

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project  
Labor Series

**P K V KRISHNAN**

*Interviewed by: Morris Weisz*

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**INTERVIEW**

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

*Q: This is Morris Weisz and I am preparing a cassette recording of an interview with Mr. P K V Krishnan, the former Indian employee of the American embassy who worked with a long series of Labor Attachés, Labor Officers, Labor Counselors, and labor people over a period of thirty-three years. Is it Krish?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, USIS (United States Information Service) too.

*Q: And USIS too? That is right, beginning with 1955.*

KRISHNAN: 1954

*Q: Until you retired in 1987.*

*This is going to be a part of the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project in which the project officers are interviewing people who served in labor capacities in any U.S. government agency, mostly AID (Agency for International Development) and embassy positions but also some in USIA (United States Information Agency). I had interviewed Joe Glazer, for instance, and I thought it was a good opportunity during the visit of our old friend Krishnan to have him contemplate from his memory certain characteristics of the labor program and the people who administered it in India.*

*Before beginning on to that, if you don't mind, I want to place this in the context of another objective of our oral history project. That objective is to study the effectiveness of the labor program of the U.S. government in its activities abroad, say since World War II. One of the benefits we had in the early post-war period was to be able to hire quality because we had a whole lot of programs going on, and because we were investing a whole lot of money in our work in general and in the labor field specifically. We were able to hire people immediately after the war but we really were not able---because of the conditions in which the countries found themselves--- not able to create good jobs. War attracted U.S. government employment because of its stability and because the U.S. government had a whole lot at stake in administering aid and*

*other programs in the various countries. Now what we found was that, because of the financial situation, no jobs were really available until the economies had grown. We were able to attract very highly qualified individuals and train them in our work to become qualified in a variety of fields.*

*We are going to study today the labor field. Those people employed in the first decade after World War II were people who started us off or participated in the development of our labor program abroad. The first labor employees were appointed during the middle part of the war and they helped us develop the objectives and characteristics of administration in the labor field. They grew with us. They were trained and filled in with the regular departure of our labor officers from various embassies and AID missions. Now we were being trained by the originators of the original holders of the labor attaché jobs. They trained the ones who came later in terms of acquainting them with what had gone before, what the problems were and what perspectives they might use in dealing with their labor counterparts in the economies, the governments, and the trade unions with which they were working. Now what happened twenty to thirty years after this period is that those people retired or found---as the economies developed---found other employment which they preferred and which could pay them as much as the U.S. government.*

*So we began losing these highly qualified people due to some faults of the U.S. government. I think the utilization of these people resulted in our losing them. For good reason or bad, there were many reasons for these people to leave. They went to their respective economies or retired or their successors went to their economies with very good jobs in the labor field. Some of these were very good jobs working for management or in some cases even for trade unions. In that sense we 'deserted' the U.S. government.*

*In connection with placing these people we had a double difficulty: first, not being able to pay as high as the newly developed industrial establishments could pay in the labor field. This applies just as well to other fields, science, business, etc.*

KRISHNAN: Especially for a foreign assignment.

*Q: Yes, especially for a foreign assignment, but I am talking about the local employees in the embassy and, in your case, Krish, the Indian employees of the U.S. embassy. We were not in competition with businesses that could afford to pay well.*

*Second, we ourselves in the U.S. government weren't prepared to train them or to prepare them for their assignments. By doing what we did in case of Krishnan and many others, that is we brought him to the United States to learn the American scene before he was able to work with our labor attachés coming from the U.S. or other countries to a new situation. The idea of training for what we used to call the local employees---we now call them Foreign Service Nationals (FSN)---the idea of training for an FSN would be to ensure he have some knowledge, of course, of his own domestic labor scene, labor, government and management scene in the labor field. Most of them could get that locally or, if not, then from the files of our embassy once they were employed. Or they could learn it from interviews or by training with more experienced people.*

*The most important thing where Krishnan had the advantage was in 1965 when Bruce Millen arranged for Krishnan to join a team of FSNs who were training together here in Washington. Other parts of the country gave them excellent training as well. I think too the labor attachés were getting training with certain different (post/region) emphasis before they were brought to their first assignments. Krishnan had the added advantage of being part of the program which was operated out of the U.S. Department of Labor and, since I was going to India, I took special care to see to it that we exposed him as well as we could to anything we wanted him to be able to use. Very foolishly, from my point of view, the State Department has neglected to continue to invest money in this type of training. The net result is that we had people entering the field of labor who function in the embassies without preparation. First of all they are not as well qualified because we don't pay them enough. Second, many do not qualify well enough because we don't invest the necessary time, money, effort in training capabilities by bringing them to the United States. I would say one of my purposes in preparing for this interview was to put into the record the great contributions made by the early group of FSNs in the labor field. I want, second, to try to influence the training/salary with the added necessity to go far beyond what we did immediately after the Second World War in carefully preparing for these assignments. Even though it seems costly, people who are going to be working in the labor field need it.*

*Other parts of our project will stress the importance of the labor force to U.S. understanding of what goes on in any foreign country and to U.S. success in advancing its interest in a wide variety of fields. That interest includes not only labor but also commerce, trade, science and all these others necessary to building embassy capability. Understanding the labor aspects of the society in which the U.S. government is operating has the idea of finding out what the labor facet is and whatever we are doing in that country. Labor considerations, trade unions, labor-management relations generally, manpower utilization, labor standards, show the way in which these factors can contribute either to enhancing or inhibiting the objective of the U.S. government operating in a particular country. With that as the background, I want to put this some place in this project.*

*In any event, let me introduce the person I am interviewing today in my home during his visit to the US, long after his retirement: PKV Krishnan will be too modest to indicate what he has contributed to the labor work at the U.S. embassy and the AID mission and the USIA objectives in his thirty-three years in U.S. government service. Let me just say from my point of view, when I arrived I found a highly trained and dedicated employee, one who did not feel any contradiction between the work he was doing for the U.S. government and his being a wonderful citizen of India. He came to work for the labor attaché in the U.S. embassy in 1953. He will say how this person trained him for his work and how his work progressed after that through a number of labor attachés. Many of these were gathered here yesterday in my home and others will be visiting here in Washington and other parts of the country. I would say that one of the proofs of my judgment about how we all regarded him and still regard him is the fact that every one of the people he contacted with whom he served over the years is so anxious to see him that he is even willing to come out to my house or urge Krishnan to visit us in Florida, California, Milwaukee and God knows where else. Anyhow, Krish, why don't you begin by saying something about your pre-government employment training. You were not, as I recall, particularly prepared in the labor field or in some form of education. Go ahead and tell us about your career.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, Murray, first of all, I must express my feeling of having bestowed upon me a great honor---

*Q: Thank you*

KRISHNAN: For the interview consider me as a candidate to be interviewed for this kind of project that you have. I am simply thrilled at the idea of the project itself and I think it has tremendous utility, particularly from the point of view of an ideal foreign policy being developed in the labor field of the U.S. government. To specifically answer your question, Yes, you were very right that I was not at all prepared either educationally or mentally, maybe mentally a little bit, because I was a rebel anyway. I was not at all prepared for this kind of an assignment in the embassy. My own background basically was I am a high school graduate, and never went to college. Whatever work I was doing, I did on the basis of the commonsense that I was trying to develop for myself from my childhood. The first job I had was in the magistrate's court as a court clerk maintaining files of all the criminal cases and putting up the case before the magistrate---

*Q: Where was this?*

KRISHNAN: This was in a small town called Udumalpet in the District of Coimbatore in Southern India.

*Q: I should say---*

KRISHNAN: At that time my high school results had not even been published. I was still a non-high school graduate when I got this job.

*Q: Did you know English? That has to be stressed here, because the concentration of U.S. employment of FSNs in the embassy has been so heavily weighted to people who know English.*

KRISHNAN: Oh, yes---

*Q: This is part of the British thing and that is one thing we have to stress---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, that is probably the only qualification I had as far as working for the embassy is concerned. There is no doubt in my mind about that. Then I worked there only very briefly. I don't know if you will find it relevant for you to record this as part of your project but as part of my background I think it is very valid. The magistrate kind of insulted me right in the presence of many lawyers in the court and in the presence of the criminal accused. That really made me very upset, since it was not for any invalid reason I rebelled against him. I said, "If this is the way you are going to treat me I am not going to work for you," and I just walked off. The magistrate even went to the extent of threatening me that he would charge me with contempt of court and I said please go ahead and do it and I will defend myself. I was hardly sixteen years old. I vividly recall this and I will never be able to forget this even now at sixty-three and nearing sixty-four. That is the kind of background I started with and then I worked for a very few weeks in the Taluk office. The Taluk office was an adjunct of the magistrate's court but then it was separate by itself because the Taluk office was basically a civil administration whereas the

magistrate's court was basically the criminal aspects of the administration.

*Q: May I interrupt for a moment? In your argument with the magistrate, because I want to bring in the fact that, even though you are not as well-educated as college, etc., you had gone to schools in which English was prepared and you were of a high enough caste to be given certain advantages over the community or am I wrong?*

KRISHNAN: I think you are wrong in my particular case. I can agree that generally that kind of a situation had existed at that time. In my own case I do belong to the so-called high caste but then the magistrate himself belonged to the same community for one thing.

*Q: If you were not a brahmin, would he have had the nerve to treat you badly?*

KRISHNAN: In that position yes, I will explain to you a little bit later the kind of torturous process that I went through and it took guts on my part to swallow several things which I had to undergo. Then, for a brief while I worked in the Taluk office, as I mentioned to you---

*Q: Why don't you define the word "Taluk"? Is that a civil---*

KRISHNAN: "Taluk" is a small sub-division of a district. I think district when you say you probably will be able to understand it. Let me describe this in one sentence for the benefit of those who may be hearing this. 'State' is the level at which most people will understand the next division of the state is the district level and a further sub-division is the taluk level, generally headed by a Tehsildar. He is a civil servant basically requiring a college education and he is recruited and given special training by the State Civil Service Commission. Then he is assigned basically as a revenue person.

*Q: Is this a matter of appointment or is it a political influence or caste influence or---*

KRISHNAN: No, I think, very frankly, that the magistrate was known to my father because the magistrate's court and the school at which my father was teaching and I was also studying, had a common compound wall. It just so happened people were going back and forth and my father and this magistrate happened to meet. They found that they had some common background coming from the same area and father knew a lot of his relations.

Here one fine morning this magistrate was sending word to my father that, having come to know that I was a brilliant boy in school, here was a vacancy in the court. He wanted me to come and work for him. He couldn't even care less what my age was because below the age of eighteen nobody was supposed to be recruited. Here I was hardly sixteen years old, not even fully sixteen years old, and he was asking me to come and work for him. So the word came from my father. I went and saw him, and he straight away said why don't you start working? He didn't even give me the background. He didn't even tell me what kind of work I was supposed to do. Basically he just threw a number of case files on my desk and said look through this and ensure that the file is properly maintained and put up the files on the day the cases are supposed to come up for hearing. I went through the files and I found that papers unrelated to the files were there in a particular case. Papers related to a particular file were missing. It became a real, real exercise for

me to go through this. Finally I set up the whole record filing system in an order. Unfortunately for the magistrate, he had numerous criminal cases pending before him which he didn't have the chance to even look at. I am now talking about 1945. With Murray, you can imagine, we are hearing all the complaints about the courts being burdened with cases. To me it was no different from what it was when I started my career.

