The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Labor Series

ANTHONY KERN

Interviewer: Morris Weisz
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is March 1, 1993. I'm seated with Tony Kern at his beautiful oceanside home in Ponce Inlet, Florida. We're going to go over Tony's career in the labor field but also cover some of his other work. And now I'd like to introduce Tony Kern. Tony, in these interviews we've begun by getting something on the social background of the persons being interviewed. How they came into the Service, what the nature of their family was, where they came from, etc. So will you describe where you came from?

KERN: Absolutely. I'm from immigrant parents. Both my father and mother immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1920's and, something that I've never mentioned to my consular colleagues in the Foreign Service, my mother was an illegal immigrant. She came over under a false name. One of her friends who had a visa number to come to the States decided at the last minute that she couldn't do it and my mother quickly took her name, jumped on a boat to join her fiancé who was working in the coal mines in Pennsylvania.

Q: Which country did they come from?

KERN: Yugoslavia. So that was the beginning. And I think undoubtedly my father's experience in the coal mines certainly set my mind-set in terms of being receptive to labor in general. He was on strike for many, many days, long days, when they were trying to establish a union in the coal fields in Western Pennsylvania. And I recall vividly the blackballing of the scab miners. The folks in that small town used to play bolino or boccie in Italian, and whenever one of the scab miners would come up and join them, they all dropped their balls and just walked off. I remember vividly to this day what that kind of blackballing and ostracism does.

Q: What you remember is your father speaking about it, I suppose.

KERN: Oh yes. The strikes and . . .

Q: That was in the hard-coal. . .

KERN: Soft coal in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Q: Oh it wasn't up in the hard-coal area then?

KERN: No. And that really, I think, set my being receptive to collective bargaining, to labor relations, or at least understanding why unions were formed, why people formed unions and why it was so important.

Q: You went to elementary and high school there?

KERN: Yes. In the little town of Strabane, that's where I went to elementary school, and the high school was Canonsburg High School next door.

Q: And then off to college?

KERN: I went off to college at Duquesne University and then Southeastern University.

Q: Your father didn't want you to enter the mines like he did?

KERN: No. (laughter) He took me into a mine. He worked at a number of mines and he took me to the one which was least mechanized. . . It still had mules pulling the coal carts. It was amazing. It was the Banefield Mine. He took me into one of these coal cars, maybe fifty yards in. And it was dark and damp. He didn't speak English very well, but he made his point.

Q: When would this have been?

KERN: Mid to late 1930s. Somewhere in that time frame.

Q: When were you born?

KERN: 1932. The miners then were still wearing the carbide lamps.

Q: That was an interesting adventure for a young person.

KERN: It was. It was a lesson.

Q: Did your father ever say anything about not wanting you to go into the mines or wanting you to go into the mines, one way or the other?

KERN: No, no. He spoke very broken English and I'm sure he felt very uncomfortable trying to explain it, and I only knew fragments of Slovenian, so there wasn't a very effective communication. I think the point he was making, though, by taking me into that little coal cart was "Don't do this."

Q: That's very interesting. You went off to college then? He wanted you to go to college, or was it a rejection of your parents that you wanted to go to college?

KERN: No, when I went to college, my father had died. I was in the [military] service, and I was in Japan and I had come back.
Q: Oh, I see. So you went on the G.I. Bill?

KERN: That's correct. I met my wife Joan in Japan; she was a civilian with the Department of Army. We got married in Tokyo. We were the point of great celebration when we went

to the hospital for our blood tests and everything else. All of the nurses were elated to see two Americans getting married. (laughter)

And then from there we came back to Washington. I went to school in Washington. I always had, when I was a little kid in this little coal-mining town, this desire about the world. I didn't know the Foreign Service; I didn't know that term, but I knew there was something called the State Department in a distant place called Washington D.C. And I used to keep manila folders with little magazine articles on countries around the world.

Q: Really! That's interesting

KERN: I had them in my folders and I knew that if this place called the State Department had a system like mine, they would be able to solve all the problems. (laughter) So I had this fantastic desire about the world. We came back and I got discharged.

Q: Before we get there, you went to Duquesne and got a degree there?

KERN: No. I got the degree at Southeastern University in Washington, D.C.

Q: In Washington. What degree?

KERN: It was in Business Administration. I was working two jobs. I was working at a lithographic plant in Rockville, going to school and on the weekends I was working at the drug store. Sort of keeping things together. And the idea of the Foreign Service sort of vanished.

Q: Was your mother still living at this point?

KERN: Yes. In Strabane. Then I got wrapped up. We had children and the idea of this State Department thing sort of disappeared. And I got caught up in another career. I started working with the National Security Agency and eventually the Defense Intelligence Agency. And then I went over to the Civil Service Commission which is now the Office of Personnel Management. There I was teaching a lot of personnel management programs and also just at that time the Labor Program was starting for Civil Service or Federal employees, and I started teaching the labor relations program for federal employees.

Q: In the Civil Service Commission?

KERN: That's right, the Civil Service Commission.

Q: Was this the one that gave college credit to people, or was this totally internal to the Civil Service Commission?
KERN: No, this was government-wide. We conducted training programs in many federal agencies. Basically it was management training, though. And at that point, we were starting

the labor relations program in the federal service. I think it was Kennedy's executive order which was the first one.

Q: Yes, which was written by Pat Moynihan.

KERN: Oh really? I didn't know that.

Q: A committee headed by Pat Moynihan on which I was a representative of our office.

KERN: The circle comes around! (laughter)

Q: Yes.

KERN: I didn't know that.

Q: And incidentally in my request for an interview with Pat, I listed what I wanted him to cover and this was one of the things. Of course, that executive order was then the [model] for the executive order that Nixon issued for the Foreign Service.

KERN: Yes, that's right.

Q: So that would have been the early 1960s.

KERN: That's correct.

Q: And then you took the Foreign Service exam and passed it?

KERN: No, I was a lateral entrant. Roughly sometime in the early 1970s, I guess, the State Department had its own executive order. They knew nothing about labor relations and they asked the Civil Service Commission if they could send someone over to train them in labor relations.

Q: Was this after the election was held? In about September, October, 1972, we had the election between the AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees] and the AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] to select the collective bargaining agent.

KERN: Right. I think it was very close to that time period. And I conducted a series of training programs at the State Department. Alex Davit was in the Director General's office at that time. I think it was teaching a week, maybe two weeks, and at the end of it, Davit asked me if I would consider transferring to the Foreign Service. And this was like a dream coming true. It was absolutely amazing. I hadn't thought about it.

Q: Did you still have your folders to tell us what to do?
KERN: Yes. (laughter) And I gave it some hard thought, and said "yes." So I took it. I transferred over.

Q: To what degree was your wife involved in the decision to make this change? What was she doing at the time?

KERN: Joan was taking care of our two kids. But, yes, we discussed it extensively.

Q: They were young at the time?

KERN: Oh yes, they were young children. And we discussed my going with the Foreign Service, because I was aware of the selection procedures; I was aware of the time frames that you had to meet from grade to grade and so forth. And that was an issue of concern. A continuity of income was very important to us naturally.

Q: But she wasn't working, so it wasn't a question of one person giving up a job.

KERN: No, I was the sole bread winner, so it was a difficult decision.

Q: *What was the reaction about leaving the country with kids and those problems associated with it? Any discussion of that?*

KERN: Yes, there was a discussion, but not of immediate concern, because when Davit hired me, he asked me if I would commit myself to staying in the Department for at least five to eight years and not try any overseas assignments. And that worked out very well because our kids were still young at that point. So that wasn't a great concern. The big concern was the potential loss of income if I got selected out. But we decided to go ahead with it and it turned out very well. Both my wife and I enjoyed the time in the Foreign Service tremendously.

Q: This brings us through you work in the State Department in collective bargaining. Your first tour?

KERN: The first tour was Regional Labor Attaché for the Caribbean. I was, in fact, recruited for that job by John Warnock. John and I were sitting down in the cafeteria and I think we were talking about grievance issues. I think John may have been in the Department's formal grievance system.

Q: Oh, yes! I think he was an assistant to the man in charge of the whole grievance procedure.

KERN: That's right, Simkin.

Q: [Simkin was] a wonderful collective bargaining expert.

KERN: Yes. That was it. We were just talking grievance issues, and John happened to ask, "Would you be interested in taking the Labor Attaché assignment?" I jumped at that, and he

said, "We had this place called Bridgetown," and he described it and it sounded very nice. And that evening I came home and said, "Sweet, would you like to go to Bridgetown?" And she said, "Why should we go to Connecticut?" (laughter)

Q: That's great.

KERN: And then I explained to her that it's in the lovely Caribbean and she became very ecstatic about this possibility.

Q: That's great. What training did you have for that assignment?

KERN: I did some off and on training. I talked to a number of people at the Labor Department and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

Q: This would have been 1979, 1980, 1981, something like that?

KERN: Yes, right. My assignment started in 1981. The other problem we had which sort of limited the amount of formal training I had was that we were just in the throes of passing the new Foreign Service Act of 1981, and I was working very closely with Harry Barnes and Ben Read to finish that. The two key chapters that I got involved in were the labor relations segment and the Foreign Service grievance segment as well. So it was about 1979 or 1980. So the first assignment was Regional Labor Attaché for the Caribbean. We took off and wound up in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Q: But I asked you about the training. You got literally no training other than what you. . .

KERN: No. It was a combination of my previous labor experience at the Civil Service Commission. I did have a fair amount of knowledge. Then I took a few courses at FSI [Foreign Service Institute], sat in on some courses. I had a number of meetings with the folks at the Labor Department in the various bureaus.

Q: That's when I first met you. I was doing some work for them.

KERN: That's right.

Q: But as for classes or the Harvard program or the summer program, none of that did you do?

