* which is the blanket that goes between the horse and the saddle.… And they were really management sellouts, and sometimes they'd be government informers. If you read the history of the rubber tappers, Chico [Francisco Alves Mendes Filho a.k.a. Chico Mendes] was killed and Lula (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected President in 2002), who was a friend of mine, became a presidential contender later on. He was in the metal workers in Sao Paulo. The history of Brazilian labor is a fascinating thing, and it would take hours to go into it.

Jim Sheahan is the guy who taught me contact work. I was always a good writer but Jim is the guy who taught me to schmooze, and really get next to these guys. He is a past master. He is the best schmooze artist that we've ever developed as far as I'm concerned. I haven't met them all but I know that no one could top him.

Q: I think that's one of the essential elements of being a good rep.

CLEAR: Absolutely. You've got to have the contact. Then, too--you know it yourself, Don-- we've always had an uneasy relationship with our own front offices. That was true in three of my cases. It was true in Brazil, because I was dealing basically with the demi-monde, the underground, the despised people whom all of our political contacts on the Brazilian side were calling Communists and traitors and whatever. Well, these were the folks that I dealt with every day…

They were the great unwashed. Of course, this created this creative tension in the front office of the embassy. Sometimes it wasn't very creative but I think all of us have experienced that in this business.

Q: Was it a particular problem in Sao Paulo? Was it really Jim Sheahan?

CLEAR: Sheahan caught a lot of flack but I had some personality things with the consul general. My own boss, Tony Freeman [later Strategic Intelligence Liaison], and I got along just fine. He was the political counselor at the time in Sao Paulo.

…We got along just fine in Sao Paulo. I know that there was always a degree of tension with maybe the DPO (deputy principal officer) and the consul general, and this is just institutional. This just comes with the business. I don't take it personally. Not usually, anyway. It's because of a different focus and different perspectives and what we perceive as different missions. Very often we in the Labor Corps–I know I wasn't alone in this–would be encouraged to be doing certain things with the labor movement from back in Washington, either in a geographic bureau or the Intelligence Bureau or in SIL at the same time that would run counter to what the front office was trying to do. They would be trying to smooth feathers because of a pending trade agreement or whatever was going on. We were always in the position of ruffling somebody's feathers. I think that's what goes on in the labor business. I am sure other people handle it much more diplomatically

than I did.

I've got commendations and curses in about equal measure. Brazil was a good experience. I had several labor-related posts back in Washington.

Q: To finish Sao Paulo, that's where you made use of the dissent channel very effectively, didn't you?

CLEAR: Yes. I think I burnt out the dissent channel in 1974. There were several incidents in there where I got interested in the dissent channel because I perceived it at the time as a valid and very open way to express an alternative point of view. Some people didn't see it that way. They saw it as a way to smoke out whistle blowers. I used it fairly effectively. Ambassador Bowdler (William G. Bowdler served in Guatemala, 1971-1973, and in South Africa, 1975-1978) seemed to appreciate it a couple of times.

I got a commendation from Ambassador Bowdler. Unfortunately, he'd already gone to South Africa but it was still very nice to get it.

Q: Do you want to discuss the issues that you were discussing at that time?

CLEAR: I think there were so many things going on at the same time in Sao Paulo. There was the migration issue. There was the manpower issue. There was the overriding human rights issue where trade unions were being greatly repressed.

To tell you the truth, I can't remember which of my reporting was commended and which was discouraged because it's been so damn long ago. I should have gone through my records and had that at hand.

Q: Do you want to summarize briefly the immigration issue?

CLEAR: The immigration issue in Brazil is still going on. First of all, the Brazilian government was extremely anti-environmental. They didn't want any outsiders infringing on their sovereignty, and that meant they were building the Amazonica Road regardless of environmental mishaps. They also had decided that they were going to resettle North Easterners who basically were cane cutters. They were not agriculturalists at all. They could swing a machete but they did not know about planting. They were going to resettle this excess population out into the Amazon instead of the southern migration route, which they had always done before. Of course, this created a vast disaster out there because they used slash and burn agriculture. They may get one crop out of the first year, probably wouldn't even get that. They would be out there destitute. Of course, the actual road cutting itself became an environmental disaster.

In fact, when José Sarney was the provincial governor of Maranhão, that was in my consular district, and I got to know him pretty well. He later became the president, you know. I told Dr. Sarney one time, I said, "Dr. Sarney, I know this is not a polite question but at the same time you're importing [food], your country's importing vast amounts of

off-road machinery and all of the training that it takes to maintain that, like gigantic earth movers. You've got 75,000 men sitting on your doorstep, unemployed in Maranhão. A great majority of the work you are doing on this road could be done by mobilized labor. It does not have to be done by great capital investment." I'll never forget Zahuta. He said, "Ah, *Senhor* Jessie, you are so naive, Brazil has got to show that it has power, and these are symbols of power." That's what he told me, and I thought, boy, that's the insight into the mentality that was working in those days. I remember that I did a lot of reporting on the whole environmental thing, which was not appreciated. For some reason, the U.S. government did not want to open that particular can of worms.

Now, the Brazilians have come around. They, in fact, see that their rain forest is an international treasure; it's not just a national patrimony alone. Even if it were a national patrimony, it's worth protecting as a treasure. I think their new government has seen that more and more. If fact, I think Sarney, as a matter of fact, wrote one of the early codicils on the treaty before he left office. So he, himself, even came around on that issue. His own state was one of the states most grievously affected by this. It was a terrible mess.

I forgot to tell you that in Recife I got know a terrorist very well. Her name was Nancy Mangabeira, and she was a member of MR8, (Revolutionary Movement 8th October) one of the Communist groups. She was in a shoot out with the Pernambuco State Police. In Pernambuco, at the time, their police had the reputation of being the most fierce opponents of the guerillas, whether they be Communist or others. Nancy had her liver shot out, one thumb shot off, and some kind of other superficial wound, so oddly enough she screamed, "American citizenship." We said, "Wow, this is strange." For our own reasons, we said, "Let's see what this is about." In fact, Nancy had a very tenuous link to American citizenship because her dead German-American naturalized father could transmit it. Her mother was Brazilian but Nancy, who was born in Brazil but moved as an infant up to New York for some months until her father died, came back to Brazil and spent her entire life there. But, she still had a tenuous connection. Of course, we milked that. We said, "Yes, we want to talk to this terrorist every week," on the pretense of citizenship services. We learned a great deal about MR8 from Nancy. But we learned a hell of a lot more about the Pernambuco state government. I got an internal commendation for that one.

Q: In what way did you learn about the state government?

CLEAR: Nancy told us a great deal about who the official state torturer was. As a matter of fact, it turned out to be a family friend of ours. I couldn't even tell my wife until later. It was absolutely a shocker. We confirmed it through other sources that this, in fact, was true. This guy was a very banal bureaucrat, a very gray man, and he, in fact, was the chief torture technician for the Pernambuco state government. We used to go to the beach together. He had a son with a mal-formed foot and Dottie was always taking care of the kid.

In fact, his cousin was one of our locals in our consulate. But the cousin was clean; she was okay. We just transferred her down to Rio and that was the end of that. I don't want

to say his name on the tape but that was proven, and Nancy gave us some more insights into the tactics, how it was done, and about how people would be bought off and used within the organization. Of course, we learned a lot about MR8 at the same time. It was really quite a very interesting association. Oh, we got off on that track.