*Q: This was still under the British rule.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, India in 1945 was still under British rule and war was just ending. I am talking specifically from May 1, 1945, May Day. The magistrate apparently had some problems in his residence, that's my strong suspicion, because I heard it through the peon and the other servants who also were actively working for the court. Apparently there was some big hassle in the house and he came completely in a bad mood and here he was, looking for a particular file, which was already on his desk. The accused had already been called and he was standing there. The lawyer is ready to argue the case and the witness has also been called in. The magistrate wants to see the file but he cannot find it on his desk. He shouts for me from there and I asked him. He talked to me totally impolitely right in the presence of all the people there and I felt thoroughly insulted. I said if you can't locate the file which is right in front of your nose, I am so sorry about this but you have no business insulting me like this. So he really lost his temper and shouted at me and said, 'What do you mean? I am sitting in session in the court and you think you can talk to the magistrate in this manner? I am going to charge you for contempt of court.' I said, "Please do whatever you want to. As far as I am concerned, I am just walking off the job. I don't care. People who don't respect me will not be respected by me, wherever it might be." I just walked off. Three days later, he was repeatedly sending apologies for me to come back. and I said I will come back but my respect for you is lost. I will not work for you. I will come back, set up for you whatever remaining work is to be completed. I will not even accept any salary for the period.

*Q: I knew your father. He struck me as somebody who is very disciplined himself.*

KRISHNAN: The relationship with my father, I think, was something special. No other sons really enjoyed that kind of a relationship. I think I was a very, very privileged son that way. My father, I don't remember an occasion when he had to raise his voice with me. He had probably found me to be a very, very responsible person knowing how intimately I was taking the responsibilities in the house in spite of the fact that I have an older brother who didn't care for the house. He heard the story and he was the person who was contacted by the magistrate. The magistrate apparently felt very bad that he yelled at me, because I was a very hardworking and sincere person. He shouldn't have lost his temper with me and father.

For the first day he didn't say anything in the morning. Yes, I must give you a little bit of this background also. My work hours started around five o'clock in the morning in the office. As I mentioned to you I had to completely, thoroughly revamp the filing system. I used to go very early in the morning so that when the court was called to order at eleven o'clock in the morning he had all the files up-to-date, all the proceedings had been properly recorded and filed in the proper place. He would be able to peruse them back and forth when arguments or evidence were being given. It generally ended at eleven and twelve o'clock at night. There have been several occasions when I didn't have a chance to come back home to even have a little bite. It was a very,

very memorable experience for me and I was a little boy.

*Q: How long did you last on this job?*

KRISHNAN: One and a half months. After that this incident took place.

*Q: Let me ask you this question because later on the issue of meritocracy comes up. The impression most of us have is the British imposed a sort of meritocracy within the administration that they were supervising. It is a meritocracy in the sense that you have the usual examinations and things like that. Why was there any concept that the magistrate might have had within his already existing staff the peons like you referred to? Might he not have somebody who could be doing the job? He might promote them. No consideration then.*

KRISHNAN: No, no nothing of that kind at all. The background---

*Q: They couldn't read or write.*

KRISHNAN: That's right. The other thing is that this was the war time. In war time these officers had a fair amount of freedom to go ahead and recruit people. What we were at that time was termed as 9A temporary employees. Section 9A employees. Section 9A of the Public Service Commission law permitted in certain exigencies certain levels of officers to recruit people on a purely temporary basis. In the morning father was going to school at about 10 o'clock in the morning. He quietly comes and asks me, "Hey, how come you have not gone to the court today. Are you not feeling well?" So I said I am not going. He didn't ask me anything further because by that time he already had the background. By the previous day itself he had the background. He just left for the school.

In the evening he came back and again casually asked me, "Did you go to the court?" I said, "No." He left it at that. The second day the same thing happened and the third day he said, "Hey, is there some problem why you are not going to the court." So I told him, "Papa, you know what has happened and you are trying to get it out of me. It's not fair for you to do that. Why don't you come up with what you know." Then he said, "No, no, no. I---Yes, it is a fact I knew about it and what you did was absolutely right. If I were in your position, I would have reacted in the same way and I have done that in my career also. So I appreciate what you did because the most important thing for a man is his self-respect and I am so proud of you that you have held to that. Fine, but he is apologizing to you and I think you should accept it and go back." I said, "If this is the way he is behaving, in my mind he has lost my respect. How can I go back and work with him? It's impossible for me. I accept his apologies. I will go and tell him but I will have to tell him that I will not be able to work with him any longer and that he will have to accept." My father says, "You know the economic conditions in the house, how do you want to handle that part of it." I said, "I will find another job."

I know so many people in the taluk office who will be quite happy to take me. If there was a job opportunity they would definitely take me because they have already seen me working in the court and in the same contiguous building. People see me going back and forth. I interact with them especially when the court fees and other moneys are collected. I come and remit it in the

Tehsildar's treasury office. I have built up quite a number of people as my contacts. "So," he says "it's your choice. If you can find a job that's fine." Few days later I get a word from the Tehsildar asking me to come and meet with him. I go there and he says, "I know the whole background, I don't want any explanations from you but I want you to work in the Treasury office because the treasury officer seems to be extremely pleased with you." I said "OK, if that's the way you feel about it I will join."

*Q: How long did you work there?*

KRISHNAN: I worked there for only about a month. And later a very interesting thing happened. The forest range officer of the little town, whose cases were being heard by the magistrate for various forest offenses, had seen me working in the court and handling specially the court cases belonging to his division. There I was: I was in a position to tell the forest range officer's assistants like foresters and forest guards as to where the cases have not been properly written up, where the particular related laws were not being cited as related to the offenses they have committed. I had begun to work on those kinds of things.

*Q: On the substance of the cases, not only the procedures*

KRISHNAN: That's right. Substance of the cases not only with reference to the various clauses of the law. This gentleman, who had by that time put in nearly thirty years of service as a forest range officer, was pretty close to his retirement. He was simply baffled by somebody who had hardly worked there for a few weeks, who is talking about the various sections of the law and is trying to educate the people. So what he did was he took me away from the Tehsildar's treasury office and appointed me in his office as his clerk. He simply wrote a communication to the district forest officer saying he has selected me effective Dec. 3, 1945. Again he was also one of the officers who had the authority to go ahead and appoint somebody on a temporary basis. That temporary job continued for nearly three and a half years. During that time, unfortunately for me, in retrospect I would say, that very gentleman lasted there for about five months. He was transferred to another division and there comes a harijan (the lowest caste/formerly dalit or untouchable) converted christian as the forest range officer. In traditional Indian society, the former name was for any member of a wide range of low-caste Hindu groups or any person outside the caste system.)

*Q: Now, this was still under the British raj?*

KRISHNAN: Very much so.

*Q: Harijan---*

KRISHNAN: Yes. The harijan converted christian had, if I am not mistaken, two years in college. He had completed two years in college. In those days we had an intermediate status called intermediate between high school and college. So two years of college education he has had. He was a fairly elderly person. He was also getting close to his retirement; moreover he was a diabetic patient. He was constantly in agony and in those days probably they had not really found the proper treatment for diabetes. He was constantly under tension and he was not ready to



do any of the normal responsibilities that he was expected to carry out. Being a harijan---

*Q: Why did you say he was a harijan converted christian? Was that an element in your evaluation of him?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I have a whole lot of reasons for that kind of an evaluation. I am making this reference only because you had mentioned it earlier that I belonged to a high caste.

*Q: Right, right.*

KRISHNAN: I am trying to relate it to---

*Q: Sure. I am not criticizing you. I just want to know what that represents as a factor.*

KRISHNAN: I am only bringing this into context because we are probably going to have a long chat on this. There will be a lot of editing. Here was a man who had a son, by that time about twenty years old. He was four years senior to me at least. He was not very bright and he had failed a couple of times in his college. He was not really pushing through and he had one sister senior to him and one sister just two years junior to him; all of them had grown up children. Even the youngest daughter was older than I by two years. He was in no position to get them any kind of employment.

Here I was, (1) a young boy, who is coming here and working and who is already in regular service. Second (2), in his earlier assignment apparently he was again working there with a brahmin (the highest caste) boy who was brilliant. He and this man never got along at all primarily because he was physically incapable of carrying out his responsibilities. Physically meaning, as forest range officer, one of his important responsibilities was to go into the forest areas for inspection. These forest areas were basically located in mountainous areas and (3) he had to do what we called in those days "working plans," meaning that he had to demarcate various areas so that they could be felled after it was auctioned to various contractors. We will have to identify clearly those trees which cannot be felled. I am talking about 1945. It is not as if this is a forestation program or a deforestation program which is an issue now but rather the teak wood trees. Several of the trees yielded miscellaneous forest products like honey, tamarind, oil, sandalwood. It is very very well protected.

*Q: Shisham (North Indian rosewood)---*

KRISHNAN: Shisham was not really a commercial crop. We didn't have any oak. We had some ebony---

*Q: Oh, ebony?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, particularly in some forest ranges we had to carefully protect the ebony ones as they are extremely valuable. For this also he has to go through the marked areas, clearly identifying tree by tree, mark them, putting a hammer stamp on the tree and numbering and listing these trees. If possible the officer must try to identify if there are a group of trees of the

same variety. They should be identified on the map. We have to make a topographic map in the process. He was incapable of doing these jobs.

*Q: Physically and mentally?*

KRISHNAN: Physically and mentally. I found nothing very seriously deficient in him. Here I was, a young fellow, who was really thrilled by the job opportunity in this. I took a fancy for being so much with nature and as a young fellow I said, "OK, let's go." So I was going with him, doing the work, getting the compass and all those things. We were staying with the forester and forest guards, giving them the instructions, very experienced people. When they found me giving them instructions, maybe I had the language advantage. Whatever it was, they were beginning to find that I was quite knowledgeable about forestry despite my lack of experience and formal training.

*Q: You mentioned language. Why was language, wasn't this all Tamil?*

KRISHNAN: No, it was English.

*Q: English?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, English. The communication in the government continued to be in English for a number of years. Even after---

*Q: North India also?*

KRISHNAN: North India also. Even today, the communication---

*Q: The only common language?*

KRISHNAN: The only common language. In those days the language issue had never cropped up. It was only later. We did the job and this man got further worried. "My God, I thought I would be able to find fault with him, but he is taking to the water like a duck," he thought.

*Q: I'm surprised you didn't become a forest ranger and go off to the government, government in that way.*

KRISHNAN: Believe me, at that time there was that kind of an opportunity. I was very keen to become a forest range officer. I was keen to be trained in the forest research institute in Dehradun which was a coveted position equivalent to an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) position. This was the IFS, in those days known as Indian Forest Service like the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Civil Service in those days. The Indian Administrative Service came a few years later.

I was very keen to go through that process. Many people including the district forest officer had known of my talents and encouraged me very strongly. Then this gentleman did not take this very kindly. He did one thing to me which became extremely painful to me. I will never be able

to forgive him for it. In one of my luncheon sessions the village headman who is generally a very, very rich landlord in the area, was hosting the lunch in his house. We were all sitting on the ground, the banana leaves spread right in front of us. For those who wanted vegetarian food it was prepared very nicely and, believe me, this was a non-brahmin house. Generally in that area of Udumalpet tehsil, the landlords were mostly non-brahmins. Here I was---

*Q: Not harijans?*

KRISHNAN: No, not harijan. They are fairly low caste people, business community people type. They are those who were non-vegetarians. The pigeon meat was prepared as part of the dish. I was sitting next to the range officer probably because I was just next to him in the rank. Maybe there was some protocol that was observed. So we were all sitting on the floor and food was being served. Here was this gentleman repeatedly asking that that particular food be served to me, that a particular dish be served to me. The forest guard and the forester suspected something wrong. They were not serving that food to me. A little later, one of the foresters winked his eye from a corner. I said, "Oh my God! What is this guy trying to do to me?" It would be a very serious offense to my conscience if he plays this dirty trick on me. He is trying to serve the meat dish to me. The dishes, the vegetarian dish and the meat dish, were identical in color in the fashion it was prepared. So if you were not careful you would take the meat piece as a vegetable piece and put it in your mouth. That would have really made it absolutely difficult for me to survive. So the moment I saw the forester winking his eye, I knew what was happening. I said, "Sir, I think you should mind your leaf and leave it to me to do what I want to eat. OK?"