KERN: No. I sort of walked into it. What I could have used was not so much labor training; I think I picked that up quite well. And I met enough of the folks at the AFL-CIO and Bill Doherty naturally and AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development], so that I felt comfortable about my labor knowledge. What I could have used was information on the functions of a reporting officer at the embassy. So when I walked into the embassy, I wasn't sure what they were looking for and what I was supposed to do, so there was kind of an awkward period of adjustment there. But that came along fairly quickly.

Q: Before you went to Bridgetown. . . I want to get some details obviously of what you did in Bridgetown. But before you got there, you didn't have formal training in any of the FSI [Foreign Service Institute] courses, did you?

KERN: Yes. I took the area studies course over there.

Q: The area studies course. No labor studies.

KERN: No labor. That's where I spent the classroom time.

Q: So in effect your classroom experience did not include anything of what we call "labor training," that is, the course work.

KERN: That's correct.

Q: And it involved your absorbing from individual conferences knowledge of people, discussions, etc. What about the field of labor? Had you already taken a labor course in business management, getting your business degree? A labor relations course?

KERN: Yes. I had a labor relations course.

Q: Oh, so you did have some academic [training]?

KERN: That's correct. And remember, when I was with the Civil Service Commission, I was with the Personnel Management Training Center, but shortly thereafter we created the Labor Relations Training Center and I was Associate Director there.

Q: That's right. Did you know Tony Ingrassia?

KERN: Absolutely. Tony was the kingpin.

Q: Oh yes. He was the guy who was representing Civil Service when I was running the election process. Very impressive guy I thought.

KERN: Absolutely.

Q: So you had the background. It's not the typical Labor Attaché training program, but rather an absorption from the other jobs you had and your other education.

KERN: That's correct. And I think that the other unusual aspect is that I came into the labor program from the management ranks as opposed to academic or the trade union movement.

Q: Then you arrive in Bridgetown. What was the reaction of the Embassy? Had there been a predecessor?

KERN: Yes. Don Knight.

Q: Oh yes!

KERN: Remember Don? Don was the first Regional Labor Attaché and he was appointed after a study conducted by Phil Habib on the importance of the Caribbean to our foreign policy. So Don was the first Labor Attaché there.

Q: So in effect there was no problem of selling the Embassy on the job.

KERN: There was. I'd been there no more than a month and President Reagan at that time was making a big pitch to cut back federal employees and federal staffing. We had a Chargé there, Jennings Randolph, I believe, of the Virginia Randolphs.

Q: The son of Jennings Randolph.

KERN: Right. And he called me in the office and he said, "Tony, it's nothing personal, but I'm recommending that the Labor Attaché position be abolished." (laughter)

Q: Make your reservation home, please.

KERN: That's right. I said, "What's going on?"

Q: He was a DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. Was he a career DCM?

KERN: Yes, he was. At the time, Randolph was the Chargé, during the transition to a new ambassadorial appointment.

Q: Did he give nepotism a good name or a bad name? If you're willing to say.

KERN: I would say probably a *bad* name. He seemed to be hyperactive, hypersensitive to everything that was going on. Perhaps he had noble ambitions to become an ambassador. He wanted everything to be right. So that was my real introduction to the Labor Attaché function, [with Randolph] saying, "You're a nice guy, but we don't need the function."

Q: In going over these experiences of Labor Attachés, I find that so much of the value of the product of the Labor Attaché is based on the attitude of his Ambassador and in this case I gather when they tried to abolish the job. You were there literally less than a couple of months or something?

KERN: That's correct.

Q: Had you settled in a house yet?

KERN: Yes, a beautiful house. It was sitting up on a ridge overlooking the Caribbean.
Q: Was it the house assigned to the Labor Attaché or just an ordinary embassy house?

KERN: It was a rental. We had no embassy houses there in Barbados. But Randolph left, I would say, within a month, and a political appointee came in, Milan Bish.

Q: As the DCM?

KERN: No, as the Ambassador.

Q: Randolph had been the DCM or the Ambassador?

KERN: He was the DCM, the Charge.

Q: Oh, the Charge, DCM, career. In other words, he left before you did!

KERN: That's right. (laughter) And I said to myself that this was a nice change for me. And in came Milan Bish, who was a very hard worker for the Reagan campaign in Nebraska. This was his reward. He came to Barbados not knowing anything about the Foreign Service or diplomatic activities. I guess he'd been there about a week and was making his rounds, meeting everybody on the Embassy staff, when he saw the sign on my door which said, "Labor Attaché," and he came in. A very nice gentleman. He said, "You know, Tony, where I come from, we think labor people are a bunch of Commies." And I said to myself, "Ah hell, this is going to be sheer hell for three years."

But gradually I got to talk to him. He was very receptive, very open and what really sold him was the fact that I gave him the story about U.S. labor and its position concerning communism and I made it very clear that the American Labor Movement was the most anti-communist organization in the entire country. After that discussion, he became very receptive to the labor function. He held functions for Labor Day celebrations, for example. And as he traveled through the islands, he always made a point of stopping to call on the labor movement people.

Q: Did he take you with him?

KERN: No, we never had to go together. And he worked out very well. He was very open. We had a Labor Day reception at the Residence which he hosted and Bill Doherty was there. Bill was handing out the AFL-CIO pins and, you know Bill, he went up to the Ambassador and pinned it his lapel. Ambassador Bish respond by saying, "My God, don't let anybody back in Nebraska know about this!" (laughter) He was a very good-hearted individual. He worked very hard.

Q: Well, he sounds like some of the people, of which there were quite a number, of the unsympathetic people to begin with who began to understand the value and I suppose you

would have to, whether you wanted to or not, take some credit for that because you exposed him to it.

KERN: That's correct. And he was very open and listened very carefully and absorbed it all. I had great admiration for the man.

Q: What did the job of the Labor Attaché consist of from your point of view? The trade union situation was what at the time?

KERN: Very active. Keep in mind that these are small societies on these islands and any kind of organized entity has a very strong impact. Throughout the Caribbean historically the independence leadership came from the trade union ranks. Tom Adams in Barbados came out of the Barbados Worker's Union. Vera Beard lead the labor movement in Antigua. Same thing in St. Kitts. On virtually every island in the Caribbean the independence leadership came out of the trade union movement. So it was very important.

Q: Characteristic of many of the British colonies and some of the others too..

KERN: That's true. They had that important role to play.

Q: Was there a Labor Government there at the time?

KERN: Barbados Labor Party, yes, which was the party set up by Tom Adams, the former trade union leader. The same thing in Antigua.

Q: They were in power.

KERN: That's correct.

Q: And the opposition? Was it conservative or what?

KERN: Moderately conservative. There weren't any great philosophical differences that I could see there.

Q: But none of the trade unionists were associated with the other party?

KERN: Initially they were loyal to the Barbados Labor Party. However, during the mid-1960s, the Barbados Workers Union switched to the Democratic Labor Party. A number of the trade union leaders in Barbados were members of the Parliament. This was true throughout the islands. This also held true in St. Kitts, Antigua, certainly in Jamaica where we had, when I was there, a very, very bitter election between Manley and Edward Seaga. At least 700 people died in those preliminary efforts before the election. There was a split between two trade union movements, the Bustamante Trade Union Movement (BTUM) and the National Workers Union (NWU).

Q: The conservative one.

KERN: The BTUM supported Seaga. But again this was the lineage of the original political movement. And then the opposition which supported Manley was the National Workers Union. I recall traveling to Kingston and visiting both of the headquarters and both were built like fortresses - huge stone walls about fifteen feet tall, wrought-iron gates you couldn't get into unless you barreled your way through with a truck. So they were in a state of siege. That reflected the kind of the political importance [of labor] throughout the islands.

We had strikes in St. Lucia, for example, by the trade union movement that brought down the government. The Government in St Lucia was known to be one of the more corrupt governments at that time. The trade union movement called a general strike, held on, and the government collapsed. There was an interim government where the trade unionists were appointed to various ministries and then, I think, within 90 days they had national elections and a conservative prime minister was elected.

Q: Now the scope of your responsibility was regional. Did your Ambassador cover more of the countries than just Barbados?

KERN: No. At that point, I had a very, very broad grid. I covered the entire Caribbean from Guyana and Suriname. . . .

Q: So in effect you worked for an Ambassador, who wasn't your supervisor in much of what you did?

KERN: That's true, because I had four other supervisors; the Ambassador in Jamaica, another one in Trinidad, one in Suriname and one in Guyana.

Q: And how did that work out?

KERN: Fairly well. They came in with their responses for my EERs [Employee Evaluation Report]. That worked out all right. And I think I managed to space my activity in a clearly equitable manner, not in terms of sharing time equally but trying to put time where it was required. For example, if elections were coming up I would schedule my travel to coincide with elections throughout the islands.

Q: Who governed your travel? How did you get paid for your travel? Did it come out of one pocket or did you. . .

KERN: This was a rarity and I don't think it ever happened again. I had a central travel budget which was funded out of the ARA Bureau. It was roughly $20,000 and I came within $3,000 each year of spending that amount. So I was on the road constantly. But it was a fantastic assignment.

Q: Was your entertainment budget similarly related to your travel?

KERN: Yes. It was all centrally funded.

Q: Centrally funded. So that your Ambassador in Barbados did not have, in effect, any control over that. He couldn't shift some of your entertainment or travel funds to his own?

KERN: Yes, [that is correct].

Q: You're right. It was a unique situation, as far as I know. But there was no conflict among the various embassies as to your coming or not coming?

KERN: No. It worked out very, very smoothly. They were very happy to see me, very receptive, looked forward to my arriving there.

Q: Were the other ambassadors all political [appointees]?

KERN: Let's see, let me think about it. No, the other three or four were career ambassadors. Let me give you an example of Suriname which was at that time initially still in civilian hands. And keep in mind Suriname was a former Dutch colony. Shortly after I got down there the sergeants of the Suriname Army wanted to have a union just like their Dutch counterparts. The government kept rebuffing them, told them this was inappropriate. A number of them seized a little gun boat and fired on the police station right there at the dockside and for some crazy reason the entire government collapsed. They didn't put up a fight; they didn't resist; they just collapsed. And I will always remember the comment of that sergeant who said, "All we wanted was a union and we got a country instead." (laughter)

Q: That's fascinating.