I had another situation. One of my colleagues up at AMP (Advanced Management Program) in Harvard happened to be a Czech-Brazilian from a very privileged family. He was going up to Harvard to get his tickets punched, and he was going back down to Brazil to set up his own computer company, which he did. This fellow had a Czech name, like Usilino, but he was definitely Brazilian. We kept in touch and had a drink every now and then and compared notes. All of a sudden, I hadn't heard from him for weeks, and he said, "Jessie, I have to talk to you." I said, "Sure." So, he said, "Let's meet at a neutral place," so we met at this little café.

He told me a harrowing story. His secretary had been with him for a good while, and she was six or seven months pregnant. She was married to a journalist from Rio. This journalist apparently got rolled up one night by the Rio State Police. The State Police had a lot of power then in each of the different states. They rolled him up, and they were on a big Communist hunt. They wanted him to name his names. He said he didn't know anybody. So they hauled him into the *modiçao* barracks, which was the air force barracks out near Campinas and roughed him up real bad. He didn't break. He had nothing to say. Then the cops rolled up the secretary, his wife, and took her in there. They beat shit out of her, raped her and, finally, with a broken beer bottle, cut her, and she miscarried the baby right there in front of this guy's eyes. It was absolutely horrendous. She came back and told this miserable story to my friend about a week later after she kind of recuperated. He got totally radicalized. He became a hard leftist. I'm talking about my friend, the Brazilian-Czech. He said, "Jessie, these sons-of-bitches...," so I didn't hear from him for a couple of days, and he got rolled up himself.

I got a tip from somebody who called me up and said my friend was in grave trouble. He was in a *modiçao,* which was about 70 or 80 kilometers away on the other side of town. At about two o'clock in the morning, I jumped in my car, and I raced out there. I went to the *modiçao* and banged on the front gate. I said, "I am the American consul, and I demand to see my citizen." I finally got through to the major or light colonel in charge that night. I threw this big bluff on them. I told my front office nothing. I was just so pissed off that I said, "I demand to see my citizen. This is an American citizen, and I want him produced in front of me right now. Bang, bang." It took about 45 minutes but they brought my pal out. He was battered up but they released him to my custody. They said, "Do you have proof that he is an American citizen?" I said, "God damned right I do, but I want him now." It was all bluff but I got him out of there. I don't know what happened to him later. We kept in touch, but he was very much underground. It was a tragic story, a total tragedy. I think the journalist husband did die and, of course, she lost her baby, and she was totally traumatized. It was just monstrous.

This was the Brazilian dirty war, and I was very much involved in that. That's why I was the labor officer. This wasn't a labor story but that's the kind of atmosphere that was

going on in the mid-1970s in Brazil. That's what was happening. At any rate, there was just so much ferment going on in Brazilian labor thing. I'm surprised that it's turned out as well as it has. I wouldn't have given 14 cents in a long bet. The economy turned out much better than I expected, also.

Q: Are there any other labor issues you'd like to discuss?

CLEAR: I'd like to move on to Tunisia because that's where I had more intense labor involvement. I took Arabic labor training [in Washington] in 1976 and went out to Tunisia. I took the Arabic training for over a year. I had a personal counseling job for about a year or so in Washington. I left for Tunis in November 1977, which was two months before a general strike and riots, naturally. I bring my own cloud with me!

Q: Would you like to describe the situation in Tunis?

CLEAR: I didn't exactly know what I was getting into. Nobody else did either. This came as a big bolt out of the blue for everybody. Habib Bourguiba's regime was widely seen in the Arab world as one of the most Western-oriented, one of the most progressive, the most female friendly, and the friendliest to investment. By most of our usual benchmarks, it was considered one of the prizes. Of course, it benefited by having a neighbor like Qadhafi. Algeria had not yet exploded. Algeria was still simmering. Tunisia looked really great to American policy makers. Tunisia had a pretty civil relationship with Israel, too, as I remember at the time. I went over there with my newly-minted Arabic, and I was doing my best schmoozing. I was getting to know the people and did my rounds. I met Habib Ashour, who was head of the UGTT [Tunisian General Labor Union], and his son, Tamar, who played a key role later on. I met most of the labor stiffs and as many of the ministry people as I could. I don't know the date but I think it was January, like barely a month and a half later, that the UGTT declared a crisis and a general strike against the Bourguiba regime. I maybe should have foreseen this but I really wasn't on the ground long enough to get the vibes to know what was happening. I regret that that came as a surprise to us. It wouldn't have been a surprise if I had been there three or four months earlier. It would not have been a surprise to anybody. Obviously, these tensions were building up big time. This was just before the wave of Islamic fundamentalism started in Tunisia. Tunisia was a very secular place at the time.

Q: Do you want to say a few words about the historic relationship between President Bourguiba, on the one hand, and Ashour and the UGTT? I think they were very close.

CLEAR: They had been co-revolutionaries, co-fighters, in the 1930s and 1940s. I know they were close colleagues for many years. Ashour just took over the [UGTT] and was elected and Bourguiba ran for the presidency and their relationship started to deteriorate then. One of the problems was Bourguiba's own mentality. Bourguiba started getting very delusional, as a matter of fact. That was not widely known. Bourguiba was almost in the same position as Salazar in Portugal. The last years of his regime were basically a farce. I remember one instance where Bourguiba wanted to bulldoze a 300 meter swath right in the middle of the Medina, which is the old, historic heart of Tunis, to install what

else but the Habib Bourguiba Boulevard. He wanted to connect his palace with--what the hell is at the other end of the water front? -- maybe Lake Tunis. The whole scheme was ludicrous. Even his ministers kept stalling him off but this was one of his big obsessions. Bourguiba got obsessed with the fact that the UGTT was not going to dance as a puppet to his tunes. They attempted to be an honest-to-god trade union, which is unusual in the Middle East. I can think of a couple more and that's about it. I guess the Histadrut in Israel and, in the Arab world, you'd be hard put to find one. My colleagues in Rockwood disagreed but I never considered them rock and trade union. I think about them about the same way I think of the Mexican trade union during those years, basically toadies.

The Egyptians had been a kind of fizzy one, so Tunisia was almost unique in the Arab world, certainly in the Muslim world unless you think about Malaysia or some place like that. The notions of independence and autonomy of action were rare. Of course, Bourguiba didn't think much of this idea at all. I'm not saying the crack down was totally his fault either. I told Habib the day I saw him before he was in jail that I thought, if there was any possible way, that I could mediate this thing. I thought he was making a terrible political mistake by calling a general strike. I said, "If you want to call central strikes, where you can say, 'Hey, these guys in the mines are being screwed, or these seamen, or these farmers, or fishermen...,' that would be defensible because then you could say that this is a labor dispute." The minute you make it a general strike, it's not a labor dispute, that's a political statement. Of course, he was falling right back on the French CGT (General Confederation of Labour; French: *Confédération générale du travail*) tactic. I told him, "It's terrible. You just don't do this." But he did it.

Of course, Bourguiba slapped him up into Bizerte, the prison out there. Ashour, at the time, was 75 or something like that and, of course, they put him in this cool, clammy place on the coast out there in Bizerte. It damn near killed him. The Ashour family home happened to be one block from where we lived, and his son, Tamar, started taking a more prominent role. Basically, he was the liaison; he was running the union in a way through his father, so he was kind of the outside liaison. Tamar, of course, came under suspicion, too. I thought, "My God, am I replaying Brazil again? Why can't I go to a normal place? I keep getting into this intrigue stuff all my life." But, Tamar and some of his lieutenants would come over to my place at one or two in the morning, and we'd sit there and schmooze all night and drink rock and whatever. It was a very dicey game because the front office was extremely up tight about this, especially Ambassador Mulcahy and his deputy, Barrington King. They didn't think this was cool at all. My own boss, Lewis Barry said, "Yes, this is what you should be doing." The Middle Eastern Bureau, the Intelligence Bureau, and SIS agreed. Once again, I am between the rock and a hard place. What the hell do I do? Do I please this front office and back off of this deal? But I am accredited to the UGTT as well as to the Tunisian government. What I tried to do is to keep very close links with the ministries. I tried to keep in contact with these guys just like normal business but at the same time I wasn't about to turn my back on the union brothers. It was very creative tension. I think I got about three inches from being PNGed out of that post.