*Q: And you said, "You should mind your leaf?"*

KRISHNAN: Leaf, this is a banana leaf.

*Q: Mind your own dish and let me eat what I want.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, that's what I meant

*Q: I guess I have to put in here that south Indian food is served on a banana leaf.*

KRISHNAN: I had referred to that in the earlier part of my discussion with you. That really shook him a bit because I had never retorted to him. By that time it was already one and a half years that I had been working with him. He looked at me and said, "No, no, no. You carry on. I am not interfering with your eating. Take whatever you want to eat." I said, "I know precisely what you are trying to do. You don't have to cover that up any longer. Just mind your business now." Then I ate my food and just walked off. Others were still sitting there and I just couldn't continue sitting there. I just walked off.

Later this man came to apologize profusely to me. I said, "No, this is something which I will not be able to accept." I said, "Simply go away from me. Don't provoke me any further. Whatever has happened has happened. I would like to ignore it for the time being. If any such thing happens you will be in serious trouble. I will make a complaint to the district forest officer. You are in the last stage of your career. Please bear that in mind." He just went away from there and

he was really nervous from that day onwards in dealing with me. So that was the first time I really had independence in my own work. From that point onward I told him if he has to do the job for surveying the fuel coupe, as we used to call it, this is the area demarcated for purposes of felling.

*Q: What do you call it?*

KRISHNAN: Fuel coupe. Literally I told him that he would have to do the kinds of responsibilities that he has been entrusted with. The thing he did was he got himself transferred out within a few months. Since he was coming fairly close to retirement and because of his own family situations, I decided that I will put up with that nonsense. At the same time, I had my family compulsions too. Kamala had already been born. The family responsibility had grown. Father's salary had not really.

*Q: Wait a second. Are you married by now?*

KRISHNAN: No, I am talking about Kamala.

*Q: Oh, Kamala!*

KRISHNAN: Yes. The responsibility had increased.

*Q: You better define for the record who Kamala is.*

KRISHNAN: Kamala is my sister. In fact, she was the only girl in the family.

*Q: Is she your older sister?*

KRISHNAN: No, she is the only daughter in the family. She is younger than I am.

*Q: Is she the oldest of the children because there were a whole lot of boys?*

KRISHNAN: No, no no. She is the youngest.

*Q: Oh, Oh, I see. Go ahead.*

KRISHNAN: I have an older brother.

*Q: Then how many?*

KRISHNAN: I am the second in the family. I have two more brothers.

*Q: Two more brothers?*

KRISHNAN: And she is the youngest.

*Q: She is the youngest, right.*

KRISHNAN: As you know, she is really my daughter. Really my first daughter. She came because of my prayers.

*Q: You are convinced of that.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I am totally convinced of it. Anyway, that's another chapter in my life that I will have to write. So the old forest range officer got himself transferred from the post. Another person who was a direct recruitee to the range officer's position on the basis of his college graduate education and formal training came on the job. His own attitude was so very different. Here is another example. He also belonged to a lower caste, basically from Kerala. Not only a non-brahmin caste but within the non-brahmin caste a fairly lower-level caste called "theeya." Here he was educated and his own approach to life was very different.

He made it absolutely clear that he was not really looking upon me to do the kind of job the range officer is supposed to do and that I was doing. The demarcation was very clearly made. He clearly said, "OK, this is your area; you go ahead. If you have any papers for me to sign, I will do that. Just prepare the papers and send them to me. I don't have to supervise you. You are an experienced person. I know your background. I don't have to worry. Simply said send any paper to me. I will sign and send it back to you. One of the things we will ensure is that you work from 10 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening. That's it." Yes, I must mention to you that when I was working under the previous range officer there was really no time limit.

That was another constraint I had to put up with primarily because of my own economic circumstances. This totally changed my situation and this was about 1948. Three and a half, four years almost. The central government operated in cooperation with the state government. Much more than not in cooperation in those days, but as an executive he issued instructions that ex-servicemen should be given preference and all "9A" employees should be terminated and replaced by ex-servicemen irrespective of qualifications. Talk about meritocracy or whatever it is I was recruited without my merit being tested.

So if someone working in the army as a civilian comes back to work, at least he has some experience of civilian work. It's a totally different kind of a job that he has to do. Now here at the same time there were some people who had passed the formal clerk grade examination of the Public Service Commission. They also have to receive priority over these temporary employees. The combination of the two finally threw me out of my job, but then I was basically working at that time for the Coimbatore South Division of which Udumalpet was a part.

The district forest officer of the Coimbatore North Division had heard about my capabilities; there was a temporary vacancy and straight-away he sent for me. He appointed me to work there for a month or month and a half. I had a little problem there again because the range officer didn't treat me properly. This was an area where malaria was a serious problem. It was a malaria-infested forest area where the office was located. I had to do my own cooking or rely on some hotel food which was not all that good. I had a fever and I was not clear whether it was malaria or it was something else or it was an ordinary fever. Now all I wanted was that I should

be able to go back to my home for a couple of days which was a distance of about forty or forty-five miles by train. Those days, of course, it took several hours to travel this distance by train. The range officer had gone on tour and I decided that I would wait for him to return to town so that I could take a leave of absence from him and then go. He came back from tour and I got word from his peon that the boss has already returned. What I did was I picked up a little bit of my baggage, went to his residence, and on the way to the railway station let him know that this is my problem. So I wanted very much to go home for a couple of days and return. He was not prepared to let me go. He says, "No, no, no. I will look after you here and I will send you something." I must describe this also. There was a separate room in the office where I was literally residing, so much so that I was working literally 16-18 hours in the day.

*Q: Was this in Coimbatore?*

KRISHNAN: This was in Coimbatore North Division, a little town called Mettupalayam. It is on the way to Ooty.

*Q: Oh yes, I know.*

KRISHNAN: Just one station before Coonoor.

*Q: I know it very well.*

KRISHNAN: So, I told him, "No, this is not something which you will be able to take care of. I think if I have a day or two in the house, it would help. If it is a serious problem I should be looked after by a proper medical attendant." He said, "You do whatever you want to." I said, "Ok, I'm on my way to the station. There are some things which I want to leave with you. Here are the things which you have to take care of in the next couple of days, until I come back." Lo and behold, very surprisingly he writes a telegram to the district forest officer that I have abandoned my job. The district forest officer knew me so very well that he refused to take any action on that. You recall some other thing, I suppose.

*Q: Yes.*

KRISHNAN: Anyway, the district forest officer refused to take some action on this. Then I got a copy of the telegram through somebody who was coming to Udumalpet, that's where my parents were. The district forest officer was keen to know exactly what happened. So I wrote a note back to him and by that time my fever had become more severe. So I had to stay back. I sent a telegram back to him saying that "I am running a temperature of one hundred and three; it looks as though it will be several days before I will be able to return to work. So I am applying for leave of absence." So this message---I had sent the telegram and then only I received this communication from the district forest officer. I gave him the entire background and I sent the receipt for dispatch of the telegram also as a proof so that he would not misunderstand me. He took his own initiative to give me the job without even a formal application being filed before him.

I owed it as my duty to explain my conduct to him. So when I wrote back to him, he asked me to

come over to Coimbatore for a little meeting after I became better which I did. He showed the entire correspondence. He said, "Look, Krishnan this is what this guy has written. Do you really want to go back to work with him?" I said, "No, not in these circumstances. If he is going to tell a lie that I have abandoned this job, which is not a fact, I don't think I should be doing this." So he said, "Don't worry about it; I'm here. Coimbatore district forest officer is sharing the office on the other side of the building. We are in communication with each other. Just don't worry about it. I know if you go back and try to do work under him he is going to spoil your record. I am going to put a note in the file that this has been examined thoroughly by me and I do not find any justification in the allegation made. So your record will be absolutely clean. So is this ok with you?" I said, "I am totally satisfied with this. It is better that I handle this this way. At any time you find that my services will be of any use to you let me know. I will find some other job in my town." So he says, "Fine." The next thing he did was he asked me to submit a formal letter of resignation, which I did. He wrote back to the forest range officer saying, "I have enquired into the matter and I have found that he has not actually abandoned the job but he has submitted his resignation which has been accepted. Therefore, there is no further inquiry needed on the subject. His account is being cleared from here. A few days later I got my salary by money order. Two months later I got a call from him asking me to---

*Q: Just a minute. You say two months later. In the meanwhile you were unemployed?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I was unemployed. That was a terrible period I went through. Then I got a message from the district forest officer of the South Division. Acting on the basis of the information he had from the North Division district forest officer that I was available, he says, "Kindly report to Topslip." It is another place in the Thunakadavu range. It is the hill station. Very interesting area to spend time. It's part of the Thekkady forest [near the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border]. He asked me to report there as quickly as possible and asked me for a confirmation if I were accepting the job. So I sent him a telegram gratefully accepting the job and proceeded to Topslip. The district forest officer was simply overwhelmed with the idea that I was joining to work under him. I was there. He encouraged me to go with him for the inspections. This is a forest area totally infested with leeches. and very thick with teak wood forests.

One of the major things was like the "Khea" operations in Mysore---elephant capturing operation. Do you remember that?

*Q: Yes.*

KRISHNAN: Khedda. It used to be an annual feature in those days. It has been totally banned now.

*Q: Was it a hunt?*

KRISHNAN: It was not a real hunt. These elephants were herded together. At certain places pits were dug. The elephants then fell into the pit where they were captured for forest operations, basically, logging and other kinds of things. Here I was for the first-time wearing shoes and wearing socks right up to the top of my knees. I was going with the forest range officer for inspections of the forest and instructing the forest rangers and forest guards regarding various

responsibilities that were additionally being given out. We also trained them in the matter of how they should record their cases. We explained what particular sections they should pay attention to in terms of the Indian Forest Act and so on and so forth. During the course of these travels I had a wonderful opportunity to see actually the elephant-capturing operation. Very thrilling. Along with the mother elephant there was a very little baby born which had also fallen in the pit. They had a wonderful technique of lifting these elephants from the pit. There were two elephants in the front and two at the back, trained elephants, literally lifting them up from the pit. They made that elephant march and when the elephant was made to march, there were two additional elephants put on the sides.

*Q: To guide him?*

KRISHNAN: To guide him but also to ensure that that elephant did not rebel. Then the elephant was brought out to a huge cage made of timber logs. One elephant refused to go in and finally one big elephant pushed her from the back and literally threw her into the cage. The other two elephants immediately closed the door by pushing logs. There still was this little baby elephant floating around. The mother elephant was getting very agitated over it. I was playing with the little elephant. It was a thrilling experience. Then a little later the baby elephant was sent in to calm the mother. For the next few days the mother elephant was really upset and at same time was refusing to eat food. It took a lot of effort on the part of the mahouts, but the people who were part of the operations there were very trained people. They have done this any number of times before. and in a few days time the elephant became under control and the other elephants began to train this elephant as to what its job responsibilities are. The elephant took it in the normal stride. All the time the baby elephant was floating around with all the other elephants and it became a very interesting thing to watch.

*Q: Were you still less than twenty years old at this point?*

KRISHNAN: I must be, at that time, less than twenty years. A little over nineteen.

*Q: So this would be 1948-49.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, 1948. The plan was worked out with the district forest officer and the forest range officer that I should be formally appointed as the forester. This was the first step instead of being a clerk, so that when the next recruitment for the forest research institute in Dehradun was coming up, I could be recommended to be taken in. Just as the plan was being put through by asking four foresters to take their annual vacation one after the other so that I would have at least a minimum of four months training, they asked for volunteers as to who are willing to take their annual vacation and there were nearly ten foresters who were willing to do this for me.