KERN: And they continued to rule. They still are. Right now they have a civilian government which basically is a front, and General Bouterse, who was a sergeant at that time, is running the government from behind the scenes. But Bouterse proceeded, unfortunately, to butcher the trade union leaders, especially the most prominent one who lead the democratic movement there. That was Cyril Dahl of De Motherbund, the Mother Union in Dutch. Cyril was a profound and public advocate of returning the country to democratic rule. He was so vocal about it, that it resulted in his unfortunate ending. Just to make it worse, not only did they kill the man, they also dismembered him. It was just a horrible, horrible scene.

Q: Oh my. You weren't visiting at that particular time, [were you]? You heard about it and read about it?

KERN: I learned about it shortly after it happened. The country literally closed down and the only information we were getting [was from] the trade unionists who were escaping

over the border into Guyana and making their way back to Barbados, which was the headquarters for the Caribbean Labor Congress. I was talking to these folks as they came to Barbados and relaying that information back to Washington. For about the first month or six weeks of that military takeover, they were the only source of information about the developments in the country.

Q: You served the entire three-year period?

KERN: Yes, 1981 to 1983.

Q: And what special problems did you work on with respect to two other aspects, not only the diplomatic reporting side, but what about AID and USIA? Any activity that you sponsored or were a part of?

KERN: We did a number of Amparts [American Participant] programs where we had folks coming down, but we were also able to get a number of Caribbean trade union leaders back to the States on these month-long programs, so that worked out very well. USIA and AID were very cooperative in the Caribbean.

Q: Did either of them have labor officers there?

KERN: No.

Q: So you in effect. . . . Did you have it on paper, or were you just acting as a person who tried to get Amparts and visitors' programs working?

KERN: It wasn't on paper. It was just my initiative, I guess, and their receptivity, so it worked out very well.

Q: Who were the backstoppers for your State Department, AID and information work to the extent that you were able to do some? Your backstopper at State obviously was the ARA Labor Advisor at that time.

KERN: I've forgotten the name. From there he went to Rome as Labor Attaché.

Q: Gwynn?

KERN: No, it wasn't Gwynn. It'll come to mind.

Q: Well if it comes to mind, tell us about it.

KERN: I'll inject it later.

Q: Did you get instructions from Washington or you were just sort of a lone operator?

KERN: Really it was free-lancing. Well, I did initially. I got some instructions from the ARA Labor Advisor sometime in the first month. He had come down to the Caribbean just going through the islands visiting. He sat down with me at some point and he said, "Listen, I don't need to know every time the Coca Cola plant goes out on strike." (laughter) I was really reporting every little thing that was happening and not being too discriminating in what I was reporting. But that was the extent of the advice I had.

Q: Of course, if you didn't report it and the Coca Cola headquarters raised hell, you would have heard about it. So it probably was better just to have it on paper.

KERN: Well, the interaction with the employers there was kind of amusing in some cases. For example, Intel had a very large plant in Barbados with a large chain link fence around it. I tried repeatedly to get in and talk with the manager. I was calling up in advance saying, "I'm the Labor Attaché, the Embassy representative, and I'd like to come in to talk to you to see what's going on." I was never successful in getting into Intel. One day my wife Joan was at a party mixing and mingling and met a woman who asked, "What does your husband do?" Joan said, "Well, my husband's the Embassy Labor Attaché." And the woman said, "Oh, that's the man my husband won't meet with!" (laughter) She was married to the gentleman from Intel of course.

Q: Was this guy a special labor relations type or just the head of Intel?

KERN: No, he was the head of Intel. The Barbados's Workers' Union couldn't organize the plant. They couldn't get in the door. Another amusing event in Barbados involved an American plant which employed a lot of women assembling little girls' dresses. The manager really didn't have much time for me, although he did see me. It was kind of a strained relationship until one month I was sitting in my office and I had a phone call from him in a state of panic. He said, "The women are outside and they've threatened to do bad things to me, if I step out of the plant and I need help." (laughter)

Q: That's usually the time people come to the Embassy.

KERN: That's right. I said, "What's going on?" He said, "Well they're screaming and yelling and calling me names. I need help!" So I said, "All right. Sit tight and let me find out what's going on." I called the Barbados Workers' Union to find out and the union rep said, "Yes, the ladies went on strike, and I have to take some of the blame, because I really haven't been following the developments at the plant very carefully." I said, "Well, the manager is calling and needs help. What do you think I should tell him?" He thought a little while and said, "Call him back and tell him to give the chairs back." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "The clown took all the chairs away from the women feeling that this would make them more efficient. By standing up, they're going to sew faster." (laughter) So I called him back and I told him, "Just give the women back their chairs," and he did that and the strike was over. Isn't that amazing, absolutely astounding.

Q: Absolutely. And how frequently those things happen. Essentially what he objected to was not that they didn't like the idea of standing up. What he was objecting to was the challenge to his authority.

KERN: Exactly.

Q: That's amazing. Did you get involved in other strikes?

KERN: Only in reporting strikes. There was a police strike in St. Vincent. It was like CNN today. I was doing spot reporting over the phone to the Embassy..
Q: It sounds as though you had an enjoyable time. What about the backstopper [Area Labor Advisor] at the Labor Department?

KERN: That was Peter Accolla.

Q: Peter Accolla, right. What was your relationship with the Department if at all?

KERN: Really very little. Frankly, I didn't know they existed in terms of anything that I was receiving in the way of advice or guidance or what they wanted.

Q: What about your annual labor report? Did you file it?

KERN: Yes, I filed it, but there was no guidance, no suggestions as to what to do.

Q: Did you get an acknowledgment of it?

KERN: No, I don't recall even getting an acknowledgment.

Q: I should tell you that the reason I'm going into that is the whole problem of the Labor Department complaining that they don't get enough information and the State Department people saying there's no flow back and forth. I was wondering if you had any comment on that?

KERN: I think that was true of my situation. I really didn't get any guidance.

Q: Yes, in other fields there is.

KERN: The only time I ever received a request was to update the Labor Department's annual Social Security report.

Q: That was not from the Labor Department as much as from HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare] or HHS [Department of Health and Human Services], whatever they called it. What was your relation with HHS? Did they send a man out or were they so satisfied with your social security [reports] that they never sent anyone?

KERN: They never sent anyone out.

Q: They sent somebody out to India once because it's such a large country that they wanted to get. . . And what about the backstopping with the USIA, your relations on the IVP [International Visitors Program] and the AMPARTS [American Participants Program?

KERN: I worked it all out at the Embassy level with the USIS offices. There was really no interaction with the folks back in Washington.

Q: And lastly the relations with Doherty and AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development, AFL-CIO]? What about that?
KERN: Oh, fantastic. I have always enjoyed [AIFLD Executive Director] Bill Doherty. I was frankly amazed at the man's knowledge of political developments throughout the Caribbean. I was subsequently in the ARA Bureau as Labor Advisor, so I had an even better feel for their activities.

Q: How about the other members of his staff? Did he have one who was specializing in your area?

KERN: Mike Donovan. Yes, let me tell you about that. Mike Donovan was the AIFLD representative in Barbados when I was there. This was early in the Reagan Administration, and he [Reagan] established the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). This was an attempt to open up trade to the Caribbean nations. The AFL-CIO was opposed to it naturally and argued strongly against it. But Congressman Rostenkowski, who headed up the Ways and Means Committee, brought his Committee down to Barbados with the avowed statement that he wasn't going to take any action on the CBI until he heard from the trade union movement in the Caribbean. Now the Embassy had no money. I went and talked with Mike Donovan and I asked Mike if AIFLD could find the money to bring some of the trade unions in for this meeting with Rostenkowski and, keep in mind they were opposed to the CBI. But since their Embassy made the request, Donovan and AIFLD responded. We had trade unionists from throughout the eastern Caribbean and Jamaica who came to meet with the [Ways and Means] Committee. It was very formal. They provided testimony to the committee members. All the trade unionists said, "yes," that they could take care of their people, that they had strong unions and that the Congressmen should not to be concerned that they were going to be steam-rolled. So I think that was a fairly decisive moment in terms of passing the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

Q: That's very interesting. I'll go over the questionnaire about other relationships in this first assignment of yours, but what do you think were the limitations of what you could do? Were they budgetary or functional? Did you feel limited in any particular respect? Or did you feel that it was an assignment in which you were able to do whatever you wanted to do? There were no limitations placed upon you. You know what the problem is. Many Labor Attachés feel they could have done more if this had happened.

KERN: No, I think that in terms of my ability to do things, there were no real limitations at the Embassy level. Where the limitations came was in the availability of programs in Washington. For example, [with] the International Visitors Program, I could probably have used twice the number of slots. That was a real constraint that I ran into.

Q: What sort of difficulties, if any, did you get into in selecting people to get those spots or similarly in attracting people to be AMPARTS? How did they feel with respect to the IVP programs? How were the international visitors selected? Did you select them? Did the unions help you select them? Was there competition among the unions? Were there some people who felt as though others should have gone instead of the ones selected?

KERN: I didn't notice any bitterness among the unions, but I did work in conjunction with the AIFLD representative Mike Donovan at that time, and Rob Torres prior to him, and also with the Caribbean Congress of Labor in selecting candidates. Fortunately, because I was able to travel so extensively, I got to know fairly well the people that were being nominated. As far as I could determine, none of them were losers and none of these were any kind of political pay-offs. They seemed to be hard-working trade unionists who would benefit from the program.

Q: Did you feel, or did you not, because the experience is different in different countries, that you had to make a concession with respect to taking one person because if you wanted another, or was there no such balancing thing?