I guess the government finally [realized] that Tamar was really running the operational

control of the UGTT so they wrote him up. They had some kind of big demonstration. They picked him out of the crowd and rolled him up, so he was in jail for three or four days and got word to me. I said, "Oh God, now what do I do!" I thought sure they would be putting heavy blocks to find out how he had been running the union and what was going on. I asked my local informally, I said, "Said, I want you to go over and find out what are the rules for visiting for a foreign diplomat. Are there any particular rules for me to just request a visit to see this guy who is my friend?" . At any rate, I asked my local to do this, and he made the call to the Interior Ministry and, boy, they made a big political fracas out of it. "Oh yes, my God, you are interfering with national affairs and what are you trying to do?" I said, "Hey, look, I just want to go visit my friend. I'm making a perfectly logical, normal request. Are there rules that I should sign something or make an affidavit or whatever to get permission?" I am just asking, "What can I do to see this friend of mine?" I was very open and above board. I didn't try to sneak in any back doors. Of course, the Interior Ministry, for their own reasons, went berserk on this. They went crazy and, of course, the embassy bit. I got hell from every angle except back here. The bureau said, "Yes, that was perfectly proper, you do have a human rights dimension to your job, you have every right to make this request." They said all this stuff and put it on paper, you know…. of course, the front office sided with that government.

...Mulcahy, to give him all credit, was not an Arabist at all. Black Africa was his area, and Barry King basically wanted a clean desk. That was his thing. He didn't want any ruffles going on and, of course, that's just not my style, so Barry and I didn't get along from the beginning.

The problem was, I think, that Mulcahy had had about enough of me at that time. They have a P.N.G. instead of having a no-confidence letter like when the ambassador gets rid of somebody. They just whisper into an ear at the ministry, "Hey, this guy is kind of inconvenient to you, isn't he?" There were no explanations whatever. I understand that when an ambassador typically wants to get rid of somebody, the official way to do it is a letter of no-confidence, and then they have to go up and down the American chain to get rid of some guy. You can't just say, you're out of here, like the Agency can, for instance. An ambassador, to do that expeditiously, will go through his ministry and say, "Hey, don't you find this guy inconvenient? We do." A foreign government can P.N.G. anybody, so the onus goes to them, and the ambassador can say, "Not me, I didn't do anything." That's commonly the way it's done. I think that's what was in the works but in the meantime the bureau back here had cooked up a detail for me over in Khartoum.

They detailed me to cover the Arab labor ministers' conference in Khartoum for the next six weeks, so I did. I left my family back in Tunis, and I went over to Khartoum and covered the conference because I was the only Arabist at the time who had labor experience and the only one who was available at the time. That was in mid-1979. There was something outrageous that Israel had done and, of course, the U.S. was paying the price and the Arab labor ministers were going berserk in Khartoum, making a big deal out of it. I was basically there as a monitor. There was no way they would let me participate. But I was there to monitor and get into the proceedings and report on as much as I could glean from the Arabic what it was that was their main line of attack. I was over

there from four to six weeks.

I came back to Tunis, and my own tour was up in three or four months. By that time, Stephen Bosworth came in as the ambassador, and we got along just fine. There was no problem at all. I probably could have even extended but my wife says, "Enough is enough." Our son was up in Rome in school, our little girl was in the younger grades, and there was a little too much hassle. Oddly enough, the Tunisian populace–how would you say it?–loves to hassle Western women. My wife would be going down in the *souks* with little kids, one on each hand, and these guys would hassle her. I tried to explain to her the colonial history, and she said, "I don't want to hear all that nonsense. These guys are making my life miserable." So, we basically decided to go ahead and cut our losses on this. Tunisia, I think, was one of my most interesting tours, using that good old diplomatic word "interesting."

I think the best thing that came out of Tunisia for me was the beginning of quite a long and good association with Irving Brown. Irving and I became very close friends. Irving had a background with Habib Ashour going way back to just after the resistance period when he was helping Gaston work up the Marseilles docks. I think Habib Ashour was very helpful in that.

Q: This would have been in the late 1940s?

CLEAR: Yes, this was late 1940s or early 1950s. As I recall, Habib was very helpful to him and, of course, Irving was very helpful to them in setting up the UGTT and making sure that it would remain a democratic union. Irving came over to try to mediate this dispute three or four times between Bourguiba and Ashour -- because he knew Bourguiba too–and he was trying to mediate it and stop this nonsense. "You guys are brothers; what is this?" Irving and I became very close and, of course, Irving and I disagreed on virtually everything but he knew I was a union guy and we had a very close personal friendship.

Q: That gave you credibility.

CLEAR: Yes, in fact, Irving basically engineered my detail to AFL-CIO department afterwards when I worked directly for him. His role in Tunisia was utterly amazing. I remember one time, Louis Murray, who was my boss and the political counselor, threw one of these high powered dinners. The British ambassador and all sorts of big wheels were there. Irving and I were also invited. All these big wheels were major investors, real high powered types. The minute people knew that Brown was there--he was in his little "schlumpy" blue suit he always wore and with dandruff all over the place–it was amazing to watch the power poll shift. All of the interest went off the investors because this guy was a legend. Irving Brown was a legend on the North African coast. Everybody knew that this was a real power player. It was absolutely fascinating to see how those lines of force moved just on that one occasion. It was amazing. Irving tried and tried but he never could get Bourguiba and Ashour reconciled again. Of course, Ashour has out lasted Bourguiba because Bourguiba is down in Monastir, basically in the final stages of Alzheimer's dementia. Ashour is happily retired and down in Djerba, I understand.

Q: Is his son running the UGTT?

CLEAR: Tamar went into the travel business because Tamar was always a little bit greasy, I have to tell you. He was a very slick guy. He is running Tunisian Travel in Nice, or maybe Marseilles, in France. I don't know who is actually controlling UGTT now. Our current labor colleagues would have to get it up to that. Ashour came out smelling like a rose because he was very honorable all the way through this imprisonment. He never renounced his country or Bourguiba or the democratic system or anything else. He was a very humble guy. He still has my Labrador dog.

Q: You had just left Tunis, as I recall, for your assignment in Washington. Do you want to tell us about your next assignment?

CLEAR: That's right. From Tunis we went back to Washington, where I'm going into the Human Rights Bureau. This would have been 1979-1980. I was in the Human Rights Bureau even before this. I came directly from Tunis to the Human Rights Bureau and worked there as their Middle Eastern expert for two years. Then, I went on detail to the Department of Labor as their Middle Eastern expert for a year where we signed some vocational agreements with the Saudis and the Gulf States. Then, in 1982, I went to the European labor job. That was a mixed bag. You were doing labor advising work for labor related issues, principally *Solidarność* (Solidarity) in Poland at the time of the European Bureau, but also the whole question of Soviet-style labor fronts and unions and that whole issue of how the U.S. government should relate to these labor fronts and whether they should at all.

Q: Shall we discuss the content of your work in the Human Rights Bureau?