*Q: Oh, that was wonderful.*

KRISHNAN: I was so thrilled. They said we are not really wanting ten of them but four. They actually did the draw of lots as to who are the people who will be asked to go on vacation. As people move from one place to the other, because they are posted in different places, we could coordinate and plan it. Everything was worked out and the district forest officer was coming for a



camp there. Already as part of this new responsibility I had gone that day for an inspection. I had returned that evening. I got a call from the district forest officer from the travelers' bungalow. This is the camping bungalow you remember, a beautiful bungalow. Especially on top of the hill, there was a wonderful climate. You could see there were some tigers in that area and one night we went to watch the tigers also.

*Q: Really?*

KRISHNAN: Yes. Not very far from the bungalow. It was a little risky, but I did that. Anyway---

*Q: In a watering hole.*

KRISHNAN: Then here was the district officer. The system is that whenever the district officer has a box of files with all the mail, all that will be carried by somebody. This goes on from one place to the other. The old practice---

*Q: Carried over from the British in order to take the ministry boxes.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, and here was the box that had arrived. The district forest officer just wanted to say hello to me and to express his appreciation for the way the arrangements had been made. He inquired how I was feeling about it. He wanted to just have a little chat with me. I explained to him how thrilled I was. He said, "Fine, fine, fine. OK." Then he opened his box, and then opened his first envelope. There were instructions that several forest range officers were being reverted to the positions of foresters. Because the other appointments, which were being made of people who had already been trained by the forest research institute in Dehradun, would in the normal course of events be assigned as probationary officers, would have been posted as assistant district forest officers but since there are no vacancies available they are being appointed as forest range officers. So---

*Q: Foreseeing the demotion of the others?*

KRISHNAN: Others. In several of these cases, these people were just acting as forest range officers, not appointed as regular forest range officers. So a chain reaction started. All these people who had taken leave, those vacancies would be filled by the people who are being demoted or reverted as they called it from forest range officers position to this.

*Q: This is like the bumping procedure.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, precisely the bumping procedure. So the district forest officer said, "Oh, my God! This is a very, very unfortunate thing; let us sabotage the whole thing. I don't want this to go on within my division." He called these foresters and told them that the situation was changing: "We were trying to do this mainly to ensure that Krishnan got this opportunity. Let us roll back the whole thing. You'll come back to duty." I had worked as a forester on an acting basis for just one day.

*Q: Thank God for the U.S. embassy in Delhi.*

KRISHNAN: Anyway, so there I was. I went back as a clerk and within a matter of a few weeks the ex-servicemen employee got posted there. He came to take charge. He was feeling very sad. The person who was taking charge from me was feeling very sad. He was asking me repeatedly if he should try to find some other job because he always has some preference. I said, "No, you have been assigned here; you carry on. I will march back to my place and see what I can do." So this temporary job which lasted for about four months I had to quit also. Then I was unemployed for about six weeks. In that six-week period without any formal training in any institute, I learned shorthand. I had the shorthand book in my house because my father used to teach shorthand.

*Q: Great, which one?*

KRISHNAN: Pitman's. Father used to teach shorthand many years ago and this book was still available in the house. The basics were still there. Even today, the basics have not changed. Maybe some additional phrases or phraseologies have been devised but nothing else has happened. So, on my own initiative I was working and in six weeks I had mastered shorthand. One day, Daddy was asking how I was doing, whether I was ready to take dictation from him. I said sure I am ready to take dictation. He said, "Have you completed the one hundred and sixty exercises you are supposed to complete? You are ready to take dictation?" I said, "Yes, absolutely. In fact, even if I had completed eighty exercises you could give me some dictation. but I have completed all one hundred and twenty exercises. Come on, dictate and I will transcribe this for you."

*Q: You were a typist by then already too?*

KRISHNAN: As far my typing experience is concerned, I will have to go back to my little role in the independence movement, the Quit India Movement. That's a different part of the story altogether. The Quit India Movement goes back to 1942. I participated in that. There was a call from the students' union to strike. One of the things they specifically wanted to see was the picket line in front of school.

*Q: This is at the age of thirteen?*

KRISHNAN: This is at the age of thirteen. The picket line method was you simply lay down in front of the steps. So anyone who wanted to go into the school would have to step on you and go. We did that. We literally covered the steps completely by lying down, so that nobody dared to enter. We did that successfully for three days. The following day there comes a telegram, which was a fraudulent telegram, sent by the British, in the name of the union, saying that we should call off the strike because Gandhi does not want us young students to participate in the independence movement forsaking their education. We go back to the school. The following day we get a renewed message from the student union federation from Cochin.

At that time I was studying in Kerala in a small little town called Thiruvilwamala, which is very close to Trichur District. So the message comes back and some of our friends get agitated about this. The British did this to us. We tried to drum up enthusiasm but it became very, very difficult

to raise the enthusiasm which was originally there. In the meantime the headmaster began to threaten the students that he would do this and he would do that. We, a few students, conspired, talked to the other students and finally decided ok. We went around the various classes---I was in the VIII grade at that time---I was selected to be the first person in the class to shout `Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' and then the rest of the forty students were to repeat and all of us were supposed to walk out of the school and do the picketing. To ensure the remaining classes also did the same thing we had selected individual students to do this in their respective classes. We had conveyed the message and everything looked as though it had been properly organized.

Here I was. I was selected to be the first person in the entire school to do this. To start the thing. I was supposed to do this when the attendance was being taken. So the schoolteacher, the class teacher, came to the class. He started calling the roll and here I am standing up and shouting `Mahatma Gandhi ki jai'. He was baffled. He says, "What's this?" I then quietly walk off continuing to shout, "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai". The teacher threatened the boys that "if any of you do anything of that kind, all of you will be thrown out." Nobody dared to do anything further. Hearing my voice from three different corners, the three others came out. Ultimately we were the only four out on a limb. By this time the headmaster had come out and as I was walking through the corridor outside the building, he comes and looks at me. "You did this." I said, "Yes, and I will do it again," and I said `Mahatma Gandhi ki jai'. He said, "You are not supposed to do that. This thing has been called off and you are supposed to go back to your classes and continue on." I said no, we have a message very clearly saying that the agitation is on and we are not going to believe the message that has been sent by the British agents here. And we, only we four were out of the classes and we were suspended for the next one and a half months. We were not allowed to enter the classes at all. We could never come anywhere near the school.

*Q: The students were Indians?*

KRISHNAN: Indian students only---Yes. Because they were working and they thought working was their duty. They went back to that thought. There was a principal who did this. So, after about six weeks the entire agitation had died down and some understanding was reached with the student union, by the then-Cochin state government. The district education officers sent out a circular saying ok you can take back all the suspended boys, provided they apologize. So they wanted to take apologies from us. We refused to give them. Another message was sent to the district education officer. The district education officer sent a message to the headmaster asking that the school simply take them back. Make a report that they have apologized. They are not asking for original statements. So that is how the thing was done.

Coming back to my shorthand dictation. Here was my father. He decided he would needle me a little bit or tease me a little bit. He took an old book of 1929 round table conference where one of our great---

*Q: Gandhi came to that conference.*

KRISHNAN: Gandhi came to that conference. There was a great orator by the name of Right Honorable Srinivasa Shastri who was there speaking for India. He was called the silver tongue of India. His mastery of the English language baffled every Britisher, made them ashamed of their

own ability to speak English. Here was the recorded, printed version of the conference proceedings. He was speaking from the speech by Shastri and began to dictate to me at a hundred and twenty words per minute. He didn't realize that by that time with my hard work I had already attained a speed of hundred and sixty words per minute. One of the things I was doing was I would look at the book and go on writing in the shorthand notebook by looking at the newspapers. Even this same proceedings book I had used before, but this was a new chapter that he had taken and started dictating to me. So I finished that. He dictated to me for five minutes; that is the standard practice. This was a real test that he was giving me.

*Q: Just to put yourself in perspective, I once studied shorthand and I attained sixty words a minute. And that was good I thought---*

KRISHNAN: So he said, "Ok, do you want to read it back? I said "Sure." " You have taken down everything." I said, " Yes. Sure. "Have you trained on this passage before?"

"No, Dad, Why?"

Dad: "No, I am just asking because you say you have taken down everything. OK read. Let me hear." He went word for word. He said, "Oh my God, how long did you work in the house? How much time have you been spending on learning shorthand?" I said, " I spent two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon and that's all."

Dad: I never saw you at any time sitting and reading.

I said, "You have been going to work and I have been doing my work at home."

Dad: Oh, I am so very pleased. Now, what do you want to do?

I said, "Dad, I have always been telling you that I want to go to Delhi to work. It is another matter that I have muddled along these four years here and three-four years now.

Dad: Ok, but do one thing. I will write to my brother in Mangalore because there is a regular typing and shorthand institute. He has been urging you to come because you don't have a job. He says that he knows so many people and there is a regular employment exchange there also. He will get you registered there and then they can see if you can be recruited.

I said, "Ok, if you want to write to your brother, I am prepared to go there. There will be one clear

understanding: any salary that I get, just as I now give it to you here, whenever I have been earning, I will deposit the money with your brother. If you are going to expect any share of that, you will have to reach an understanding with him. I would not want to eat in that house, unless I knew that I had paid for it."

*Q: You were not keeping any money for your own spending?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: Without?*

KRISHNAN: Without.

*Q: How did you buy anything?*

KRISHNAN: I had taken whatever clothing I wanted for at least a normal period of one year. I had not expected to continue there for more than a few months because my main objective was to get to Delhi, after appearing for an examination, through a formal institution which will only give you a certificate.

*Q: Suppose you wanted to buy a bidi. Suppose you---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, these are habits which I never had. So I didn't have to worry about that.

*Q: What about the---?*

KRISHNAN: In reality it turned out to be a nice arrangement. My aunt was thoughtful enough to ensure that I always had a little pocket money. So that I will have something too. If I had to have a little coffee, I would be able to buy that.

*Q: Even that be---*

KRISHNAN: I wanted to ensure that I treated them as my parents as I had done in my parents' home. Basically my objective was my conscience---

*Q: Betel leaf?*

KRISHNAN: I never had that habit.

*Q: Never had that habit.*

KRISHNAN: I take betel leaf occasionally but never had the habit of that. Never.

*Q: Go ahead.*

KRISHNAN: So I go to Mangalore.

*Q: So what you are telling me is that when you left here after your brief stay, you were going to pay for it?*

KRISHNAN: Well, this is a totally different kind of a situation, Murray. Please don't make comparisons. Well, you will be sorry for that. I got a job a few days later. It took a little time for me to get a job, as a clerk in the civil supplies section in the district supply office.

*Q: In Mangalore?*

KRISHNAN: In Mangalore.

*Q: This is before you passed the test.*

KRISHNAN: Yes. Basically what I was doing was learning shorthand and typing part-time in the school and working in the normal hours in the district supply office. So for my typing classes I went early in the morning to finish the typing class; then I went to the office. The typing school and the office were not very far apart, but it required a total of four miles of walking each way every day. In those days, we worked six days a week, full time. So here I was and in the evening after work, I would go to the Institute for my shorthand and dictation practice.

*Q: And then walk four miles back?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, then walk four miles back to the house. I came back, had a shower, then ate and slept. I had the same routine the following morning. I was doing it and I did my job very well. There was a lot of appreciation for it and then I got a message from my father saying that if I appeared for the examination, I was the only candidate from Mangalore to be qualified as a shorthand typist for two reasons. One, those who had appeared for the examination in that particular batch were appearing either for shorthand or for typing. This was one of the reasons. The other was they failed in one of the two.

*Q: Failed in one of the two?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, they passed only one. To be a qualified shorthand typist or a stenographer for that matter, you have to have both. I was the only person in that batch, in that year who passed. This was an annual examination. It was not held very frequently at all. So the institute in charge was extremely pleased. They gave a special certificate on my character, this and that, and how I was trying to be helpful to the other students.