KERN: No, there was no balancing.

Q: How I envy you!

KERN: I know. I agree. It was a real consensus. We all sat down. We had names and everybody knew the people who were being nominated so it worked out very well.

Q: That's wonderful.

KERN: Yes, as I said, it was a tremendous assignment.

Q: Well okay, is there anything else you'd like to say about that assignment before we proceed to your coming home?

KERN: No, those were the highlights of it.

Q: Family enjoyed it? Did you have the kids down?

KERN: No. The kids came down periodically. Joan enjoyed it tremendously. She's a natural beach bum.

Q: Did the children come in between school assignments? Were they going to school here?

KERN: Yes, they were here in the States.

Q: There was no American school there.

KERN: No, no, by that time Tony was in college, so they weren't youngsters at that point.

Q: Were your children affected in their selection of colleges and types of education by your service at all?

KERN: No. Leslie decided to be a teacher. I tried to talk her out of that years ago, but I think she's a natural born teacher. And Tony wanted to get into telecommunications which he did.

Q: That's interesting. Now you finished your assignment there. A full three-year tour with one home leave in between, or none?

KERN: None.

Q: And then you went home and what happened?

KERN: At that time Tony Freeman was selected to be the Special Assistant [to the Secretary and Coordinator International Labor Affairs (S/IL)]. He was looking for someone to function as his deputy. I received a call down in Barbados saying would I be interested? I said, "Sure." Actually I was more interested in Kenya, but that one got away for some reason. Oh that's interesting. I applied for the Labor Attaché job in Kenya and I didn't get it, much to my disappointment. Then some years later I happened to run across the individual who was assigned to the post at the time I was making my bid and he explained what happened. He said I was too senior, that the other officers in the Embassy were concerned that my rank at that time would cause problems.

Q: What was your rank?

KERN: I was an 0-1 [Foreign Service Officer, Class One].

Q: Oh, I see. I suppose the Political Counselor felt as though you. . .

KERN: That was it. I would out-rank him.

Q: Could you guess why I guessed that?

KERN: Why? You were in the same situation.

Q: Of course. But that effort was unsuccessful in my case, because [Ambassador to India Chester] Bowles wanted an FSO -1 [Foreign Service Officer Class One]. What is [the current equivalent of] a 1? A minister counselor, I guess.

KERN: Yes.

Q: He [Bowles] wanted somebody at that rank to take the first [labor] counselorship [at the Embassy in New Delhi]. That was too bad [that you didn't get the assignment to Kenya]. So they got a more junior Labor Attaché?

KERN: Yes, and I wound up being Tony Freeman's deputy [in S/IL].

Q: Tony's deputy, which was an interesting assignment.

KERN: Very much so, very much so. I had a chance to work or at least understand the work of the AFL-CIO at that point.

Q: Yes, that's probably of great value and the present incumbent, Jack Muth, doesn't need to know about that because of his background.

KERN: That's right (laughter)

Q: But it would have been very valuable for you, and it turned out to be that way. What did that assignment consist of? I think I have a general idea, but I think in terms of your interview, we should get that down.

KERN: At that point, I think Tony was so new to the labor function, or to the personnel function, that my principle role was interfacing with the personnel system in the Department [of State] and trying to arrange training and assignments for the Labor Attaché Program and then some interface with the Labor Department.

Q: Put a year on that. When did you come back?

KERN: About 1983.

Q: And you stayed in that job how long?

KERN: Two years.

Q: Well by that time I was teaching the course at FSI, I think, because I remember you participated in a few of the sessions.

KERN: Right.

Q: In effect then, Tony took advantage of your personnel background, your knowledge of the board of the Foreign Service and how it operated. Did you divide the job up, as it were, with his taking the policy matters and you taking the personnel?

KERN: Yes.

Q: Or were you involved in the other half of the job also?

KERN: No, only tangentially in the policy side of it. I did do a fair amount of liaison work with the three institutes, AALC [African-American Labor Center, AFL-CIO], AAFLI [Asian-American Free Labor Institute, AFL-CIO] and AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development, AFL-CIO].

Q: And FTUI [Free Trade Union Institute, AFL-CIO] Was it created yet?

KERN: No, that came a little later.

Q: Do you feel [the work in] that assignment could have been better divided between the two of you? Did you feel as though you weren't being introduced to other parts of the job?

KERN: Yes, I think that I could have made a broader contribution. But for whatever reason, it didn't work out quite that well.

Q: Well, obviously it didn't work out because you were handling something that was very unpleasant. Now we all know Tony Freeman and we love him, but I can imagine as the head of the office he wanted to take care of the policy-oriented things.

KERN: That's right. One of the other functions I had in S/IL was lecturing to junior officer classes and some of the area studies classes. That was enjoyable.

Q: And the Labor Attaché training program.

KERN: And the Labor Attaché training program and that was all very fine. I enjoyed that activity. A little side story, though. We had a Labor Attaché conference in Vienna sometime in that time period and Irving Brown, whom you know, was the featured speaker. And as you know, we had this "no contact" policy. No one was supposed to deal with any communist union anywhere in the world. And we had Irving there. There was some sentiment that maybe this "no contact policy" wasn't the right thing to do and maybe we were holding onto the policy too long. So Irving was to be the featured speaker and the topic was the contact policy. Irving was going to give us his rationale of why we have it and maybe tell us we could do something differently. So Irving was on the program and he has an hour. He's talking to us and thirty minutes went by. He never came near that topic. Forty-five minutes and he's still not close to that topic. Five minutes to go. . .

Q: But he's talking!

KERN: He's talking and we're all listening and Irving's talking. We're about a minute short of an hour and he says, "Oh, and by the way, the contact policy. Listen, you can have coffee with them, but no pastries." (laughter) And that was the contact policy.

Q: Well, the AFL-CIO had a difficult time holding on to this and when we have dinner, I'll tell you more about my experiences in that, but this is your interview and not mine. What impact do you think that had on the Labor Attachés who were listening to him? Did they have any sentiment one way or another?

KERN: I think there was a general feeling that we'd held on to the policy too long, that there were legitimate grounds for talking to Communist trade union movements, wherever they happened to exist, and that we should be able to touch that side of the equation, but we never did.

Q: Well, let's discuss that, because it's an interesting thing. One of the problems is -- and I'm closer to the old AFL position because of my history -- that if you decide to open up your relations with the communists, to what degree are you interfering with your contacts with the anti-Communists? For instance in Vienna it would have made no difference, because they were already way ahead of the American movement in their contacts with the Hungarians especially. But I don't know that that's so in a country like India, where I was permitted, or rather nobody disagreed with my decision, to attend meetings at which Communist speakers appeared, so that I could answer them. I used to lecture at conferences of that sort. But I would not have wanted to open up a contact with a Communist trade union because it might have affected adversely my relations with the other unions to the extent that the other unions were so anti-communist. So you do have to balance these things. In any event, I gather that in the Department [of State] and among the regular Labor Attaché Corps there was a feeling that we shouldn't arbitrarily say, "No," just like we shouldn't arbitrarily say, "Yes." I mean, that is the problem.

KERN: That's the problem.

Q: And that is something that some of our Labor Attaché friends were not willing to go that far and the AFL-CIO was not willing to go that far? They didn't trust us to use intelligently a policy which permitted that tactic.

KERN: Absolutely true. You certainly can talk to the more traditional democratic unions and get their sentiment on this, but we didn't even go to that degree at all.

Q: You then served for a couple of years as Tony's deputy?

KERN: Yes, two years.

Q: And then?

KERN: From there I went to India.

Q: How well I know!

KERN: Which was a fantastic assignment. Unfortunately abbreviated. I was there for about two years, and I was medevaced twice and on the second time back, the Embassy doctor met me at the airport and he said, "Tony, that's it. They're sending you back home." So that came to a short tour.

Q: Was it a full two years as a matter of fact?

KERN: Yes.

Q: It seemed like less to me. It's too bad, because I feel and I feel you do, that it's not until the second tour that you really get to know India. It's such a big country.

KERN: It's a huge country and you're sort of waiting around trying to get a sense of direction. We were all benefiting from Krishnan's guidance, but still you had to absorb it and analyze everything and that was part of the problem. I did travel a fair amount though. In that two year period I got up to Gorakhpur, which was up on the northern border attending a railway conference. It was a long train ride, about twelve hours, and I was in this little compartment with four other people.

Q: Which railroad union was that, the Northern?

KERN: The Northern. And I recall riding, and I was kind of shivering.

Q: Who was the head of the union at that time? This fat fellow, what's his name.

KERN: Yes, his name I. . . .

Q: Did you go with Krishnan?

KERN: No, Cheenu [V. Srinivasan] was with me at that time.

Q: We're using these names. You'd better identify them.

KERN: Cheenu was the deputy Indian local in the Embassy who was working in the labor section at that time.

Q: And later succeeded our friend. . .

KERN: That's right. He later succeeded Krishnan. As I was sitting up, they threw in a big canvas thing, which looked like a pillow, so I figured, well all right. I tried to prop that up at the end of the bunk and used that as a pillow. When I woke up the next morning, it was very

cold. I put my head out of the curtain and I saw people stuffing the blankets into this canvas thing which I thought was a pillow. (laughter)

Q: Well, after two years, you would have learned!

KERN: Yes, the third year I would have learned!

Q: Say something about the trade union situation and what you had to do during that period in India.

KERN: I don't think the alignment changed. The INTUC, Indian National Trade Union Congress, was allied with the Congress Party.

Q: Tony, don't forget that this is your interview so when you say that it hadn't changed much, you mean it hadn't changed much from the time I know, but please describe it.

KERN: I'm talking to Murray [Weisz, who served as Labor Counselor in New Delhi 1966-72] and I'm saying that I don't think the situation changed in the, what, twenty intervening years?