CLEAR: The Human Rights Bureau dealt with new policy. This was Carter's initiative and Patt Derian was his chief lieutenant. Of course, it was extremely controversial. Patt was riding very high, and she was concentrating particularly on East Asian human rights violations, on Latin American human rights violations, as well as those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. She had kind of a study that differs to my area, which is the Middle East and South Asia, so I was able to take her on a trip out to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. We did the sub-continent tour and uncovered some very interesting facts and acted and interacted and reacted against the ambassadors on the scene out there because this policy did not have universal admiration. Let's put it that way. Patt started the annual human rights reporting dogma or doctrine. I had the Middle Eastern one, which was not easy because I had the Israeli, West Bank, Gaza area. This was a constant negotiation to try to get just exactly the right nuance in the language to describe what both the Palestinians were doing to the Israelis and what the Israelis were doing to the Palestinians and vice versa. It was quite a dog and pony show.

Now, of course, the human rights report has turned into a vast compendium every year. It is a big deal. The one thing about Patt Derian that I still remember is that, when she left office -- the same day that I left that job-- she did an exit interview with Scotty Reston of

the *New York Times*. She said the one thing that she regretted most is that she was not able to do more for the Palestinian Arabs. Of course, I pulled my hair out for about a week about that because I'd been precisely trying to get her on a Middle Eastern trip so that she could see for herself what the equities were on both sides of the issue and on both sides of the green line. It wasn't to be.

Others breathed a sigh of relief because, of course, she was a Democratic politician and she knew where her voter constituency lay, and it certainly wasn't with Palestinian-Americans. She felt safe enough to say that upon her exit from the position. The Human Rights Bureau was a very interesting time for me.

Q: Had the labor component developed at that time?

CLEAR: They were just starting to bring in workers' rights. As I recall, the first human rights report was in 1978, Carter's election, and in 1979 I got there. I really wrote the second human rights report on the Middle East, or edited it. I didn't write it. The worker rights and the U.N. component started in the 1980s, just when I was leaving the bureau. That's when they started bringing that element in, and it became very important actually. Kathy Lee Gifford was embroiled in this whole dispute about child workers doing her clothing line down in Honduras. That's a current issue that's going on right now. The whole effort of the human right report and bringing in worker rights was because there's child exploitation and unsafe conditions. All of these were in abundance.

You've seen them in your posts; I certainly saw them in Brazil. In fact, I saw one American firm that was an absolute horror show in terms of worker safety. It was unbelievable. This was a well-known tool company, and the conditions under which those tools were made were unbelievable in terms of fire hazard and fumes. This is what the worker rights were meant to address. That just came in when I was leaving the bureau. The human rights experience was very interesting indeed. I am proud of those early reports because they were the first, I thought, attempt at real strong, even-handed objectivity. The degree of grief that I got from the Middle Eastern Bureau was a token of how I'd cut. They've gotten progressively more and more tough as the years have gone by. They sure have.

Q: After the Human Rights Bureau, did you go to the Labor Department?

CLEAR: For a one-year bridge detail as their Middle Eastern advisor.

Q: Was it not the Middle Eastern side?

CLEAR: No, it was not the Middle Eastern side. I was over really with what they called DoLTAC, which was their Department of Labor Technical Advisory Corps or something. They were people who were sent out to beef up vocational training in various areas of the world. I went to Qatar, Kuwait, and to Saudi Arabia to sign new or continuing agreements in vocational training for the Gulf sheikdoms. There, again, my Arabic stood me in good stead. A couple of times, it really did well. Those programs were pretty well

received. I'm not sure the Saudi program trained as many Saudi mechanics as they did Yemenis. They were honorary Saudis for the intents and purposes of this program. I think the U.S. knew this at the time. But it worked, it was okay; but the point is they did train people in much needed skills.

From there, of course, I took the European labor job. This was in the 1982-1983 range as I recall.

Q: How did you get the European labor advisor's position?

CLEAR: The parameters of that were interesting. Maybe my friendship with Irving had something to do with it. I'm not quite sure about that because I don't know how many contenders there were for the job at the time. This was a two-headed job. One was doing the labor counseling for the bureau or any labor issues that came up and the other one was congressional relations. I did a lot of lobbying for the European Bureau on the Hill. I was really wearing two hats at the time. Sometimes the two intersected, of course, where I'd do labor lobbying on the Hill for the European Bureau, especially in terms of *Solidarność's* (Solidarity) needs. There were several issues that came up at the time.

The most prominent issue that I remember was one of representation and recognition of Communist block labor fronts. I won't call them labor unions because they're not unions, but labor fronts. The position that I'd always taken personally, and a lot of my colleagues agreed, was that we were, after all, not trade unionists, we were there to do the U.S. government's work. As such, we were political reporters. As such, we took our contacts where we found them. Very often a labor-front bureaucrat, even though he called himself a labor union leader-- which would drive the AFL-CIO up the wall-- could still be a very valuable contact and [provide] insight into what we were trying to do. Or maybe through that person we could reach somebody we really wanted to get. But we were precluded from doing that because of the high echelon politics between the leadership in the AFL-CIO and State Department. The fact was that we did not have anybody in what was then the Soviet Union, particularly in Russia. This was a neuralgic and continuing issue that bugged all of us. We had much better luck in Poland. We had no luck in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia happened strictly off our watch. We had no luck in Bulgaria, Romania, or any other key spots at all because we just didn't have anybody with the labor skills in those posts to understand what was happening. That was my opinion. A lot of people shared my opinion but there were many people who equally said, "No, you can't give these guys the luxury of representation because it implies approval."

Q: This would have been about 1982?

CLEAR: Yes, this was in the 1982-1983 range as I recall. I went from the European Bureau, as I remember it, directly to the AFL-CIO international staff.

Q: Before we go over to the AFL-CIO, do you want to describe your working relations with SIL and the other folks involved?

CLEAR: Yes. The way the bureaucracy worked at the time, we had five geographic labor advisors plus-- when we didn't yet have the INR-- the Intelligence Labor Advisory. That's what I became later but that was in the works. There were five geographies for each of the geographic regions, and I was the one represented here. Through SIL, they tried to coordinate global policy so that we wouldn't go in totally cross-wise to general principles of labor policy. SIL also took into consideration the ILO point of view, the international trade secretariats, and all the transnational organizations. As I recall, we had a fairly harmonious time with SIL. There were other times in other bureaus that we did not. At that moment, the European Bureau's point of view on these issues pretty well squared with SIL's.

Q: Did they square with John Warnock' point of view?

CLEAR: Yes. The only thing, again, was that Warnock was very hard line on the recognition issue. Of course, I was not. I was the other direction. It really was a moot point because the top policy of the government was, in fact, not to extend recognition or deal with these labor front types in any event. I thought that was a terrible mistake then, and I still think it is because, until the Berlin Wall fell, we didn't have anybody who knew anybody in any area of the workforce anywhere in Russia or the Soviet Union with the one exception of Poland. I thought that was a mistake. Even though the contacts might not have been up to the standards of purity of the high command in the AFL-CIO, I still thought that it was still a terrible mistake not to have had them. We're talking history, and that's history.

Q: Otherwise, the working relationship with SIL was good?

CLEAR: I think it was good at the time. I don't recall it otherwise, in fact, other than on this one single issue. Our relationships with the AFL-CIO were good, too. We got along quite well, actually. There were so many things we were doing together. We were working on the *Solidarność* problem, trying to prop them up and make sure that they were viable. We were trying to get through some conventions of the ILO and some of the worker rights conventions. The whole human rights/worker rights thing was in ferment at the time, if you remember. There was a lot of common interest going on between the government and the AFL-CIO.