Anyway, I got a message from Dad that if I were ready to go to Delhi I could come back home. I submitted my resignation. The district supply officer was very unhappy that I was leaving. He gave me a special certificate. He had a friend in Delhi who was a muslim. This is something which is interesting for you to know. The muslims were fully integrated with the society. There was not much of a distinction. This is something very very peculiar as far as---I would say special---as far as Tamil Nadu and Kerala are concerned. The muslims in those two states, in the good old Madras state, which used to be called the Madras presidency, included those in Andhra Pradesh also. Yes.

*Q: Because it was far enough from the north, where they had been discriminated against?*

KRISHNAN: Exactly. They never had the problem of facing the invasions for one thing, and then there was no serious effort at conversions in those areas. They hardly spoke any Urdu or Hindi language. They always spoke the local language. They had a little accent. They were very heavily in business.

*Q: Well, Muslims were not in the civil service.*

KRISHNAN: In the civil service also.

*Q: Really?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, in fact, in the district forest office, south division, they had a clerk who was a muslim. This was another person who was a wonderful person. Similarly, the district supplies officer, the officer's level, was a muslim and he gave me an introduction to his friend here. Because at some point in time, apparently as part of his mid-level training, he was sent to Delhi to get some training on the civil supplies side. This was a period when rationing was extensive and procurement operations were also very extensive. My own responsibilities included the assurance that the revenue officers were properly filing the reports on their activities, both in terms of revenue collection as well as grain collection. It was necessary to ensure that those grain collections were properly accounted for. At the same time it was necessary to insure that the grains that were collected were properly distributed to various ration shops in various places. Shortages included transportation, the area of responsibility that I had.

*Q: One question on Muslims because of the current thing. Once partition took place did these people side with the New Pakistan or did they remain Indian?*

KRISHNAN: They remained Indian. I don't know of any migration of any significance.

*Q: So they didn't go like the ones in Delhi went to Lahore or the hindus in Lahore---*

KRISHNAN: Then there were other reasons so it was not purely communal considerations. There was the holocaust. There was probably in both the communities really no escape but to escape to the other side. That could be most unfortunate. Anyway, this gentleman gave me an introduction also. I came to Delhi. Father changed his mind and he said, "No, I don't want you to go. I want you to be with me. We will get a job for you here. Now that you are a qualified stenographer, it will be easy to get the job." I said no; I had to go on a hunger strike for three days.

*Q: You, in your own home?*

KRISHNAN: In my own home. My father thought that he would be able to subjugate me, if I may use that expression.

*Q: Break your resolve.*

KRISHNAN: I stuck to my resolve and finally he had to yield.

*Q: I never got the impression from knowing him that he would be that---*

KRISHNAN: That was a part of his disciplinarian character that showed up with me for the first

time in my life. It was the last time in my life.

*Q: I knew him as a gentle person who I would not have suspected of---*

KRISHNAN: I think his affection for me was so overwhelming because he found me so talented. I am so hard working, and I achieved whatever he had not even dreamt of yet. He thought it would be advantageous for him to have me in the family staying there. Once he found that I was really not yielding, he said, "OK I will make arrangements." We had some friends in the neighborhood.

*Q: This is the second tape of an interview that I, Morris Weisz, am having with PKV Krishnan. In the first tape we went through Krishnan's early years. We went through first a brief explanation of mine of the function of the foreign service nationals (FSNs) who used to be called "local employees" at the various embassies of the United States. Then we proceeded to review in depth the earliest history, education, bringing up of PKV Krishnan who became in the U.S. embassy in Delhi, a foreign service national for thirty-four years. We've reached the point, Krish, where you finally arrived in New Delhi at the age of twenty-two?*

KRISHNAN: At the age of twenty-three.

*Q: Twenty-three. You came to Delhi and had a few brief jobs. Please describe them.*

KRISHNAN: At the age of twenty, Murray, sorry. Yes, because I was born in 1929 and I came to Delhi in 1949. Yes, I came to Delhi. The first thing that I learned, getting down from the train, was that the government had banned recruitment. There I was, searching for a job, for a whole month and finally landed in a company called Electronics Limited. I joined there as a stenographer. For a little while I continued as a stenographer. A little later I was promoted as a sales assistant and from sales assistant later on as sales manager. I was to be deputed as the sales manager of a branch which was being opened newly in Calcutta, but then some other influences over the managing director torpedoed the whole thing. I got very upset with it. After receiving a farewell party, it was very difficult for me to think that I would really not be going to the branch office or even setting up the branch office for that matter. So I quit the job and then I joined very briefly with a company called Associated Tubewells Limited. where I was transferred to Lucknow. I worked there for three months.

In the meantime I had applied to the embassy for a job, which was something of a long desire. One of my purposes for which I came to Delhi was that I should work in a foreign mission. I still don't have a rational explanation for that kind of a thought. Anyway, I had applied to the American embassy and that's the only embassy I applied to. I got an interview call. I came, took a test, passed the test, and a little later I was called for a personal interview. I went there. They discuss the job. I was told there were two job opportunities for a stenographer. One was in the labor section in the embassy and the other was in the audio-visual section in AID (Agency for International Development). The personnel assistant, Mr. Seshan, asked me which one would be my preference so that he could convey this.

*Q: Is this your old friend Seshan?*



KRISHNAN: Yes, the same man.

*Q: What's the time now? You came at the age of nineteen, twenty in '49. By now it is?*

KRISHNAN: It was 1954 June.

*Q: You were there nearly five years in these various jobs.*

KRISHNAN: The longest duration was in the Electronics Limited. Then I straightaway said I would like to work in the labor section. He went back to report to the personnel officer that my selection was for the labor office. He came back to me and says, "Fine, you are selected for the labor office. When can you report to work?"

*Q: You had not known Seshan. There was no personal involvement.*

KRISHNAN: No. I was just taking the exam in the very routine manner. Then I joined the American embassy, labor section on June 9, 1954. There I was taken to a Mr. Robert Anderson, who was the political officer because there was no labor attaché at that time. Virtually there was no record worth the name in the office. I was given a huge office space, with a huge leather couch and what not. It looked like the office of a very very high-level officer. I was surprised to see that. All over there were bookshelves with books on American labor, Indian labor and what not. There was an accumulation of letters, mostly in the form of postcards, from various people wanting to know this aspect of labor and that aspect of labor and what not. This bunch of letters was given to me by the secretary, Mary London. That was her name. She said, "Look into these letters and prepare drafts for my review. Then I will give them to the political officer for his approval. Then it can be typed in final form and sent out." So there I was, not knowing what exactly is to be done with these letters and not knowing how am I going to answer some of the specific questions that these people were asking---

*Q: About American labor?*

KRISHNAN: About American labor. I said ok there has to be some way. I have to find answers for these things. This is probably an opportunity for me to pick up something on American labor. I read the letter very carefully and tried to make some references in the books that were there. So I started really learning in that kind of a process. Otherwise I never had any kind of formal training. But two weeks later for some reason the political officer, Mr. Anderson says, "Is this the way you draft these letters? I am very unhappy, I will fire you if you don't improve." I was concerned about his statement. I came back to my office.

A little later Mary London comes to my office, all the way up and pacifies me and says, "No, there is something I mentioned to him which apparently annoyed him. Basically it was my fault. I shouldn't have done that. Don't worry about it. He will not do anything. He is a little short-tempered person but a very nice person in his heart. Don't get exorcised. In the future, I will make sure that when any paper goes to him it will be in the style that he wants. So you don't worry about it. Even if it has to be retyped or something I will do it there myself. I am going to

tell him that you did the job.” So I said “No, Mary, I think you should really educate me since you know his preferences and let me see if I can adapt myself to that.” From that time on I got along extremely well with him to a point when I came for my orientation and he was special assistant to George Ball, Under Secretary of State---he was virtually leaving for Paris for the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) meeting in the next two hours, when I walk up to his office. I told his secretary, “Just tell him somebody from India has come to see him.” The secretary asked “Why?”

*Q: Where is this section?*

KRISHNAN: In the State Department in Washington, DC.

*Q: Oh, this was in 1965.*

KRISHNAN: So I told the secretary, ”You tell him that somebody from the embassy whom you wanted to fire is here to say hello to you.” The secretary had no choice but to go and report in exactly the same way. There he was, “Who is this guy?” and the moment he sees me, “Oh my God, Krishnan.” He comes and hugs me, lifts me up. He is a tall lanky person. He just lifted me up and said, “How are you here? Where are you? I have wanted very much to meet with you for a very long time.”

*Q: What you are referring to is many years later when you came to your training/orientation in Washington in 1965; you went to the State Department. By that time he was an assistant to Ball.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, that's right. I am trying to cut short things as much as possible as far as my background was concerned. He was so thrilled and pleased with my visit here, particularly for my orientation. He said that he was rushing away to the airport along with Under Secretary George Ball and he was not sure when he was going to come back. In the meantime my own travel within the country was beginning. He said I should definitely call on him at the end of the trip. So I tried to meet with him at the end of the trip but then he was away from Washington for another tour abroad. I didn't get a chance to say hello to him again. Anyway, this was the beginning of my training and I slowly began to learn. Let me put it this way, I began to learn without any real guidance, the hard way. I am kind of used to being left alone to fend for myself.

*Q: Did you know that they were recruiting for a labor attaché?*

KRISHNAN: No, not for quite some time. Robert Anderson kept saying that there might not be any labor officer at all for a long time to come. Somehow I would have to build whatever I could here. At that time, because I was only recruited as a stenographer, my own role was very very limited in terms of attending to the correspondence. As I began to understand things, I began to understand quite a bit about Indian labor. I began to read newspapers regularly with particular emphasis on labor aspects. These may be portrayed in the newspapers. I began to develop contacts myself, and Mary London had a list of contacts that Henri Sokolove, who had been the labor officer probably two or three years before, had given her. She had a list of the contacts and she came out with that list and suggested that maybe I could use that list as a basis for any of the contacts that I wanted to develop. There began the exercise and for the first time David Burgess

was appointed as the labor attaché to come to Delhi. He arrived in December 1955. In the meantime the political officer said that I was the only person knowledgeable here. I had to brief him on this, that and other aspects and I was all ready for it.

*Q: So June to December*

KRISHNAN: June 1954 to December 1955.

*Q: Fine, June '54 to December 55, for one and half years?*

KRISHNAN: For one and a half years I was on my own and I think that was the real period which contributed to my development in this field.

*Q: So it was self-development whereas in my mind I had always thought that from the very beginning Burgess had been training you but he didn't come until a year and a half later.*

KRISHNAN: No, he didn't; that's right. One of the wonderful understandings that Dave and I had was that whenever he went for a meeting he came back and reported what happened at the meeting. Together we would start making notes. Basically he was dictating to me and I was taking down the notes and transcribing them. They became a part of the record in the form of what used to be called "Memorandum of Conversation". One very good thing Dave did was, whenever he met with people, he started by asking for some biographic data about these people just by way of introduction. He was able to draw so much information from them by way of simple conversations that all of these things were recorded in these memoranda of conversation. At the end of his tour we were sitting in the office late into the evenings for nearly two and a half months. Drawing upon the resources of the various memcons and just purely organizing the biodata we produced an evaluation of the individuals. To the best of my memory we did around two hundred and thirty such biographic data reports. I don't think any other section in the embassy including the political section had prepared such a volume of documentation.

*Q: This is just before---*

KRISHNAN: Just before his laying down the office.