Q: Almost, yes.
KERN: At that point, if there was any excitement there, it was speculation that Rajiv Gandhi would tell the INTUC that they were no longer an integral part of the Congress Party and that they could go off on their on. There was a large INTUC Congress at that point and Rajiv Gandhi was addressing it and there was a lot of excitement or tension, really, or concern that he might use that speech as the occasion to separate the Congress Party and the INTUC. He hinted around at it in his speech and he obviously was just teasing the trade unionists. He never made that kind of a break.

The other dominant trade union organization was the HMS [Hind Mazdoor Sabha trade union organization], somewhat aligned to the BJP [Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party], although they continued to maintain that they were separate and distinct.

Q: From the BJP, really?

KERN: Yes.

Q: At that time. That was different from my experience. The HMS was closer to the Socialist Party. That's interesting. And what about the relations of those unions to the AFL-CIO and the effort to get American trade union help?

KERN: It never materialized. Before I went over, naturally I talked to Chuck Gray, who was in charge of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), and he gave me a little briefing about the relationship which was cool at best. I never could understand why until subsequently when I came back on home leave, I stopped by to see Chuck again, and I said,

"Gee, I don't understand." In that intervening time I'd tried to get more trade unionists to come over and tried to get AAFLI to set up an office there. AAFLI had been banned or thrown out some time earlier. I talked to Kanti Mehta who was the head of the INTUC and he said, "Sure Tony, we can try." They were open and receptive and I mentioned this to Chuck. INTUC was willing to work with the Indian bureaucracy to get AAFLI to come back legally. And Chuck wouldn't respond to it. He said,"You know that son of a bitch, we paid big dollars for him to have eye surgery and he never even thanked us." And I think that was the reason that AAFLI kept out of India. They resented the fact that Kanti Mehta didn't express appreciation for this.

Q: Well, I may be wrong, but Kanti got in touch with me when he came here and my impression was that he was paying for that himself. Did they say that the AFL-CIO paid for that?

KERN: Paid for that eye surgery, yes. Chuck was very direct about that, and he resented the fact that he never even got a note saying "Thank you." It sounds crazy, but I swear that was it.

Q: That might have been the reason for what? For the AFL-CIO or the AAFLI not working with the INTUC or what?

KERN: Yes, for the strained relationship. There really wasn't any kind of relationship at all that I could detect. I tried to get trade unionists to come over. It's tough, you know, traveling almost twenty-four hours to get there. But there was no receptivity on the part of Chuck Gray to set up an AAFLI office there. The Embassy was all for it.

Q: The Embassy was for setting it up. I thought the government of India wasn't too happy about the prospect.

KERN: That's right, absolutely true. But Kante said he was willing to work with the government to support the return of AAFLI.

Q: But Chuck would not apply or what?

KERN : He wouldn't apply. He absolutely wouldn't make the effort. And I think it all had to do with the eye surgery. Isn't that amazing?

Q: Yes, that is amazing. Let's get to the Krishnan [issue], that I want to mention. Krishnan was, of course as we have discussed, the assistant to a series of labor officers beginning with Burgess in 1956 until Krishnan retired in about 1986. We all admire him greatly and he certainly was wonderful and there's not a disagreement among all of us who worked with him that he was a great contribution to whatever success we had.

KERN: Right.

Q: How do you feel about whether he displayed any biases between the unions that he was working with or whether he was able to cover up those feelings that he had for or against the union in connection with his work? Now I want to get comment on the general area of the Foreign Service national working for a labor officer.

KERN: In the situation with Krishnan, I think his service was invaluable. I think it would have taken each Labor Attaché an inordinately long period of time to find their way around that immensely complex country. I don't think we could have functioned very effectively. I think he was straightforward in terms of unions. I think he had a bias toward INTUC and that reflected his predilection toward the Congress Party as the Party of Independence and the Party of Freedom. But I think he kept it in check so that it really didn't result in any kind of distorted activities on the part of the labor section at the Embassy.

Q: Well I asked you that question without any prompting because I didn't want you to know how I felt about it and I agree with you entirely. And so does everybody else. We had a series of Labor Attachés, some of whom were pro-AFL, so pro-CIO, some independent and all that, and every one of us seems to agree, 1) that personally Krishnan was pro-Congress Party and 2) that it did not interfere with the wonderful relations he had with the HMS and the other unions and with management. And I think that is a remarkable feat.

KERN: You're absolutely right. You mention management and that's true. We met with the Tatas and the other big industrial families there.

Q: That is so different from the case with respect to other countries where the Foreign Service nationals sometimes had limited usefulness because of relations they had with one side or the other. I hope some of the research in this field will reflect the value and limitations of having Foreign Service nationals work for them.

KERN: The only area of concern, I think, at one point I was trying to get some information for our Defense Attachés, and I asked Krishnan if he could try to line up some unions involved in defense activities that were related, and we never did get near those unions. That was the only place where I would have a little negative comment.

Q: Well, was that due to an unwillingness to try to do it or the Indian Government's really being very worried about that?

KERN: I don't know. I'm sure the Indian Government would have had restrictions and concerns about that, but I don't know if he really made the effort. That's the only question mark I've had. I would say, "Listen, you know we have AFGE, which represents military bases all over the U.S. Maybe we can get them to interact with their Indian counterparts." Nothing happened on that.

Q: Well, let me go over some of these points that are raised in our questionnaire. Before I cover the subject matters, I now have a series of questions that go into your reactions on

the basis of your total Foreign Service career, so let's bring you home from India. Do you have any other comments to make? Anything on AID or USIA in India?

KERN: Yes, the AID Mission was interesting. I made courtesy rounds shortly after I got there, calling on all of the counselors and all of the heads of the agencies there. I arranged to see the AID Mission Director. I was ushered into his office and he said, "Kern, before you say one word, I don't have a goddamned dime for you." (laughter)

Q: Oh Tony, I'm afraid that you suffered from the amount of money that I got from them. They and USIA used to pay for a whole lot of my travel.

KERN: There was nothing there.

Q: Sorry, buddy! (laughter) But they had so much more money when I was there than they had when you were there and we had a limited travel budget for the Embassy and they got good value for the money they gave because I used to give lectures and I also commented on the AID projects. I don't feel guilty about it. Sorry, Tony.

KERN: He never did give me a dime.

Q: Were there any projects you were interested in that they could have helped you on? Because the AID program by that time had gone down.

KERN: Yes, it was really down and the amount of discretionary funds they had was virtually nil. They really didn't have anything to work with.

Q: Yes, AID went down pretty much. What about the USIA where we did have a whole lot of cooperation from them and even just before you came there, they had me coming out for lecture tours and things like that.

KERN: They were very good about that. They were very, very receptive and frankly I always found USIA overseas to be much more receptive to the labor program than the AID folks.

Q: Well, in countries like India, it just makes so much sense for them to feel as though they're getting into the nitty-gritty of the society if they have people coming over as AMPARTS.

KERN: You recall the Bhopal chemical disaster there, where several thousand people died. I had been contacted by the University of Arizona, which had received seven million dollars from Union Carbide to set up a program in Bhopal, but they needed Embassy assistance. So I worked with the various ministries to try to get them established. We got them residency permits and they were setting up a training school for the blind and another training school for vocational education: electricians, carpenters, and other needed kinds of skills and training. But we never got beyond the residency permit. They couldn't get the

approval from the government to move forward because of their concern that this might somehow compromise the lawsuit they had with Union Carbide. And I guess the Arizona reps. were there about six months and then folded up and went back home. I always thought this was a sad development.

Q: Did you have regular meetings with management people or did it have to wait for some strike to happen? Did they call upon you other than when they were in trouble, management people?

KERN: No, again you're talking about Krishnan's invaluable assistance. I'd just ask Krishnan, "Can you meet with management people in every town?" and we did. We met with the Tatas. I've forgotten the other major industrial family there. And with the Tata family, not some underling. Chemical plants, anyplace, electronic plants, so I had fairly good access to management. . .

Q: Are you talking about the Birlas as the other one?

KERN: That's the other one, right.

Q: I think, as a matter of fact, they're supposed to be bigger in terms of size than the Tatas, but those two companies really. . .

KERN: Monster companies.

Q: And they both have a social conscience that doesn't interfere with their profit making, but they do that. And that's something that's lacking in many other countries. And the Tatas especially, and the Birlas also. It's fascinating for a person like me, who comes out of a conflict situation between labor and management on everything, although that's changing now, to see how they operated, to see, which I'll mention now because I may forget about it later, to see that the Tatas operating as a steel corporation against the government-owned steel operation would assign one of their prime labor relations specialists to work for the Indian Government's rival steel corporation, as they did with this very interesting guy for a number of years. It is just unusual.

KERN: Yes, they were very progressive companies, very much so.

Q: But they did exploit their people. Well, that's part of the business, isn't it?

KERN: That's true of India though.

Q: On the other hand, the degree of exploitation is not as much. Well, you then came back from India. If you think of anything else you'd like to say about it, by all means do before we're finished. And before your retirement, what did you do?

KERN: I was the Labor Advisor. . .

Q: Do you want to say anything about your illness? Was it caused by India?

KERN: No. It was not caused [by India]. It was a pre-existing condition.

Q: You're okay now?

KERN: Yes. So I came back from India and served as the labor advisor for the ARA Bureau and then for the Africa Bureau. Both of these assignments, I think, gave me more access to the AFL-CIO and their activities as well as the various regional institutes. And I also at that point had more interaction with the USIA and AID bureaucracies in Washington, and that was an eye-opener..

Q: Headquarters. Sally Dupree [of USIA] and company?

KERN: Sally's fine. Sally's wonderful. We always worked well [together], but the other divisions over there [at USIA] were absolutely anti-union. At one point I had a short assignment at USIA. This kind of hostility didn't make sense. So I talked to Tom Kahn who headed up the International Department at the AFL-CIO, and I said, "Tom, we ought to get together and we'll bring all these people together, tell them what you're doing, how you're doing it, let them question you, go back and forth." And he said, "Fine. I'll arrange for it."