Let's see. I had a very interesting thing going on with the Teamsters, too. I think the trusteeship started earlier. I think it was in the last year of my time in the European Bureau that they came under trusteeship. The Teamsters also had a fairly active international program, and they wanted to keep connections. We all got it cleared from top and bottom, and it was agreed that I would be a liaison. I would deal with the Teamster high command on issues that had to do with *Solidarność* and any other international things so that they would not be totally going off on their own hook. That's when I forged relationships with the Teamsters' leadership. Paul Sigmund was the government and international director. Karen Krensner ran the Latin American side. Of course, Jackie Presser was interested but Jackie Presser was on his last legs. We didn't know it at the time but Jackie was dying of cancer. I went to their convention out in Las

Vegas, which was in 1986. It was kind of a monitoring operation. They knew what I was up to and I knew what they were up to and everything was okay. That was a little side duty I had on top of everything else within the European Bureau.

Q: And that was within the coordination of SIL?

CLEAR: Yes, that was within the coordination of SIL. Everybody was surprised that we would have anything to do with it. No matter what you think of this union, they've got representation in Panama, South Korea, Canada, and two or three other foreign places. You can't ignore them. You really have to understand what they're doing so they don't go off half cocked and do something really strange. Now that they're under government trusteeship, I don't think there's anyway that they could deny us. In fact, they wanted a relationship. They wanted somebody they could talk to so it took a lot of bureaucratic to and fro but we got that. Those were the basic issues that were happening during those years.

Q: Was Paul Sigmund difficult to work with?

CLEAR: No, Paul remains a good friend of mine today. In fact, he's working with Ed Rawlins in Far East training. The two of them are dual senior partners in Rawlins International. Paul landed on his feet. He went from there to Gray, the PR guy. Gray sold off his interest in Hill & Knowlton, so Paul was in Hill & Knowlton. Paul and this New Hampshire legislator went over to Capitoline and formed a venture capital company for South Korea. Now, Paul and Ed Rawlins are dual partners in this other thing. It's an interesting history. Sigmund will surprise you; let's put it that way.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

CLEAR: I think on the European scene we never did get the representational thing. Of course, it became moot after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and I was long since gone. I don't think any of us in the Bureau at the time had any inkling of those pressures that were building in the Soviet Union. I didn't feel them. We didn't have anybody in the field who could correctly interpret them. It was almost like Iran played earlier. It's just like this thing exploded full bloom. It was dismaying to me. I think if we had had people on the ground that we would have foreseen the crumbling of the Soviet Union. From the European Bureau, nothing happened. Irving said, "Look, we'll take a detail on our international staff." They wanted me over there. Irving and Ambassador Jerry...what's his name? Wilson? My memory fails me. He was an IL honcho in international organizations. They engineered this detail because there never had been one before. They had never trusted any State type to get anywhere near that building before. Irving presented me to Lane Kirkland as a trade unionist who was on temporary detail to the Foreign Service. He said, "Really, he was just in the Foreign Service for awhile, he'll be back."

I went back over there and worked with Irving on several different projects and, of course, *Solidarność* was high among them. Irving played that card pretty close to his

vest. I did a lot of constituency work for the member unions. When they would have any kind of international problems, that was my baby. If they had a visa problem or if they had a humanitarian shipment that was being blocked by some bureaucrat, anything at all that had an international cast, I was the guy that they would call, and maybe I would untie it. Usually I could untie it, and sometimes I couldn't. Then I did a lot of lobbying, frankly, for the AFL-CIO on the Hill because Irving knew I already had Hill experience. I got to know Senator Orin Hatch and his committee very well and Kennedy, the education/labor. We did a lot of lobbying for the AFL-CIO. Maybe I shouldn't say that as a State Department officer. I was on detail, and I was a member of their staff, and I knew the people, so that's what was going on.

Q: Could we back up though? Could you tell us how you had experience before on the Hill?

CLEAR: Yes. I had been doing lobbying for the European Bureau on the Hill before. Being a member of the European staff that dealt both with labor matters and with Hill matters, I was on the Hill a great deal. I was there two or three times a week talking about, maybe a consular issue today, a labor issue tomorrow, and maybe Friday it would be a new human rights issue. Very often we worked on this project about the Gulag labor in the Soviet Union. I was the editor and author of that study. It was a big propaganda effort. It was a joint State Department and Hill effort to expose what was going on in the forced labor camps in the Gulag.

Q: That wasn't the first time it had been examined, was it?

CLEAR: Oh no, this was a continuing rolling thing. I guess I must have had edition seventeen or something like that. This consumed a lot of time and there were lobbying and coordination meetings on all those buzz words that you use. I got to know all those folks. You got to know people on the committee. Of course, Irving tapped right into that. He said, "Well, Jessie, since you know these guys, go ask them this and go do that and da da da." I also worked very closely with the regional organizations, FTY and AFIELD (African American Labor Center), the Asian American Free Labor Institute, and FTY was an umbrella free trade unionist …that did Europe at the time under Jimmy Kimbel. I did work a lot with the American Institute of Labor Development; that's the Latin American and the Caribbean. Those guys and I worked with ITSes. So anything that had an international spin on it that Mike Dobbs, the deputy, and Irving weren't handling directly, landed on my shoulders. It was a very interesting two-year detail. I enjoyed it tremendously. Of course, they perceived me as a trade unionist, which was true. They didn't think they were dealing with cookies and striped pants and all that crap. I guess I was probably uniquely fit for that particular detail, and it worked very well for us.

Q: Did you feel that you were the first of many or the exception to the rule?

CLEAR: Well, I hoped that I was the first of many but I may have been the last, like there's never going to be another one of them! I didn't make waves over there. It was like working in embassies. I got along very harmoniously with everybody, even the State

Department, oddly enough. It was amazing. I don't know what happened. Of course, the problem is that Irving then went from taking an international directorship after Tom Kahn died of AIDS.

They asked Irving to come back over from Paris and run the thing for a while, so he lived in the Mayflower Hotel for months on end. I am trying to remember the history. He and I left about the same time. I think Irving went back to Paris at that time to rejigger the Paris office. At one time he wanted me to leave the State Department and come in the ___ (AFL?) in Paris. Maybe foolishly and maybe not, I told him, "No dice." I had too much seniority in this outfit. That was in the cards at one point, too, but I think Irving went back over to Paris.

Q: During your time at the AFL-CIO, Tony Freeman was the SIL, wasn't he?

CLEAR: Yes. Actually, I paved the way for Tony to get that job. He was in Rome at that time as Labor Counselor, and I was pretty well up to speed on the issues that they would be asking him. It wasn't a confirmation job but it was almost a confirmation job. It had very heavy vetting, so I made a side trip over to Rome to talk to him about the job for a couple of days, at least my understanding of what it would be like.

He replaced Warnock. So we had several good sessions, and he came into the job. Tony was in there for a good period of the time that I was there.

Q: Did Irving ask you to go over to Rome? Did he put in a good word for him then?

CLEAR: No. I did that on my own. I was going on a private trip to Portugal anyway to see some friends of mine, so I decided to go over to see Tony to tell him about this job [And] I know that he passed muster, because he got the job. It would have had to go through Irving, and it would have had to go all the way up to Lane. Had Irving, Lane, or Tom Donahue chopped off on him, he wouldn't have made it. He must have had some pretty good support up there. I didn't get into how the sausage was made, I was just there to light the fire under the griddle.

The AFL-CIO was really a good experience. It was nice to be in a non-classified environment. That's always bothered me, you know. You are dealing with very sensitive stuff but it's not officially classified. You don't have those burdens over you all the time. You had a lot more autonomy and freedom. Who cleared my stuff was basically Irving. After a while who cleared my stuff was me. Irving said, "You write it and, if you screw up, we'll nail you, so consider it cleared unless I tell you otherwise." That was really mellow. When I was working with his authority I could get a hell of a lot done on the Hill, especially with these organizations. The NGOs and non-government organizations and private relief outfits and God knows who all were interested in our various issues. That was a good experience. Then I went over to the Intelligence Bureau, and they re-established, after an eleven-year hiatus, this position of labor intelligence analyst.