*Q: I would like you to go through rapidly each of the people who came in with approximate dates and then I'd like to go back and have you describe them, the types of things each of them did, so we can distinguish the functioning of the office each time. Let's say---*

KRISHNAN: Dave, as I mentioned---

*Q: By the way, do you have the list that Davey brought the other day to bring us up-to-date on the dates---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I think I have it in my room---

*Q: If you have to refresh yourself about the dates, but Dave stayed for about six years?*

KRISHNAN: Yes. He came in December 1955, in the early part of December 1955, probably the first week itself and stayed on until November 1960. Dan Horowitz succeeded him. He came in the first week of Jan 1961 and stayed on till July 1962. No, he stayed for only one and a half years because he was assigned to the senior officers' training course. Bruce Millen succeeded him but in the meantime we had for the first time an Assistant Labor Attaché Lennie Sandman, who came close to the arrival of Dan Horowitz. Within a few weeks after his arrival, or within a few days after his arrival, Lennie also arrived and joined. Then we---I hope my memory on that is correct--- then Bruce Millen succeeded him. Bruce Millen came. There was a little gap for Bruce also to arrive probably in four-five months. Bruce stayed on till the middle of May 1965.

*Q: By which time Sandman had left. He came with Horowitz and stayed with Horowitz?*

KRISHNAN: No. After Horowitz left he was kind of acting labor attaché for a few months. Then Bruce Millen came; he stayed on for a little while and completed his term. He didn't stay for more than two years. I think then J. Blowers came. J. Blowers and Bruce Millen also were together at that time I think. Yes, they were there. In fact ever since the arrival of the assistant labor attaché he and I shared one office with a little bit of a partition artificially made. The assistant labor attachés naturally had the problem of securing documents frequently. It became a little bit of a nuisance to them; later they found a separate office for the two of us, but not for a very long time anyway. Then after Bruce Millen, you succeeded.

*Q: There was a gap there too.*

KRISHNAN: There was a gap.

*Q: I arrived there on August 22, 1965 and the place was vacant with Blowers acting for a while.*

KRISHNAN: Yes. At that time I was also not there as I had come here for the orientation. I had returned only at the end of the first week of July 1965. I was there well in time before you arrived. After you, Weiner succeeded you in Oct. 1971 but then you kind of overlapped. To the best of my memory that was the only occasion when there was any overlapping between the labor attaché and his successor. Then Weiner stayed for two and a half years. After Weiner, Steve Block came but there was a gap of a few months. Weiner had to go because of his health problems which caused a kind of medical evacuation and transfer.

*Q: Meanwhile there was another assistant labor attaché---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, Whitlock was there but Whitlock stayed only a few months. He became ill; then Whitlock was succeeded by Sean Holly.

*Q: Oh, no excuse me, Sean Holly. I am sorry to correct my interviewee, but Sean Holly came after Blowers went. He stayed---*

KRISHNAN: When did Whitlock come then?

*Q: After Holly.*

KRISHNAN: I see. Anyway we can verify that. That's not a critical issue at this point of time anyway. Then after Whitlock, Sean Holly, you say?

*Q: No, after Whitlock we did not have another labor attaché because of the---*

KRISHNAN: That's right, we did not have another assistant labor attaché because of BALPA (See note at end on downsizing the Foreign Service). Sean Holly was the last to be---

*Q: Yes...*

KRISHNAN: Okay, I will go by your memory on that---for the time being at least. Then, Steve was succeeded by John Becker. John Becker to Jim Leader. Jim Leader to---

*Q: Kern.*

KRISHNAN: Tony Kern and then Salisbury. There was a gap between them, but with Salisbury I had the opportunity of working only for a month. Just one full month.

*Q: Just to break him in.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I don't know. I don't think I even had the chance to break him in.

*Q: We should state for the records after verifying the files the exact dates of their tours---*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: Well, that's the sequence. You worked with so many of them.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, there was one period when we had the Labor Information Officer in USIS (U.S. Information Service), Chris Sholes.

*Q: We had a succession of labor attachés and a few assistant labor attachés. We also had a labor function in AID agency where the labor function was fairly independent functionally and administratively. The information agency where we have two labor information officers, as I recall, one of whom was assigned for a long period of time. That was Chris who, although his position was independent, worked very closely with us and accepted me as the policy person.*

KRISHNAN: No, I think he was nominated as the labor information officer.

*Q: He was nominated but as an employee of USIS not the embassy, whereas his functioning was on things I suggested.*

KRISHNAN: Sure, sure. That worked out perfectly in USIS because of the understanding at the highest level.

*Q: Then for a brief while we had Asher.*

KRISHNAN: Jim Asher?

*Q: Yes, for a while I think he published our magazine.*

KRISHNAN: I think that was just limited to the publication work; otherwise he was not really doing any representational functions or really providing any manpower or anything of that kind.

*Q: So what it amounted to was that we had, beginning with the appointment of---my appointment---as labor counselor, a sort of higher status in the embassy but still not operationally supervising either AID or USIS. We worked more closely with USIS than with USAID because they (USAID) had a whole lot of money, a whole lot of program work. What I would like to do is go through these people starting with Burgess and just describe how it worked out. I am interested since you mention at the end of the tour the responsibilities that Dave Burgess had as getting on record a whole lot of personnel biodata and evaluation in each case. I don't know about the others but I never felt all that. Did we have it in the files?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, this was one of the things which---

*Q: On which you briefed me. OK. I don't remember it now but I do remember doing a similar type of thing. When I interviewed people I---Ok. One characteristic of Burgess's work was his close attention to people so he did perform an important job of getting a whole lot of information into the records. What else did he do?*

KRISHNAN: One very very significant achievement during his period in my evaluation was INSTEP (the Indian National Steel Education Program). He was able to bring this about under the auspices of the Ford Foundation. He had involved Ambassador Bowles at that time very actively. The head of the Ford Foundation was a person by the name of Doug Ensminger who was a long long time associate of India. He had a tremendous sympathy for India and here was Dave Burgess working very closely with Bernstein at this end on the United Steelworkers. Something like 1500 qualified graduate engineers, who were ready for recruitment or had already been recruited for the various steel plants in India, were brought to the US in batches for training. One of the important contents of the training program was labor-management relations, which was a very significant achievement. Training was conducted by steel workers, Department of Labor, and funded by the Ford Foundation entirely. This, I thought, was a very significant achievement. He had in the process developed an extensive network of political contacts apart from pure trade union contacts. They became a basis for our better understanding of the Indian labor movement as to how the political parties looked at their adjuncts, the trade union wings. There was one other thing.

*Q: Did he maintain contacts with INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) or any other groups?*

KRISHNAN: Yes---

*Q: What is the name of that person who headed the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC)?*

KRISHNAN: Jatin Chakravorty. He was part of the United Front government in West Bengal until two years ago when he fell out with Jyoti Basu on some issues. With him he had very close contacts and through him he was able to get to know the views of the communists very well. He also got some evaluations of various personalities.

*Q: What they had seen was through the eyes of Jatin Chakravarty? That could have been a very biased one.*

KRISHNAN: He got some kind of an insight that he was able to get in the situation where no information was available. Something was better than nothing.

*Q: I found Jatin valuable in that respect also. Yes, what about the relations with our---*

KRISHNAN: I must mention one other achievement that Dave had was bringing Walter Reuther to India. The visit of Walter Reuther really changed the entire outlook on the relationship between the American trade union movement and the Indian trade union movement, particularly with the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). True, they did include others but with INTUC particularly the visit became a very big plus. That visit lasted about two weeks and from there on Reuther was able to build up a good rapport with the unions, INTUC particularly.

It was not an easy thing to have Walter Reuther come to India for a period of fifteen days but he made such a tremendous political impact. He came alone and he made such a tremendous impact that the newspapers were carrying extensive coverage on their front page of his various visits. He was the first one to make a reference to the need for the developed countries to contribute one percent of their GNP (Gross National Product)---it used to be called GNP but these days it is called the GDP (Gross Domestic Product)---to developing countries. Such contributions should be under the auspices of the United Nations. He made a wonderful speech in Sapru House. (The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of Indian Council on World Affairs (ICWA), while the Minister of External Affairs is its Vice-President. ICWA is housed in New Delhi in Sapru House which was established in 1943 and is devoted exclusively for the study of foreign affairs and international issues.)

*Q: Yes, it was a wonderful speech. I hope you are not giving him the credit for the one percent idea.*

KRISHNAN: No. This was an idea first propagated in India. Reuther had developed during that visit a very personal rapport with the then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. They were close enough to a point where Reuther was in a position to write a personal letter to Pandit Nehru objecting to, or expressing disappointment on, a certain stand that the government had taken on foreign policy. If I remember correctly, this was the question of Hungary, the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

*Q: He didn't change the policy.*

KRISHNAN: No, he didn't change the policy. I think Nehru did answer back. I don't remember the contents of the letter at this point of time. I would give complete credit to Dave as a big achievement. Coming as it did fairly close to the early part of his assignment the visit really helped him build up his contacts throughout the trade union structure.

*Q: He was there under the first ambassadorship of Bowles and other ambassadors also?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, sure. Sherman Cooper was there only for a brief period. I am not able to quickly recall the names of the other ambassadors.

*Q: Bunker?*

KRISHNAN: Bunker, of course. Maybe after Sherman Cooper, the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). Frederick Bartlett continued as the Chargé d' Affaires for quite some time. Then Ambassador Bunker with whom he had a very close functional relationship was appointed. It was Ambassador Bunker also who promoted this INSTEP extensively. INSTEP continued for a few years. It was not as if---

*Q: Did he get involved in the Russian, American and German investment in the steel industry?*

KRISHNAN: In what context?

*Q: In terms of investment policy of the United States not helping out in the construction of certain plants and the Russians and Soviets---*

KRISHNAN: Sure, he got involved particularly in the case of the Bokaro Steel plant which was very much on the anvil at that time.

*Q: He was an activist.*

KRISHNAN: He was an activist, yes.

*Q: That's what I wanted to bring out. Later you may comment on what type of activities was best without reference to any particular individual.*

KRISHNAN: One of the few things where we must give credit to Dave is that he did not confine himself to pure labor as such. The kind of information he was getting, which was in a way a public reaction from the trade union people, was in any case due to his access to the political bosses as they were. He was able to feed a hell of a lot of information to the political and economic and other officers in the embassy.

*Q: You looked upon his function as a two-way stream.*

KRISHNAN: That's right.



*Q: He used the embassy for some things and the embassy used him to get information which could be useful in the administration of our policies. I don't want to imply there is anything wrong there.*

*No, on the contrary.*

*I would like to peruse through other labor officers without giving due credit because if you give due credit when you come down to it you might have to give due criticism. I just want to remind you that anything you say will be on this record. You can say anything you want. If you want to criticize me, I don't care. But I don't want this interview to be in terms of credit or criticism but rather at the end an identification of the types of things that were done that you thought were good and the types of things that were less without attributing to any individual.*

KRISHNAN: OK. The only reason I was compelled to make a point was that we were really building up from nothing. I had developed quite a lot of contacts but then my contacts were not really the kind of contacts that were needed for an American officer doing that kind of work.

*Q: I should tell also that with respect to Dave himself, his description of what he did is already in the Reuther file and it is really very interesting. So Dave's stay was as long as anybody, maybe Sokolove and I---*

KRISHNAN: No, I think you and Dave stayed virtually the same length of time. Sokolove was about five years not six years.

*Q: We three were the longest. Then one of the things I would have you comment on later I hope is the question what are the advantages or disadvantages of having people there for a long or short period of time. If he stays too long some negatives may start building; he may build up disadvantageous relationships. One of the things I want to cover is the value and disadvantages of the long- and short-term service for labor attachés and labor officers in a country like India. Dave stayed five-six years. Six years?*

KRISHNAN: Six years.

*Q: And then he goes on to other things and builds a wonderful beginning of the filing system and the administrative work.*

KRISHNAN: And the contacts.

*Q: And the host of contacts which must have been very valuable.*

KRISHNAN: Fabulous.

*Q: He was succeeded then by a different person.*

KRISHNAN: Totally different.