So I contacted the USIA folks who said, "Sure. We're willing to do it. We'll get the bus." Well it was a rainy day and the bus was about forty-five minutes late, so it started off bad. We finally get out to the Meany Center and had a very nice luncheon hosted by the AFL-CIO. We had what I thought was a good exchange of questions and answers. As we were heading back to the USIA Headquarters, I said, "Now wasn't that helpful?" I just got sneers and they said, "He was just trying to buy us off." And I said, "Ah, hell." I gave up at that point. They were so anti-AFL-CIO, it was pathetic.

Q: It's interesting, because out in the field, just like your experience, mine was that they saw this as a necessary part of their job, whereas in the headquarters. . .

KERN: . . .they resisted.

Q: Right.

KERN: And again, I think it was a question of power. This was money being siphoned off from more "worthy" projects [like] bringing in dancers or whatever.

Q: Yes. How much of this was due to just the battle for money for their programs and how much of it was a sort of an intellectual bias that they felt that the arts and the fancy stuff was more important? They were looking down on. . . .

KERN: Oh it was intellectual bias. They made no pretenses of knowing anything about labor overseas or domestically.

Q: Do you have any comments on how that could be corrected other than your valiant efforts to get them together? (laughter) What has to be put into the USIA? I think under the present administration, it's more likely to be helped, but. . .

KERN: It's hard. If you don't come from a working-class background, it's hard to relate. And I think that's the problem they've had over there. I'm not condemning all of them, but enough of the folks in the [USIA] headquarters office just do have this intellectual bias.

Q: Well this has changed so much from the days when I was active. I wonder whether we can put part of the blame on the fact that they do not have a full-time active headquarters man like Joe Glazer. When Joe was there, he was very effective with the operations people. And we don't have. . . Is [Thomas] Stillitano [still there]?

KERN: Yes, Tom. I don't know if he is still. . . .

Q: He doesn't work full-time.

KERN: He never did. But Tom was the kind of personality you need. He's very outgoing, gregarious. Just great.

Q: Oh, sure, but what is the reason that he hasn't had as much of an effect on the bureaucracy of USIA as a person like Joe Glazer did?

KERN: Well, one thing, I think , was that Tom realized there was no future for labor at USIA, and consequently he was looking to his career future. So he would do what he could, but he had other activities, which I think were more important to him than labor. I frankly think that he made the correct personal assessment in that setting. I think it is a kind of an intellectual, maybe a class bias. I think if you look through the background there, you won't find people that really know what's going on in America. They do tend to be pseudo-sophisticates. They do like the arts and entertainment world and the communications world and I think that anything other than that is kind of an intrusion on their real world. So that's where we run into a problem.

Q: That's interesting. How would you compare the AIFLD and the AALC in terms of personality, program, effectiveness? You had dealings with both.

KERN: Yes, I had that unique experience. By far the AIFLD operation was more dynamic, better funded, and had a very dynamic leader in Bill Doherty. As I said earlier, I really am amazed at Bill's ability to know what's going on politically throughout all of Latin America. Just immensely impressive. And the people he knew, not just trade union leaders, but people in management and government. He played a very vital role and I have tremendous admiration for him and the folks that worked for him.

Q: Staff, yes. What about Irving Brown? It wasn't in your period though, of course, but didn't Irving Brown have the same sort of relationships with leadership in Africa?

KERN: North Africa. That's my understanding, yes. I don't know that he had any kind of influence in sub-Saharan Africa, but Pat O'Farrell, who was his deputy, also had that kind of knowledge of people in sub-Saharan Africa, but he didn't have the program and he didn't have the money, and I think, more importantly, Africa was not that important to us. Latin America was; therefore, it had all the attention. All the assistant secretaries knew Bill Doherty and Bill knew them as well as folks on the National Security Council and the White House. And that was because Latin America was important to us. Africa wasn't. And consequently Pat didn't have that kind of inter-relationship with the hierarchy of the U.S. Government. He was a very able man and he did well and he plugged away in supporting "democratic" unions. Some were really marginal, borderline, but I think it's paid off. For example, in Zambia, Fred Chaluba who was the president of the Zambian Trade Union Congress, became president, I think, about a year ago. He unseated Kenneth Kaunda, who was almost president for life there, in a fair election.

In South Africa, Pat [O'Farrell] really had problems trying to work with COSATU, the big black trade union movement. Pat was working more with -- I've forgotten the name of it -- the National Association of African Workers. There was a smaller trade union movement which was black. He ran into problems with AID. They had hired an outside contractor, Arnold Zack, -- You may know him. -- to evaluate the program. He came back with a very, very negative report and with suggestions which would have, in effect, I think, destroyed AALC as an entity. Zack, I think, was buying off on recommendations made by the COSATU Trade Union Movement and in particular Cyril Ramaphosa, who was a very strong, very articulate trade union leader there, that they would deal only with the AFL-CIO. Pat tried to make the argument that the AALC was part and parcel [of the AFL-CIO], as it was, and Zack kept pushing that program, trying to push that idea through the AID bureaucracy, not realizing fully that [AFL-CIO President Lane] Kirkland wasn't going to accept that argument.

Q: Isn't that parallel to the Indian situation where one time the INTUC said,"We want to deal with the AFL-CIO. We don't want to deal with the alleged CIA connection"?
KERN: That's right. There's a similarity.

Q: Is that a qualm we should give some weight to in our work with our people? Or should we just say, "Look, you work with the German Stiftungen[German Assistance Institutes]," which receive funds from the German Government. What is there about American Government support?" In India they say, "The [U.S.] Government is supporting the AAFLI and therefore we don't want to have anything to do with them. We want to deal with the trade unions," whereas they don't raise that question about the Stiftungen or the British Council.

KERN: Right. I think the difference was that our trade union movement was "tainted" by the CIA. And I think -- Who was it? -- the Church Committee came out and indicated that the CIA had funded various trade union activities overseas.

Q: The question is, "What did they fund them for? For undermining the government or for carrying on anti-Communist activities?" That's the point.

KERN: Right. We know that they were being funded to carry out anti-Communist activities and to support democratic unions. But in many parts of the world, it wasn't seen that way. It was seen as being a CIA agent. I think one of the few good things that Reagan did was to create the National Endowment for Democracy. He was up front. Money went from the Congress, money went to the USIA, and then automatically it went to the four institutes. And it was up-front and there was nothing devious about it. And I think that was a very positive step forward.

Q: Isn't that the case now with the AID thing? The AID funds go directly to the institutes. What's wrong about that? The CIA connection, so far as I know, hasn't existed for years.

KERN: That's true. Absolutely true.

Q: And when it did exist, it was exposed and that's finished now.

KERN: Going back to my time in Barbados, for example, on some occasions my visits would be preceded by announcements in some local left wing rag about "the great destabilizer" coming to the country now with CIA connections. I recall talking to a really left-wing union in Saint Lucia. I had at that time one of these thick watches. You know, the self-winding ones with the [large] mechanism. I was sitting there talking, and I noticed that the union president kept staring at my watch. I said, "Do you think this is a microphone in here?" And he says, "Yes, brother." (laughter) I said, "Here, take it and put it away somewhere." But that was the kind of mentality that was present. It was this CIA taint which I think really distorted [things] and in many cases made the AFL-CIO's work much more difficult, and ours as well, in trying to convince them that this was not true.

Q: Tony, it's almost six o'clock and I would like to stop now and go over the other questions possibly at dinner and tell you what I think it would be a good idea for you to cover and ask you what you'd like to cover. So should we stop this at this point? Thank you.

KERN: All right

Q: This is Morris Weisz continuing the interview with Tony Kern. Tony, on the first side of this tape we have covered your background and most of what I would want to cover in the work of the Labor Attaché Corps and your work generally in international labor affairs. But we have a list of what we call "Key topical guideline points" that our outline suggests

we cover in these interviews. And as I said, most of it has been covered, but I want to go over them to get any supplementary comments from you, Tony, that you may wish to add. Please add anything else that you want to about our interest in labor and foreign affairs and your pre-Foreign Service concerns and involvements in the field. You mentioned a few of those that you had as a young child. You even gathered materials.

KERN: Right. I gathered the file folders. Even before I went into the Foreign Service, for example, when I first got to Washington, I wanted to work for the AFL-CIO and I went over to the headquarters building on 16th Street and asked how I went about it. I never got beyond the receptionist and was in effect given the cold shoulder. You know, "Get lost."

Q: Did you mention the fact that you came from a miner's union?

KERN: Oh sure. I said all those good things, but it made no impression.

Q: You don't remember who you saw?

KERN: No.

Q: It's interesting because this is one case in which the State Department profited from the refusal of [the AFL-CIO to hire you], whereas there are many other cases in which the unions profited from the training we gave people and then they hired them in the institutes, but that was all for a good cause. It's interesting to know that you tried that. A number of others did that like our friend Jim Shea and Lennie Sandman, who worked originally for the trade union headquarters and, of course, many others worked for individual unions as did I. I think you've covered how you got into the Labor Attaché career which was in a unique way without the normal way that we did through the Civil Service track
.
And now the next question is something that I don't think we've covered and that is a general one. How did the Cold War, McCarthyism, the Civil Rights struggle, all these things impact on you and your job? What effect did it have in the job and how you carried it out?

KERN: Well, the Cold War itself I think was the rationale behind setting up the overall foreign Labor Attaché function. And I think right up until 1989 with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, I think that was the motivating cause of the Labor Attaché program.

Q: How would you respond when I tell you that a large majority of the people whom I have interviewed mentioned just what you said. And then I mention that actually the origin of the Labor Attaché program was in 1943 during the War and the first few Labor Attachés as a matter of fact went to Latin America. So it was only later on with the big burgeoning of the number of Labor Attachés in the Cold War that we actually pushed forward on it. So that actually the enlargement of the Labor Attaché program was as a result of the Cold War, but the origin of it [was not].