Q: This would have been in late 1986 or early 1987?

CLEAR: Yes, that's the way it works out because I studied Dutch before I went to Holland. I re-established this Labor Intelligence position, which I thought was really good. I was bureaucratically located in some kind of global issues hideaway nobody ever heard about. We started up a thing called the *Labor Intelligence Quarterly,* which was very well received by the people in the profession. It came out as classified, and it talked about some very sensitive issues. I don't know if it is still going on today but it was going on for several years after I left the job. The INR Bureau (Intelligence and Research), for those who aren't initiated on the tape, has a big degree of autonomy also. They do not follow the operational controls of the geographic bureaus, and they are fairly free to write as they see it. They don't tailor their reports to fit current policy. I saw one horrendous blowup between Elliott Abrams, the Assistant Secretary for Latin America, and Frank _____. This guy was the INR counterpoint. He was desk officer for Nicaragua and El Salvador, and his desk officer for Nicaragua and El Salvador had been writing stuff that was directly in counterpoint to the official policy on Contras and the Central American stuff that was going on. Talk about blood on the floor, I never saw such a fearsome bureaucratic fight in my life. It was amazing. I had a lot of respect for INR because they were very autonomous and very jealous of their separate charter. I enjoyed that.

I'd say their stuff and the Inspector General's stuff were the most popular documents in the building. You won't read it like this elsewhere. I'd try to contribute my bit on the labor side.

Q: What were the big labor issues at that point?

CLEAR: The whole Soviet thing was building up to a head. As I remember, I wrote a lot of stuff on Iron Curtain issues in that shop. There was the big ferment on worker exploitation in the ILO, so I was doing a hell of a lot on worker exploitation in the Third World. I think the bulk of my reporting was on those topics. There was Middle East labor related stuff. How can labor be part of this equation-- both on the Arab side and, to a moderate degree, the Israeli side? There was a lot of different ferment going on in the bureau. As I remember, worker exploitation was the flavor of the month when I was setting up that magazine. Obviously, the whole question of the Gulag, which was another form of extreme worker exploitation, was a big deal, too.

From there, it was Dutch language training and then on to The Netherlands. That would have been in 1988. It was March 1988 through late 1991. That was a two-hatted tour.

Q: You were labor attaché there?

CLEAR: I was labor attaché there and also narcotics policy coordinator. Both jobs were very interesting. When I got to Holland in March of 1988, this was the tail end of the deployment controversy, when we were deploying missiles all over Europe. The Netherlands was scheduled to take deployment in the next few months or so. The Dutch were extremely anti-American at the time, and they were being fomented by the FNV, which is the major labor union, the Socialist labor union in the country and to a lesser

degree by the CNV, the Christians-- both Catholic and Protestant. Again, I walked into a kind of fire storm.

What happened was that the deployment issue got diffused at the very last moment, and I don't exactly remember how that was done. It wasn't by anybody's brilliant diplomatic work at all. It was overtaken by events. I think the Dutch deployment was delayed and delayed for so long that finally the Berlin Wall fell. The deployment thing was very fierce.

The other big issue that was making American policy makers have headaches was the Green Issue, the environmental issue. That was a big deal and, of course, the most neuralgic issue of all that I was right in the middle of was Dutch narcotics policy. Frankly, even though it was a labor attaché job, I spent 65 to 70 percent of my time on narcotics policy and 30 percent, on labor issues. That was after the deployment issue had passed. That was just the way the priorities of the embassy were at the time. I happened to have agreed with them. I thought the Dutch narcotics policy was fascinating and unique. They had a great deal to say to inform the American policy, and it hadn't been sufficiently reported yet.

Q: Describe the policy in a nutshell.

CLEAR: In a nutshell, the Dutch policy decriminalizes narcotics. In other words, you are not treated as a criminal; you are treated as a public health case. The sale of hard narcotics, just as in any other country, is vigorously prohibited and prosecuted. The sale of hash, on the other hand-- hash oil or marijuana-- is closely regulated by the state. They had state outlets called hash bars or whatever. It would be just like a regular bar, like the Virginia Alcoholic Board Commission, for instance. You'd buy a certain quantity in a certain grade for your own retail use. In Amsterdam or all over the country, there'd be one or two or a dozen hash bars, depending on the size of the place. These would be under state regulation. The hard stuff was still sold underground on the black market just like it is here. The difference in The Netherlands is, if you were caught using narcotics, you were taken into mandatory treatment and given social programs. You were not incarcerated for use. If it was a retail quantity, you were not prosecuted. It's only if you were an obvious dealer with wholesale quantities that you were prosecuted.

By the way, The Netherlands has a very, very strong drug education and sex education program for Dutch kids, starting at about the fourth or fifth grade all the way through. This was part of their curriculum but they learned, not like here. They learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. They speak four languages when they graduate from high school. They speak fluently English, Dutch, and either German or French. They have to have three languages and an optional fourth. They do not slack on their academics but were taught all about the whole sex thing. They have an extremely low unmarried pregnancy rate, and their own addiction level in Holland never sees more than 3 percent of the population, never. The problem of the policy is that it is a magnet. It tends to bring in the addicts from Belgium, the United States, Britain, France, and the neighbors.

Q: Do they sell hash openly?

CLEAR: Yes. Exactly. It's a market produce. Of course, hash is not the problem because there is also a flourishing black market. Their enforcement isn't nearly as strong as it should be, and that's our criticism of the policy. It isn't nearly as strong on the enforcement side of hard narcotics as it should be because their own bureaucrats have mistaken their leniency with soft drugs and with the using population, and they extend it over to the dealing population. I think that's a basic mistake. There is still a great deal that we could learn from their policy. I spent a lot of time on doing narcotics analysis and raising hell with the people back here in CDC and the National Institute of Drugs. We'd have a constant stream of visitors from the Hill and from the bureaucracy. Of course, the first place they'd want me to take them was the drug neighborhoods of Amsterdam. They were doing field research, of course. It's hypocrisy, I tell you. On the labor issues, the FNV warmed up very well to me after they found out that I wasn't a mortal enemy on deployment which, again, was not even an issue. We got along very well, and I got along well with the Christians, too, the CNV.

I think the last trip I took in Holland that really strikes me was a NATO trip. It was wonderful. I took a mixed delegation of FNV, CNV, and one woman from the teachers' union. We did a NATO tour. This was in March or April of 1990. This was just six or seven months after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was absolutely delicious to see this because we had all been thrilled by what was going on in Germany, seeing this happen right before our eyes. We wired together this NATO tour, and we to Mons down in Belgium, to the NATO staff school south of Rome, and-- I can't remember all the different points we went to. The overriding impression all of us had was that here is a bunch of guys who have lost their mission. We talked to Belgian admirals, German generals, American colonels-- and God knows who all-- and they all were flopping like fish out of water because their *raison d'être* had been destroyed. Fold de Gap was a dream or a nightmare because it didn't exist anymore. The dust was still settling off the Berlin Wall, and they really didn't know what NATO was about, and their briefing sessions were hilarious. Their briefing sessions reflected their uncertainty on what it was all about. That was one of the highlights of my Dutch tour. That NATO trip was wonderful.