*Q: Dan Horowitz. Dan stayed a short time, much shorter. He had experience in the Foreign*

*Service rather than in the trade union and background which Dave had. Horowitz was a regular Foreign Service Officer with a good government-labor background. He had been in the labor relations field and I worked with him in the thirties in the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board). Did you know that?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: He is a different person for a different length of time with a different background with proximity to the trade union movement.*

KRISHNAN: But the proximity to the trade union movement or the lack thereof was probably compensated by the fact that he established the trade union program for Harvard University. There he had the opportunity of interacting with a number of trade union leaders not only from within the U.S. but from abroad also.

*Q: Oh, Yes, and with the advantages of his contacts with the academic community. Charles Myers, Dunlop, all those people. I am not trying to cast any aspersions on my dear friend Dan.*

KRISHNAN: No, no, no. we are talking about facts, Murray and---

*Q: You have a different background, a different length of stay and a better known and more professorial---*

KRISHNAN: He was a professor by definition.

*Q: Yes. Later when you get to the question of evaluating the types of background I would like your comment on the advantages and disadvantages of the background. For example if a guy comes from the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) like Bruce who came later and Dave Burgess with the strengths it gives them with the steel workers and the auto workers, etc. there must be some negative aspects. One could be in terms of the suspicion that some other people on the other side of the trade union movement have. Again---we will go into that later. So, Horowitz comes and stays for a relatively brief period---*

KRISHNAN: Eighteen months. I don't think he was there for more than eighteen months.

*Q: He was very disappointed---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, he was.

*Q: He was called back, but was not able to get back; he told me about it sometime ago. So you have now a different person, with a different background, and a different ambassador?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, when Dan came it was John Galbraith.

*Q: Oh, he was there with John Galbraith?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, he was a different ambassador.

*Q: What was the status of the labor program in this period? Was it as high as it was during Dave Burgess or was there a disadvantage in the hiatus?*

KRISHNAN: No, I think there was really no change during that period. Dan was trying to see what kind of programs he could introduce in addition to what was already being done. Particularly he began to look at the possibilities of the interactions between the universities, particularly for labor management/industrial relations courses. He wanted to see whether these institutions would be willing to look into those questions---I mean, in what way could the embassy play a role? The labor office could play a role in encouraging the universities in bringing about an association through the Industrial Relations Research Association (IRRA). He was a member of the IRRA, if you will recall.

*Q: Yes.*

KRISHNAN: He was trying to see if an Indian Chapter could---

*Q: Oh, Dan did?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, Dan did. It was about that time that he got transferred. Then Bruce Millen kind of revived it and started to pursue this matter.

*Q: That is interesting. It actually didn't get started until we got Mohan Das to join and who else formed it? Actually, the year after I came, you remember they formed a formal---*

KRISHNAN: It was Mohan Das who was really responsible for that.

*Q: It started under Horowitz. It proves to you that a gem of an idea that came about under Horowitz, was pushed by Millen and then finally was brought into existence---and all three of us were members of the IRRA, Dan, Millen and I. By the way, it was a very good thing to have started. Is it still in existence?*

KRISHNAN: Not really very active.

*Q: Really?*

KRISHNAN: No. I have serious doubts if it is even functioning. Maybe it is there in name; somebody may be using the letterhead. Maybe Mohan continues to do that, but I don't think it has made any impact at all.

*Q: That is too bad.*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: Horowitz then stays briefly and gets a few things started in the academic field, etc. Is it at this*

*point that we should start talking about the labor function in AID? Wasn't it at this point that a guy named Walkinshaw was head of the AID program, or was it even before?*

KRISHNAN: No. This was about the time that Walkinshaw came in.

*Q: Okay. You have then a trade unionist from the CIO who is in charge of a rather large program---*

KRISHNAN: From the CIO wing. Let us put it that way because by that time the AFL-CIO had merged already for several years.

*Q: Walkinshaw is there from the CIO wing of the AFL-CIO from the UAW (United Auto Workers) itself.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, absolutely from the UAW itself.

*Q: Appointed?*

KRISHNAN: He was I think the District Director of the UAW.

*Q: Yes, appointed by AID with any approval of the State Department as totally independent? What sort of relations existed between the two functions?*

KRISHNAN: Nothing.

*Q: No relationship at all?*

KRISHNAN: No, No. Each one, well. Let me simply make the observation that there was really no functional coordination. Bob Walkinshaw looked at his assignment in a totally different light. Dan was trying to build on what had already been built and give a new dimension to that relationship, but then he didn't find the kind of response that he had expected from AID.

*Q: Well, there are a whole lot of things that should be looked into by any academic study of the function of the State Department as against the function of AID, irrespective of personality, irrespective of background, but simply the function. Because, as you know, I had experience both in the AID program and in the embassy side. I never saw a case in which---It did not turn out that way because he was needed elsewhere and then there is a hiatus and then Bruce Millen comes.*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: Does Dan's functioning continue pretty much or does it change?*

KRISHNAN: It pretty much changes because his contact with the trade union movement became a little closer and more expanded. At the same time he was trying to initiate new programs thru AID also. One of the programs was the possibility of establishing worker education programs in

the universities as part of the labor management relationship programs. Again, you know these things have a long gestation period before anything can be done but then he was called back just after he had completed two years of his assignment. If he had continued for a little longer time he probably would have succeeded in bringing to fruition some of the ideas that---

*Q: Wasn't he also instrumental in bringing Victor Reuther over?*

KRISHNAN: Sure.

*Q: That led to the development of a program proposal by Victor thru the ambassador which I think was the reason I was brought out. The ambassador was intrigued with the possibility and asked, when Bruce left, that the Labor Department nominate somebody to be a labor counselor. The concentration of work under a person like Bruce was to use the AID program---*

KRISHNAN: ---to use the AID program to go into academic things. One of the things, for example, is he helped found the Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations. Not very many people had conceived of that idea. That institution continues to do a lot of work but it started basically as a management industrial relations institution. Later it developed trade union training programs also. Initially not very many people were touching this institution even with a ten-foot pole because it was established by the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) group of people. So it had a management label on it. Then over a period of time when people like Prof. C.P. Thakur came onto the scene they were able to establish some contacts with the HMS and INTUC people and they began to see some value in this program.

*Q: Only HMS and INTUC or they had---Didn't they have a real connection with the---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, but only in the name as far as---

*Q: One person. What is his name?*

KRISHNAN: Nanda.

*Q: Nanda was a delightful person.*

KRISHNAN: He, in fairness to him, didn't use the institution for any of his political purposes at all. Then the trade union training program conducted by them was not really all that appreciated, basically because of the labor. It was always considered to be a management tool.

During the Millen time the contacts were with the Indian Institute of Personnel Management and the National Institute of Labor Management, one headquartered in Calcutta and the other headquartered in Bombay. This was very well and this was solidified during your assignment there.

*Q: This activity illustrates for me at least the utilization of a variety of persons with backgrounds in doing things in their own field where they have had experience. The year that Bruce spent in Madison or on the industrial relations staff at the Institute for Industrial Relations resulted in*

*thinking of this kind. Then when he came to India and when we got around to discussing the different kinds of functions we should remember the advantages in different types of backgrounds being utilized. I don't know about Sokolove, but beginning with Burgess, the background of the person leads to the thick of certain things. There is great advantage in having a variety of backgrounds, irrespective of what their specifics are, so that you can draw on a number of different experiences that can be useful in administering labor programs.*

KRISHNAN: I fully appreciate the point that you are making but then here is an experience where something like a 'hit-and-run' method was happening, quote unquote. One person plants the seed, sows the seed or whatever it is one does. Then the other one follows up to water the plant. There are other occasions when only a certain aspect is being concentrated upon to the neglect of other aspects. This is another dangerous thing that happens. What I am trying to suggest is that there should be a real broad range of objectives that should be clearly set with every individual playing whatever role they can from their own individual backgrounds. At the same time they should develop the other aspects or at least do not neglect the other aspects.

*Q: This obviously argues for a very much more systematic development of objectives and utilization of things that have been successful. Just because a guy does something and there is a word that he should do something else, you should not unless you can continue the beneficial aspects of what has gone on before. I must confess, as the person who succeeded Bruce, that I came not with a different agenda but with additional items on my agenda. For those I might have neglected other things. Well, after Bruce left the ambassador decided to set up a counsellorship for labor affairs because of his background, his interest in labor, etc. and his friendship with the labor department. The labor department saw great advantage in that because they had been wanting to set up counsellorships. So by some tighter cooperation the department established an additional level and recruited somebody with the combination of backgrounds that I had, an expert in some and---*

KRISHNAN: Even if you put it that way, Murray, jack of all trades, what you were about to suggest goes far beyond the facts. A person who has such a wide background is in a position to clearly see which of the backgrounds the person has and which he can really emphasize, given the situation at a particular point of history in the country. It makes a valuable contribution.

*Q: The situation is different; the AID program is different, the friendship of the United States, the situation and relationships between the two countries are different. I don't expect you to go through all the qualities of mine because you are now staying in my house! I think there were different opportunities and I took advantage of them. Sometimes you had no idea of the degree to which I thought I failed. I think you were trying very much to convince the Indian labor government, the labor minister, those in the labor situation to change their attitude towards bargaining and things like that. There were a whole lot of aspects where I failed but it was not my fault.*

KRISHNAN: Look at the Indian labor ministry making the recommendation to the ministry of health to ensure that the two ministries agree that the trade union organizations should be specifically encouraged to adopt and propagate family planning amongst industrial workers. I mean who was responsible for planting this idea? Then the Indian Labor Conference sat on it and

approved this as a policy. This became a government policy. And if only---

*Q: The policy was not enforced to the degree at my---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, but if only we had the kind of cooperation that we had expected from AID at the same time from USIS in terms of bringing experts from the United States in certain fields. During the time you were there I think we could have achieved a hell of a lot compared to what in some ways I feel was a missed opportunity.

*Q: What happened to that fellow at the tea plantations who had the idea of encouraging---*

KRISHNAN: Perumal.

*Q: Perumal was the colonel or the captain.*

KRISHNAN: Captain Perumal.

*Q: Captain Perumal. He is the trade union guy. The management guy who had this idea---*

KRISHNAN: Southern India plantation.

*Q: He had the idea of rewarding women who had no children.*

KRISHNAN: Chacko

*Q: Chacko. Women have no children. The no-baby bonus idea was to replace encouraging people to have children because they got more money if they had more dependents. His idea I thought was great. I don't know what happened to the idea of giving the no-baby bonus or giving a better bonus if you don't have any children.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, but that worked only for a while. I don't think UPASI (United Planters Association of Southern India) pursued that matter with any vigor further than that. Then Chacko himself retired and joined some organization in Geneva for a little while. He was going back and forth. The ILO (International Labor Organization) gave him some assignment. Then his own interest got diverted to new areas.

*Q: We agree that more could have been done in connection with the AID funds that we had at our disposal. The relations with trade unions were good, I would say, but we still couldn't solve the problem of the AFL-CIO and the Indian Trade Union Movement establishing a good relationship.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, I agree with you. I don't know if I should allude to what extent their own channels of communication contributed to the understanding of the situation by the AFL-CIO. In whatever perspective it was and to what extent, it contributed to the AFL-CIO not taking the kind of initiatives one would have expected.

*Q: Well, my observation was at that time that the AFL-CIO was too insistent on the acceptance by the Indian trade union movement of various conditions which they felt they could accept; on the other hand the INTUC was especially unwilling to risk its relationship with its government by accepting conditions that the AFL-CIO and the U.S. government placed upon that type of cooperation.*

*It was very interesting how the attitude of the U.S. government and trade unions toward assisting trade unions in another country evolved. The governments crossed with one another but were still democratically oriented. Then one of these days we could get Dan Horowitz to compare the situation he worked with in Italy. There were two unions, both of them members of the ICFTU. I think he was instrumental in directing American trade union and the U.S. government policy towards realizing that if you had two unions you couldn't expect them to work together because of their differences. That is a subject for research later on. There was activity which was unsuccessful in many cases but there was activity in the field of trying to advise the government on labor relations policy which I thought was so brilliant. I failed to do so completely! I was going to revolutionize that and to establish research facilities. The whole government had as its subject the family planning policy where we had some labor aspects too and a few other things, e.g., assistance to the Asian regional labor organizations. Excuse me for interrupting. What happened to Mathur?*

KRISHNAN: Mathur retired from the ICFTU Asian Regional Organization.