KERN: What motivated that in 1943?

Q: Well, there are a few efforts made to explain that by the original Labor Attachés and because I have a limited time of yours, let me tell you that this is reflected in the interview with John Fishburn, who was one of the first Labor Attachés, and in some of the material that we're gathering in the early period of the function, and it seems to have been a combination of a few ambassadors' interest in the labor function, in the importance of labor in these newly freed countries or newly independent countries, or newly industrialized countries, plus the interest of a group of State Department employees in an early version of S/IL called ILH, I think, International Labor and Health or something like. It's an interesting history and I'll send you to the files to get it. Anyhow, it did pre-date the Cold War, but it really began to be a powerful factor later on.

KERN: Well, I think I mentioned that in the Caribbean, Phil Habib's study set it up as being a crucial area in the Cold War, and that was the genesis.

Q: And in our foreign policy interests, you made that point.

KERN: That's right. Absolutely.

Q: What about McCarthyism?

KERN: I noticed no impact of it, when I was in the Labor Attaché program.

Q: Did the Civil Rights struggle in the United States have any impact on your Caribbean assignment, for instance?

KERN: No, I had more questions in India on the Civil Rights Movement than I did in the Caribbean.

Q: Questions? Comments? Or both?

KERN: Both. Basically the comments were negative. They couldn't quite understand our posture, as they said it, as "the defenders of democracy and equality" and being so repressive with our own black population.

Q: And you were too polite to point out how they treated their own untouchables. (laughter)

KERN: That's right.

Q: That was amazing, wasn't it?

KERN: Oh yes, the dual standard was just unbelievable.

Q: I'm sure you gained a whole lot of understanding of how where you sit is where you stand on many issues. The next question is one on training. You explained how you didn't get any of the official training, but had other types of training. As it turns out from our conversation, I think you would agree that some of the things that you missed, if you were going to be a Labor Attaché for any length of time, might have been filled in by the course that Don Kienzle gives. Didn't we give you any of the readings before you went out?

KERN: I probably had readings.

Q: But you didn't read them.

KERN: You know, I've mentioned this also. What I think is one of the short-comings in our Labor Attaché program has always been that we really never got much in the way of the management perspective. And there are some rational management firms that have had legitimate labor relations dealings. And then there are also companies that don't have unions but nonetheless represent an American work force that's unorganized. And I don't think we ever received enough on that to explain how that's functioning and why it's functioning. And why it is not necessarily detrimental to an American work force. I think that was a major void in our labor training.

Q: I'm happy to say that Don Kienzle is getting a whole lot of that into it. And I think a whole lot of that may be related to something you had some experience with and that is the Bhopal disaster, which shows this. In India, did they have any meetings of the American employers of Indians? We used to have in my day the American Chamber of Commerce regularly meet in the Embassy on almost a monthly basis and one item on the agenda was always the labor situation in India. They didn't have that [during your assignment to New Delhi]?

KERN: No. No meetings of that nature at all.

Q: The next question is on the economic and political situation at the post and how you fitted into that setting. What about the separate political and economic reporting sections of the Embassy? You were assigned to one but had something to say about the other?

KERN: Yes, in both Barbados and Delhi I was in the political section, but of necessity I got involved in economic reporting.

Q: Suppose you did some economic reporting from the political section. Did you clear it with both or just the political or economic?

KERN: No, I would clear it with both sections, and also get their perspective. They might have additional information that I didn't. It worked out really well.

Q: No problem as a result of that?

KERN: No, none at all..

Q: And the DCM? You didn't have a direct line to the DCM?

KERN: Oh, sure. I had easy access to the DCM. The lines [of authority] weren't that rigid.

Q: In both cases?

KERN: Yes

Q: Oh, good. Then the question is what your role was in reaching over the organizational, functional. . . You didn't have any of that problem which so many of our people did?

KERN: No.

Q: Your status in the Embassy? In the embassies?

KERN: It was confusing. What I found, strangely, is that even though we have had the Labor Attaché function for 45 years in the State Department, people still didn't know whom I worked for. They consistently thought I worked for the Labor Department. They were always amazed when I said, "No, I'm a Foreign Service Officer." I don't know where we go wrong in not getting the message through to our own colleagues.

Q: It's not that we go wrong. It's that they just find it difficult to accept. The other thing related to that is would it be more appropriate for the Labor Attaché Corps to go the route of the Agriculture and Commerce services and become members of the Labor Department staff? How do you weigh the pluses and minuses of that?

KERN: I've been ambivalent on it at times. At times I've felt that the function itself would be...

Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages as you see them?

KERN: Well, I've been ambivalent on it. At times I've thought it would be much more beneficial, if we had the Labor Attaché function with the Labor Department, because they do understand the function; they're more appreciative of it; and I think more supportive of it. And I think we've gone through periods within the State Department where the impression certainly is that they were on the verge of eliminating the entire function.

So aside from that, though, I think the Labor Attaché function properly belongs in the State Department. I think it is fundamentally a political activity and especially today when we are talking about building democracies, I think unions are a vital element in the democratic process. I believe that if it [the labor function] went to the Labor Department what would happen is that it would become very bureaucratized and I think we would be responding to

requests for tremendous amounts of labor statistics and interaction with the labor ministries and I think the political dimensions of the activity would suffer because of that.

Q: So on balance, you seem to fall on the side of keeping it in the State Department.

KERN: Keeping it in the State Department, yes.

Q: I too am ambivalent and most of our colleagues, as you can imagine, see pluses and minuses, so when somebody says to me that he ends up by being on the side of switching it to the Labor Department or keeping it in the State Department, I always raise the other arguments to ask how they respond to them. And since I come out about where you do anyhow, it's hard to think of the other side, but is it possible that in the new administration in which the Labor Department is doing so many other things that relate to activities and operational functioning that you might be able to get the advantages of both? Let me give you an example. Senator Pell was speaking in the confirmation hearings of the new-Secretary of Labor [Robert B.] Reich. He said, "Well, in all these competitive things, in situations in which we are competing with other countries or they are competing with us for jobs and welfare systems. -- We have to find out what's being done on the health care front. -- Shouldn't we be getting comparative information from other countries? Why don't you get that from the Labor Attachés? We have a Labor Attaché function. They work for you, don't they?" (laughter) There was that impression *that we were talking about.*

Is it possible to get the advantages of both systems if instead of the Labor Department begging the State Department to give them this information, if it were made a duty of the Labor Department to gather this comparative information, but also demand that that duty be performed for them by the State Department in some functional way that reflects the administrative reality that it comes out of the State Department budget but it's for the purposes of the Labor Department's work.

KERN: That makes sense. It really does. In the past, I don't think the Labor Department was very diligent in levying requirements, and I think some of the requirements levied were viewed as being kind of picayunish, number-crunching activity which really doesn't appeal to any Labor Attaché. But I think there was a deficiency in terms of direction coming out of the Labor Department and I don't think they really had a finely focused idea as to what they were looking for. I think it is very legitimate for Secretary Reich to say, "Listen, we need reports of comparative labor practices, because we are getting into a competitive society. We are already getting across the board reports, for example, on Japanese work methods. We should have been studying and reporting that years ago. The same thing in Germany. What are our competitors doing that we're not doing? I think it's very appropriate in today's environment.

The Cold War is over. During the Cold War years, all we were concerned about were the political aspects. How do you block a union from going Communist? How do you convince somebody that the democratic system is the best? Nobody gave a damn about collecting unemployment statistics. They weren't important. I think the entire environment has

changed, so that more domestic oriented questions and issues can be raised and levied on the Labor Attachés.

Q: The new problems, the new perceptions require a re-examination of function and administration.

KERN: Absolutely, and I think again this is an area where we must broaden our activity. I think we're making a tremendous mistake if we continue to focus almost exclusively on the trade union movements. I think we're beyond that.

Q: Management practices?

KERN: Management practices are crucial. Management attitudes. Worker attitudes toward whatever is happening in the country. But I think we must start de-emphasizing the attention we place on trade unions.

Q: I would hope you would put it in terms of not de-emphasizing but putting it in the appropriate place within the entire complex because trade unionism is important.

KERN: Yes. I'm not denigrating the role of the trade union movement, but if you have "x" amount of time, then you have to take time away from what you're doing.

Q: Well, could you review the role of the AFL-CIO in general, not with respect to your particular assignments, in the U.S. Foreign Labor Program and policy evaluation? What do they do from your point of view that's right and wrong? What should we demand of them in return for the support we give the institutes and what should they appropriately demand of us?

KERN: Okay. I think their role is very key. I don't think a Labor Attaché can have the degree of access and acceptability in foreign trade unions that a true trade unionist has. I think a German trade unionist relies on the word of his American colleague more than he does on the word of the American Labor Attaché even though he has all kinds of sympathy and understanding. They are not the same. I think they play a vital role, a role that we can't do.

What the Labor Attaché, I think, does that a trade unionist cannot do is to be a little more objective on the reporting on the country's scene and not take sides. I think, out of necessity, trade unionists have this kind of sense of solidarity and are less inclined to be critical or analytical of their counterparts overseas. And I think that's where Labor Attaché comes in. He takes a more objective view.

What should we expect out of them? Fundamentally I think it's to build -- It sounds like a cliche. -- democratic pluralism. That has been a term that we have used during the Cold War, but I think it is even more legitimate today than it was during the Cold War years. To support democratic institutions. I think we ought to ask them also to work more with

foreign management wherever they can. Don't be so isolationist and try to get your trade union counterpart in El Salvador or in Japan or in India to work with the management counterpart, if you can do that. At least make that effort. I think we ought to ask them to do that as well.

Q: That's interesting. Did you feel as though some of your efforts were not successful for any particular reason institutionally in the United States Government or in the trade union movement or in your own ability to carry on your work as you were limited by money problems, or any other factor?