It was ironic that we were caught so by surprise when the actual bricks started falling in October 1989. I think that's awful that we didn't see it coming. I think if we had seen it coming, Don, we could have prepared the Russians for what was coming to them and how the transition would be very difficult. Maybe, we could have had some people in place in labor positions to help smooth the path from direct state control into this anarchy they now call buccaneer capitalism, which is running Russia. They never had an intermediary stage. They went right from one extreme to the other. I think that we could have provided an intermediary path, had we been prepared and seen this thing coming. Maybe it will still all shake out, right?

Q: Hopefully.

CLEAR: I left Holland in July 1992 and came back to the Pentagon tour. I came back to run the Transition Center for 18 months. I ran that show over there, which was very interesting. That's the outplacement service and pre-retirement training. That was an interesting tour.

Q: Did you follow Jim Mattson there?

CLEAR: No. Jim invited me over there. Jim was the director of the retirement division, and he wanted somebody to run the actual transition center. Jim, unfortunately, left office after about 18 months or so. His successor and I didn't exactly get along, to put it mildly. I took a curtailment and went over to the Political Military Bureau and did some odd jobs for them for about six months on the Defense Trade Advisory Council and some of these inter-agency things. This counterterrorism position over at the Pentagon arose, so I interviewed for it, and they said yes. They liked my INR experience or whatever. It worked very well. It was an excellent tour. It wasn't very labor related but it sure was exciting, let me tell you. Unfortunately, that business is on the increase not the decline.

Q: When did you retire?

CLEAR: I retired in September 1995. I retired right from the Pentagon billet. I don't think there was anything at State that could have topped it. We didn't want to go back overseas again because my wife had her own profession. She's an accountant, and our daughter, Rebecca, is very successful in the TV production business up in New York. Our son is sailing out of both Baltimore and New York as a chief electrician. I figure there's nothing I can do to top this, so I decided to take early retirement, like you did. It was the best thing I ever did. Now as an entrepreneur, it's a new world, new life. As a labor career, I wouldn't change it for the world. I must say that I was a total idiot. I didn't know there was such a thing until I was in the service for about a year and a half. Of course, the word does filter down to you after a while. You do what's right. I hope the Labor Corps survives and prospers.

Q: We all do. What about your relations with other groups, say USIA at the embassy?

CLEAR: Actually, USIA had an exchange program, and they were pretty well-funded. It didn't take me long to learn that. Very often I would get Labor people over to the States or bring labor types to my country under USIA auspices. That worked very nicely. There were some fractious moments with USIA but I don't remember the details. I think it was just a question of coordination and the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. On the average, the USIA and my shop always had pretty good relations. Joe Glazer, of course, was the dean of them all, the happy troubadour.

Q: How about your relations with the Agency over the years?

CLEAR: That's an interesting thing. In Latin America, I frankly thought they were a sewer. I've met some really fine people individually but, institutionally, I think the Agency was playing even more double and triple games than they were reputed to. An

example would be the coup against Allende in Chile. That had a great deal to do with southern Brazil at the time. I had all sorts of very widespread and deep contacts in the labor movement, which were being supported at the same time by their being on the other payroll. I was walking on top of the same rug that they were walking underneath on. This had to do with laundering money to facilitate the truck lockout in Chile. People called that a general strike but it was not a strike, it was a lockout.

In Chile, the truck owners association was not a union but an association. They were paid to lock the drivers out. Of course, the truck lines are the life line of Chile. They are much more important than the railroads or airlines in hauling the produce of the country. If you want to bring down Chile in a hurry, you stop the trucking.

Q: This was when you were in Sao Paulo?

CLEAR: Yes, Sao Paulo. It is reputed that the Agency laundered a hell of a lot of money down in the south exactly to achieve this lockout and, thereby, destabilize Allende. Of course, the Chileans took over with Allende personally, and we all know what happened. On the other hand, in the Middle East and North Africa, I had nothing buy high praise for the Agency because I happened to have been located at the primary source of breaking news all the time for two or three years on what was going on in the country. The stuff that I was reporting was almost invariably accurate. Sometimes I was led astray, too, but most of my stuff was very much on target. This was like breaking news, things that were going to happen the next day. Of course, this did not square with what the Ministry of the Interior, the Vice President of the country, and Bourguiba himself was telling our front office.

Of course, our front office got enraged with me rather than questioning their own sources. The Agency's paid reporting would come along two or three days later and would validate what I had been saying. I have a great deal to thank the Agency for in North Africa. In a way, they established my credibility. Of course, you never get thanked for this kind of stuff. No good deed goes unpunished, no evil goes unrewarded. I had the satisfaction that these guys saw it the same way that I did. I have to respect them in that area. They had some really top pros. I imagine everybody has the same experience. It depends on the personalities, and it depends on the peculiar circumstances at post. The Agency, I would give maybe a B- but, in the Middle East, I'd give them an A+. In Latin America, I'd give them a D-.

Q: Sounds like you worked for ambassadors that had the "don't make waves" philosophy.

CLEAR: Yes, actually, the ambassadors that I had, the ones that I got along best with, frankly, were political appointees.

Q: Was it because they understood the political dynamics?

CLEAR: Yes. The political appointees were much easier to work with and that turns the

conventional wisdom on its head. Ordinarily, they say, you get a career guy who really knows what's going on. But I found the career guys difficult, with one or two exceptions. . John Chat who was an SEC chairman before and Howard Wilkins who was the pizza king, both of them were tremendous ambassadors as far as I was concerned. Steve Bosworth in Tunis I thought was fine. He was a career guy, but he was a good guy. Mercifully, I was at the consulates instead of the embassy in Brazil. I really could speak directly to those guys. Bowdler must have liked his work because he gave me the commendation you heard about. You did find a certain degree of elitism among the political cadre, too. I definitely did find that. I think all of us have.

Q: Do you mean the Foreign Service political cadre?

CLEAR: Yes. It was true even though we were part of the politicals at every embassy except The Hague. In The Hague, the labor guy was part of the economic section. Ask me why? I have no idea. Maybe it was because of that narcotics component.

At any rate, I did find a certain degree of elitism in the political corps in dealing with labor because they, of course, would denigrate your sources and think that their conventional received wisdom was wisdom. Of course, I've never believed that at all.

Q: Who has to check their sources?

CLEAR: It doesn't square. Sometimes I would find their sources would outright lie to them. When I found my source outright lied to me, I'd say, "Oh, yes, I know this is not true." I reported that. I found that they were over protective of their sources too often. I think that's always been a very bad mistake because these guys are out there to burn you, too. If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog, right?

Q: It's true, at least in the political world.

CLEAR: I think, Don, you and I and our crowd were part of a unique bunch. First of all, we had bonding because of the New Delhi conferences. They occurred over many years so we got to know each other. We ordinarily wouldn't have known one another except just in passing but we got to see each other every year on the average. There would also be the regional conferences like the one we had in Brussels, and we had the one in Africa in Johannesburg. Because of different regional conferences, we did get together a lot more than I think other cadres in the Foreign Service did, and it really worked.

Q: Are there any observations you'd like to make in general about the Labor Attaché Corps or other aspects of your work?

CLEAR: We probably didn't appreciate Harold Davey at the time because we could never get a word in edgewise but Harold Davey was an absolutely indispensable man. He's the guy that glued this whole corps together, and he knew everybody and kept everybody in relation to everybody. Harold was just an absolute treasure and resource in this business for all the time he was in there. I guess Bill Blumfield will carry that one on.

Bill is well positioned because Bill was at his right hand and saw how it worked.