KERN: Lack of adequate funding, I think, of our own counterpart programs, the International Visitors Program, the Amparts Program. That was a major deficiency because we had a lot of talented people in academia, in the trade union movement, and even in management, folks we could bring out. For example, an Ernie Savoie from the Ford Motor Company, who talks about employee-management cooperation. He would have been an *enormous* asset in India, but we couldn't do it; we didn't have the funds.

Q: What efforts were made and where were they stopped to get a guy like Ernie Savoie? What was the inhibition to it? The Ambassador didn't take a part in it. He didn't say, "No, I don't want him."

KERN: No.

Q: What was it? Sheer [lack of] funds that inhibited your ability to ask or your ability to accomplish it?

KERN: Ability to accomplish. I could ask, but it would be turned down, and typically it would be turned down in Washington. Maybe they were just passing the buck and making life easier for themselves at the embassy level.

Q: But you got enthusiastic responses -- I recall your mentioning before -- from the local people who immediately saw its validity but they couldn't sell it.

KERN: That's right. They couldn't sell it. And I think it was this "anti-labor bias" which we were talking about earlier that really is an impediment to taking on a program in its full dimension and carrying it out.

Q: That's interesting. I think we covered the human rights situation. You made a comment - I don't know whether it was on the tape or not - that you felt that the human rights matters should be folded logically into the work of the Labor Attaché.

KERN: Yes, I long thought that the labor functions at State should have been folded into the Bureau of Human Rights. Being simplistic, I guess., there is a "human component" or "people aspect" that has rationality and cohesiveness to it. Also in the past one individual fighting the bureaucracy is a losing battle in any bureaucracy and I think this reorganization

at the State Department makes a lot of sense. It puts a bureaucratic weight behind the labor function which we never had before.
Q: What would your reaction be if the trade unions oppose that by saying, "Gee, I want a guy just on labor things because it's so important. Human rights can be covered by any good guy with a right heart and things like that, but labor rights is something else." Do you think they might oppose that idea?

KERN: I don't know. My sense is that they really don't give a damn, and I think that's the other part that we have to look at. [Judging from] the years I spent especially in S/IL and then the two bureau assignments, my sense was that the AFL-CIO's interest in the Labor Attaché's function has really declined over the years. In effect they have their own Foreign Service Corps with their people overseas [in the various institutes], so that they need not rely on this. But if they made that challenge [to the State Department reorganization plan] about "we need someone to specialize," I don't think you can separate human rights and labor rights. If you do, then you just give up the flag. If you defend labor rights, but you are not concerned about human rights, that is illogical.

Q: Any comments to make on the CIA?

KERN: No, by the time I got in the program, there really wasn't any involvement, although I was frequently hounded by the allegation that I myself was CIA or that the AIFLD folks were CIA. I would get asked about that and I would tell them, "No, this is open and above board." The funds are appropriated by the Congress. The usual argument. But there was still that lingering taint to it.

Q: Which was of course steamed up by the opposition to our policy.

KERN: Absolutely

Q: We covered AID and USIA. Any other agencies, international or foreign? I can't think of any, but perhaps you can. The ILO [International Labor Organization], of course, is obvious.

KERN: Yes, the ILO. The ILO, I think, was important at State only with respect to the Cold War. Once that was over. . .

Q: Not International Labor Standards?

KERN: I think the Labor Department has a tremendous and legitimate concern, but I don't think the State Department has any great concern about whether workmen should pick up 89 pounds or 80 pounds. That is a labor standard that the State Department does not care about. So I think the State Department's interest in that kind of activity will diminish.

Q: How do you come down on the question of the validity of international labor standards in terms of the fact that many of the countries that are most active in the ILO to have good

standards don't follow the good standards themselves. Is it appropriate for us to join with the developing countries in the ILO and other agencies in developing international labor standards when we know damn well that many of the countries that are supporting these standards have children working at the age of seven and things like that?

KERN: That used to be a common criticism. Our nation only ratified ten of the 170 some conventions. We had a standard response naturally, which was, "Although we don't ratify, we do *implement*."

Q: Through the states which we don't. . .

KERN: That's exactly it. Federal legislation. . .
Q: We've all played that tune.

KERN: Yes, that's right. Its the standard tune, and it's true. Many countries. India ratified many more, but. . .

Q: Violated many more, too.

KERN: Yes, and violate them. But I think the labor standards take on a new significance in today's world. This is a world of economic competition now, not political competition anymore. I think we ought to be pressing for enforcement of international labor standards just as actively as we hopefully will be pressing for fair trade with our competitors. I don't think we can afford to allow other countries to take our jobs by gross violation of worker rights or human rights. I think we ought to press any country that refuses to allow collective bargaining to form and say, "We're not going to trade with you." I think we ought to work to the point of elevating those labor standards throughout the world to the standards set by the ILO. Then we will have a more even playing field, not that they are going to be paying a $4.25 minimum wage, but they ought to have a decent wage to allow people to survive at a decent standard of living. It might a $1.50 an hour or $2.00 an hour, but we ought to work toward enforcement of those kinds of standards.

Q: Needless to say, I agree with you, but how do you react to the Indian -- both of us having served in India -- saying, "Forget about it. The only reason you want to raise our labor standards is so that we won't be competitive with you any more. So you're claiming to be in favor of the Indian worker, but actually American imperialism says, 'Set the high standards, so that we can keep you from getting any jobs.' "

KERN: I think the point is that we have demonstrated in our own country that the higher the labor standards, the more productive the work force and the higher the living standards as well.

Q: Over a period of time.

KERN: Over a period of time. Take a look at India and what do you have? Massive, massive child labor, abusive labor and slave labor. It's a bad situation. I know they can talk moralistically, but if you look at the reality of the situation, the actual practice is that improved labor standards improves working standards, and the more you depress your labor standards, the lower the salaries and the lower the standard of living.

Q: We shared that experience, you and I. What about instructions that you got from the desks in Washington in your two Foreign Service assignments? Were they sufficient? Were they understanding? Were they demanding? Were they too demanding? Not enough direction given? Not enough support of some sort, financial and otherwise?

KERN: The directions were adequate and I never really felt it came from the Desk. I think folks in S/IL or the Bureau Labor Advisor would pass on some suggestions. On balance, I would say it was adequate. What I don't think we had was the strong support in Washington on behalf of our requests. If we made a legitimate request, say for an Ernie Savoie, I never felt that S/IL or the Bureau or USIS or anyone else really went in to do battle to try to get the individuals we wanted. It was sort of a bureaucratic turf.

Q: Now that leads to the next question which is the impact of new and emerging domestic issues on the work and the role of future Labor Attachés. How should we amend, expand or in some cases diminish the demands made upon the Labor Attaché for specific things that he would be following or active in?

KERN: I think we need to inculcate in the new Labor Attaché the new labor practices: employee participation, quality of work circle, wherever they work, and also point out the failures: employee stock ownership, all these things that are happening now. I think they are an immense curiosity throughout the world. Just what are we doing? People still look to us and I think it's important that our Labor Attachés understand what is happening in the industrial scene here in America. Not exclusively union again. I think we have to be careful of that and broaden our perspective in terms of what we're teaching them and in terms of what we're asking the Labor Attachés to report on from the post.

Q: Now I guess that reaches the last question, aside from the general one, "Do you have anything else to add?" But first the role of the AFL-CIO in the selection and in the assignment of labor officers and how this may have affected your career, union and Labor Department pressures to influence your reporting, etc. Just in general, you entered the field later than many of the other people I've been interviewing, so this may not be quite be as applicable as it is to the old-timers, but if you have any comments on that.

KERN: I didn't see any AFL-CIO influence on appointments -- This is speaking when I was in S/IL as the deputy and my two bureau assignments -- that they really had any kind of decisive input. I think whenever we did check with them, it was a mere courtesy. They didn't have any kind of veto right as to who was going to go where. And the personnel system at the State Department had reached the point where they wouldn't have accepted that kind of a veto. They were that sure of themselves.

Impact of other groups? I think the Labor Department was consulted much more closely than we consulted with the AFL-CIO, and I think that was valid because they had a better perspective on the reporting experiences. So they had a basis for saying "yes" or "no" or "This individual is weak" or "strong." They read the reports; they communicated with the Labor Attachés at the embassies, so they do have a legitimate grounds for making comments.

Q: Do you have any comments on the appropriate division of functions between the area Labor Advisor in the State Department and in the Labor Department? Do you feel there's any duplication of effort or any, as we used to say in India, any "lacunae," any areas that are not covered by either of them? What's the appropriate division of function? What should an Area Advisor in the Labor Department's ILAB [Bureau of International Labor Affairs] and in the State Department's S/IL do?

KERN: Well, clearly at the Labor Department, their role is to advise the Labor Secretary and to levy requirements on the Labor Attaché that would respond to whatever interests Secretary Reich would have, for example, and communicate that to the Secretary. I think legitimately that they ought to work through the State Department counterpart in communicating requests to the field. All this is breaking down, of course, because of the fax machine. You can communicate directly from your desk to the desk in the Labor Attaché's office.

Q: Frequently without telling [the Department of State].

KERN: Yes, exactly, and that creates problems. Then the Labor Attaché in the field doesn't quite know who he is responding to, so that creates, I think, some confusion. I think you have to work that out very carefully with your counterpart in both departments. I think it's an issue of trust and confidence. If you have that between the two of you, then it's going to work out all right.

Q: Well, my last question. What didn't I ask you that I should have asked you?

KERN: I think that was a very comprehensive examination.

Q: If you have any supplementary comments when you get back your transcript, feel free to add to it. I don't know when we'll get to it. That depends a little on money and transcribing. But Tony, I simply have to add that I'm very grateful to you for spending the time with me and arranging for this delicious dinner.

KERN: Put that in the transcript. Fantastic.

Q: Thanks a lot. Thank you very much.

KERN: I enjoyed it.

Q: Good. I enjoyed it, too.

End of interview