Then again, I have grave doubts about the Foreign Service, in general, let alone the Labor Corps, because of the short sighted-budget problems. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars for one fighter aircraft or for a bomber, and I have no problem with that at all. To run the entire Foreign Service establishment costs less than any one of those units. It just seems to me that, when you are on the forefront and when you have people who are trained to be the eyes and ears, you can know what's going on and maybe make better decisions. That's especially true in our business in worker rights. I've always been into larger manpower issues. That's why I liked the migration issue in Brazil. This is exactly what I was trained to do, to analyze where the people were coming from, why they were going there, how they perceived they were bettering their position, and how the country was affected.

I did graduate work in labor economics at LSU (Louisiana State University) but then I saw it first hand in Brazil. That was a real thrill because I had studied this academically, and here I was thrust right into the middle of one of the great internal migrations in history, which is the Brazilian internal migration that happens every time there's a drought up in the northeast. You get this vast flood of people. Of course, Brazil has transfer centers where they try to parcel people out to the coffee fields, and it was really a marvel to see. It's one of those rare times when you can bring your academic training to life and make it work. It was really great. I like to study that, and I think we're going to lose a dimension. State, itself, has always bemoaned the fact that it "doesn't have a domestic constituency." I think that's foolish. They just haven't bothered to build their natural one.

Q: What do you see as the natural constituency?

CLEAR: The natural constituency of the State Department should be the entire universe of people who are involved in global trade, and anybody who has ever gotten a visa or citizenship service. There are vast numbers of people the State Department could enlist and say, "Hey look, this is what we did for you guys. Why don't you lean on your congressman and let him understand that we don't do cookies, we don't do striped pants; it's not our thing. We're out there trying to prevent bad things from happening to you back home, or to help good things to happen to you back home. That's what we're out there for."

I think State has done an absolutely miserable job on the Hill. I was on the Hill for State so I think I know whereof I speak. One of the things that we do that I think is a terrible mistake is congressional travel facilitation. The way we do it, we bring nothing but contempt on ourselves. What we should do is say, "Hey, we're professionals. We want you congressmen and staffers to understand what is going on in this country. We will facilitate your meetings with these people. You want to talk to this group and that group, which are in opposition. Anything that's official and above board, I say write." When we descend to the level of travel agents and pants pressers, we do nothing but breed contempt. I think State management has made a terrible mistake in perpetuating that role

for us. That's not the role we should be taking with Congress.

Q: In other words, we should do only those things that are official business, then let them hire local travel agents?

CLEAR: Yes. You can use travel agents, American Express, or whatever. The very idea that we are toadying to their basic demands, I think, is demeaning. Then when we go up on the Hill looking for appropriations to hire one or two more labor attachés, they laugh. I think it's a very regrettable policy.

I think, too, that the dire state of organized labor is reflected in the labor attaché corps. I remember one memorable time that I got into a confrontation with Lane Kirkland in the full light of the video lights, and it was about organizing. I told him that they'd been on the outside of the movement, or at least on the fringe edges. A lot of us were very concerned with the fact, and this was when labor was 18 percent. Now it's down to 12 percent.

Of course, Lane said, "Well, we've got the most hostile employers on earth and that's not my job, that's for the constituent unions," and on and on. I just didn't find that was an acceptable answer. With labor being in the real trough of its existence, it is probably not hard to understand why the Labor Attaché Corps and, later, the attaché program was also in a pit. To put it optimistically, the only way it can go is up. It can only get better.

Q: Do you think there's much understanding on the Hill for the need to factor in labor and the social organizations in our overall analysis of what's going on?

CLEAR: Strangely enough, I found it in odd quarters. Orin Hatch, of all people, was one of the most knowledgeable and perceptive. He seems a hard right wing Mormon but that's only part of his story. He is extremely perceptive. He's one who can smell the way foreign political winds are blowing, which is rare. Arlen Specter is another one. There's basically a handful. You have a lot of know-nothings within the new freshman class but it may be that some of these freshmen will have to be cultivated. You have to have guys like me that go beat on the door and say, "Hey, do you want to talk about this issue?" and get to know them personally. That's what we do not do at State. That's what I did for the European Bureau and at AFL-CIO. You take that effort and multiply it by dozens of times. Obviously, the Labor Corps should do this. I think SIL should follow the congressional schedule like a book. If anything even smells like a labor or manpower issue, they ought to delegate either a traveling attaché from that country that's available or get one of the labor advisors or somebody else to get up on the Hill and talk to these people. They need to create an environment so that at least they know your face. They may not like you, but they'll know who you are.

Q: They'll see that you do have a point of view.

CLEAR: The need to know that you have a point of view and you are trying to help them. You're trying to give them a dimension that they may not understand. It may be a hostile

dimension. It may be some right-winger from Oklahoma but so what? The point is that you are giving him a new window that he hasn't looked through before. He may not like it and that's fine. But at least he's looked through it. I had one staff director, Chips Chester, of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Chips Chester said, "Jessie, why haven't you guys done this before? We really would have liked to have this kind of information." We were talking about Sri Lankan violence. I had just gotten back from a Sri Lankan trip, and I told him about the Tamils and the Sinhalese and all this stuff. He said, "You know, why don't you guys come up to tell us some more?" I said, "Well, what can I say?" I was invited up here, and I'm telling you the way it is. I just saw this; it just happened. This is not going to be a little deal; it's going to be a civil war. It's going to be a big deal, which, unfortunately, it became. It had been brewing for years but it never hit the press. Jaffna had been partitioned, and I had just gotten back from there. I had a friend that lived in Trincomalee up on the other coast. Hill people are very appreciative once you get up there and actually give them information in front of their face. That's the key. The State Department has got to build its constituency but that's the larger problem.

As far as Labor is concerned, it won't get far until the AFL-CIO can be moved out of its trough. A lot will probably depend on this year's election, November 1996. My God, time flies. Even with supposedly unreconstructed hard right-wing Republicans, you would be surprised that you can make hay with these guys. There are certain courses you are not going to move them on but that's fine. You disagree, say on right to work in a given state, but you can still agree on worker protection. You can still agree on internal migration. You can still agree on any one of a host of issues. You just have to put one issue aside and say, "Okay, fine. We don't get along on that one but we can still work together on these." My parting shot is that you have got to build a constituency. Of course, a lot of it is beyond our control. If the AFL-CIO just stays down in its morass and its swamp, I don't know if the Labor Corps can even survive. I'd hate like hell for it not to.

Q: If it doesn't stay, we'll have to invent some way of finding out what's going on in labor and related organizations abroad.

CLEAR: They can call it anything that they want, but the need is going to be there. They can take the same line and put it in a new bottle but it's still going to be the same line.

Q: If they don't factor this portion into the overall equation, they're going to get blind sided again and again.

CLEAR: I fear that's exactly what's been going on in China. We just passed Most Favored Nation on it, and I think Clinton made a terrible mistake on that. We passed Most Favored Nation for China and, at the same, time we're raising hell with everybody else about trading with Iran and Libya, which is a secondary boycott. But a secondary boycott is exactly what we campaigned against when it was against Israel. So where is your consistency, right? Never let the clammy, cold hand of consistency lay too heavy on your shoulder, right? I haven't lain awake nights thinking of these issues but some of them are neuralgic; they just stay with you. The representation thing bothered me for

years, and you can see now what happened because we didn't have labor attachés in Eastern Europe, or something like it. You don't have to call these guys labor attachés but there should be people with labor training who could dig into the permafrost in Russia and find out what the hell is really going on out there.

Q: Are there any final observations you'd like to make?

CLEAR: No. I think I'll just thank you for the opportunity.

Q: Thank you very much, Jessie, for agreeing to participate in our Labor Department Oral History Project.

CLEAR: Maybe history will look at us kinder than they do today.

End of interview