*Q: How long ago?*

KRISHNAN: I think about four years ago.

*Q: On retirement, is he living in Delhi?*

KRISHNAN: He is living in Delhi and I think he is still working on his rural project in Banaras. I don't know where he gets his funds; then he is trying to continue his work in adult education.

*Q: Is he running a travel bureau?*

KRISHNAN: Do we really have to go into this?

*Q: No. After that glorious experience for six years, Weiner stayed only for a brief period concentrating in trade union relations as I recall.*

KRISHNAN: Purely the bilateral relationship between the AFL-CIO and the INTUC and the HMS and he found the HMS to be a little more responsive relatively speaking.

*Q: After that brief period, was there a hiatus before Block or did he succeed immediately?*

KRISHNAN: No. There was a hiatus between the two.

*Q: We no longer had an assistant labor attaché. You in effect had to perform your usual function*



*of guiding the office until the successor came in; as I like to put it, training the successor for a while.*

KRISHNAN: Let me not assume that responsibility.

*Q: What different type of function is now introduced by a guy like Block who comes from a trade union family but is a regular foreign service officer and qualified lawyer. Did he operate in different fields? I had a feeling from my visit there that he was active within the embassy, perhaps a little bit more than I was. Was that only because of his work on the school board?*

KRISHNAN: Work on the school board was one thing; that was for one term. The other thing is he thought that the labor function should be part of the political function and that is the way the office should be integrated into the political section.

*Q: Didn't that happen at the time of me and Weiner also?*

KRISHNAN: No, under you. You had a distinctive advantage compared to the others because you were really senior for one thing.

*Q: Oh yes, I had a senior grade but I found that an advantage to be technical: first of all nobody could stop me from going to the ambassador. Also there was an advantage in the political side; I could accomplish certain things by being in the section.*

KRISHNAN: You made the precise point. Nobody could stop you from going to the ambassador. This was like the identical situation when Dave Burgess was the labor attaché and he was absolutely part of the political section. Then he had expanded his operations in such a manner that he was frequently being called upon by the ambassador for guidance on various things.

*Q: Yes, but that has disadvantages too. How would you like to be a political counselor and suddenly you find out that the ambassador has given your assignment to somebody else in your section, but independent of your relationship to manage the section.*

KRISHNAN: No, it depends on how you build the coordination there. As long as one of the officers has the capability to access certain things or for that matter look into specific aspects or is in a position to de-emphasize the political aspects and bring the economic content into the relationship, it has the advantage. It depends on how it is viewed. Though on a number of occasions the ambassador called upon Dave to do certain things or Dave was in a position to make suggestions to the ambassador directly, he made sure that political officers also were aware of it. Similarly he ensured that from the ambassador's office the message was very clearly conveyed. I don't remember any occasion when there was any serious conflict between the two, the political and the labor section at that time.

*Q: In Burgess' time?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: In my time, nothing serious really. I think there was a little annoyance occasionally because I had this separate access.*

KRISHNAN: Then when Weiner came he emphasized the need to be independent of the political section and within a few weeks of his arrival he was made to report directly to the DCM (the deputy chief of mission).

*Q: Did that create problems?*

KRISHNAN: It created a lot of misunderstandings between the two sections. So it was in that context that we saw Weiner departing and then Steve Block coming.

*Q: Then Block feels that it should---*

KRISHNAN: ---it should be under the political section only. If I recall, Block felt that the labor function should be fully integrated into the political function, whereas I felt differently.

*Q: What about the economic function? There were so many labor problems regarding the economy.*

KRISHNAN: This is why I was not in agreement with that approach. The functions were not really integrated that way. What happened was that some of the work of the political section which was purely political work was getting assigned to Steve Block to a point where I was taking on additional work on labor issues as such.

*Q: This is administratively a disadvantage because the minute you give a person a broader responsibility than just trade union you start giving him other assignments and then that is a disadvantage. Block then concentrated on political issues within the embassy, but his trade union relations were excellent as I recall because of my tour there---*

KRISHNAN: Sure, sure.

*Q: Yes, but it is a question of emphasis. Then Becker followed.*

KRISHNAN: Becker followed him and---

*Q: How long was he there? Three years or so?*

KRISHNAN: Becker also was there for three years. The pattern more or less continued.

*Q: He had no labor background except he had been on a training program, I think.*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: He followed through as a foreign service officer with a sympathetic understanding of labor but no particular connection.*

KRISHNAN: Right.

*Q: He stayed three years. Then Leader came for three or four.*

KRISHNAN: Three years I think. There was a discussion whether he should--- Yes, I think he was there for three years if my memory serves me correctly. He had an excellent relationship. He had a tremendous conflict because he saw that labor should be a separate function. He wanted to ensure that labor became a separate function by the time six years had passed. It is not that easy to separate the function and restore it---

*Q: He wanted also to be responsible to the DCM directly?*

KRISHNAN: Not necessarily. He was prepared to work out of the political section but as a separate office---as an office dealing exclusively with labor functions because he found a lot of merit in that. Unfortunately he was constantly being given a lot of political work.

We had problems with Sri Lanka and because of his past experience in Sri Lanka he was given the authority. He worked as desk officer for Sri Lanka also, so continued association for a longer duration. With such a serious problem between the two countries, who else could have been the ideal person? The net result was that I was the one who was pitching in. It was in the political section, at those higher levels. They were even saying that there was really no need for a separate labor officer as long as Krish is here.

*Q: He then is succeeded very briefly by Tony Kern who unfortunately became ill and didn't really stay long enough to decide what he wanted to concentrate on. Am I right about that?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, but one thing he was very clear about was that the labor function should be exclusive, just as Jim was trying to get it established. Tony decided that he had to start that work right from day one but that got into a whole lot of conflict with the embassy political section, and to an extent with the administrative section.

*Q: By this time is it still a counselor position or did this deteriorate to a labor attaché function?*

KRISHNAN: Right after your departure; no, right after Weiner's departure. No, no, Block was the first counselor with an FSO 3 grade in the embassy.

*Q: I was a FSO 1.*

KRISHNAN: You were the only one who was an FSO 1.

*Q: Weiner was an FSO 2 who then went on to be an FSO 3. Leader?*

KRISHNAN: Leader was an FSO 3. He was promoted. He was designated as the first secretary.

*Q: So, Leader was a counselor---*

KRISHNAN: No, Leader was the first secretary.

*Q: Leader was first secretary. The last counselor was Block?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: And Becker?*

KRISHNAN: Becker was also a first secretary. Then Tony came; the discussion began again whether it should have a counselor designation or not. Tony, I think, carried FSO 2 as his grade, if I am not mistaken. Tony started emphasizing the exclusive role for him as the labor officer. This was not to his liking and so his illness came in very handy.

In the meantime the foreign service inspectors came on the scene. They were examining various positions' functions and they came up with the conclusion that the labor office had not sent so many reports. So all those usual bureaucratic evaluations took place. They said there was no need for a labor officer's job here. There was an endorsement of that by the ambassador. It became a serious question whether there would be a labor officer at all any more in the embassy. Apparently this became a matter of big debate between the Labor Department and the State Department. The AFL-CIO pitching in very heavily on the side of the Labor Department. Probably at that time a certain element of the role of the AFL-CIO itself was called into question. They were asked if they were so serious about it why not send their representative over there and mend fences with people. That is how---Tony's illness sort of contributed to the function not taking off.

*Q: Then there was a hiatus before Salisbury came?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: He came in only as a political officer with concentration on labor?*

KRISHNAN: No. He was fully integrated into the political section.

*Q: He did some labor work.*

KRISHNAN: Some labor work, but then I was with him just for a month. So I would not be able to comment very much on what happened during that time.

*Q: I would like you to comment, based on your long experience, on how important length of service is. Can a guy do anything if he is limited to two years?*

KRISHNAN: No, Murray. I am very clear in my mind.

*Q: Three years, four years?*

KRISHNAN: Three years is also a somewhat short period, particularly from the individual's own point of view because he needs a little break there. So a four-year assignment is something which I would consider ideal, but if some programs are on-going with something that has to be pursued in connection with that program I would not mind another tour of duty for that particular individual.

*Q: Let me then raise another question. We had a case, a couple of cases in Europe, in which my judgment was this guy has been at post too long. He is too set in his views. He knows already what the players believe in, and what opinions he will hear. He is boxed into a position. He has a vested interest. Four years ago he reported that Union X was no good and therefore he can't see the changes that are taking place in Union X. Don't we need a fresh mind on it? You know there is that disadvantage of a great deal of continuity contributing to a person's laziness, his refusal to expose himself to new leadership coming up, and his defensive attitude based on earlier reports.*

KRISHNAN: Actually I would consider this as drawbacks of an individual rather than as something for policy makers to look into during an assignment.

*Q: That's an important issue, yes.*

KRISHNAN: In any diplomatic assignment, giving due credit to the drawbacks of individuals, I think objectivity should never be lost. One should keep one's eyes and ears constantly open all the time to look into avenues of new openings.

*Q: Is the value of an individual serving as an officer---a labor officer---dependent in any respect on his background: academic, foreign service, U.S. Department of Labor, management or government? Is a determining factor what his background is or is it dependent entirely on the individual's combination of experience, personality, etc.*

KRISHNAN: The individual's background is very important. You are virtually repeating the point if I understood you correctly because when you say experience I am referring to his background. The background of the individual is very very important unless you are trying to say whether he was a trade unionist or belonged to a trade union family that you consider as a background and you are separating the experience in terms of career experience. I am combining the two experiences as part of the background. When he comes to take up an assignment, what is his background? In this kind of a specialized field a background of a wider nature is extremely important and valuable. I don't know if I should make a comparison here but when someone who has had a trade union background and has had the opportunity to work in the government, or on an international assignment, he is academically oriented, he is intellectually solid and he keeps up an open mind on the issue. This is the kind of background that would be valuable in this kind of assignment.

*Q: On the trade unions side, as part of his experience as a trade unionist, there are great advantages as we have seen in some of the cases. There also disadvantages if he is tied down to one particular trade union or one particular orientation. If it is one particular trade union I think he might become too close to one particular union. That would lead to an inability to be*

*objective. Whereas when a person comes, as we say, 'squeaky-clean' without any background in any of the unions, he can't be accused of being less than objective.*

KRISHNAN: OK, in the first case, when you say he is a pure trade unionist it very much depends upon whether such a person is well qualified to be assigned as a foreign service officer. What are the standards that you have to recruit a foreign service officer? Here is a person who has a trade union background but he has a much wider range of background and interest and he will fit in with the overall policy objectives of the U.S. government.

*Q: What if his trade union background involves just the push from the trade union leaders to get him into the government?*

KRISHNAN: Well, that would be a sad thing to happen. That kind of recruitment is not in the interest of serving foreign policy objectives. On the contrary if a person with a trade union background, who is prepared to grow out of that shell, if I may use that expression, and see things he would be a lot more valuable.

*Q: Krish, at this point before we end, I would like to ask you to comment on what you think, on the evidence of all the people who were labor attachés or labor officers while you were serving the U.S. government. My asking is indicative of how highly we regard you as a person, and as a person who has contributed so much to our work as labor officers. I want you to direct your attention to the training that you have had for the job, much of it self-training, until Burgess came along. You learned something from each successful person while you were teaching.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, that was totally two-way traffic, no question at all.

*Q: I am concerned (and the State Department knows I have been because I have been pressuring them on this) about the fact that because the foreign service national's work is so important to the U.S. government's objectives and because there are so many hiatuses between the officers and the need for continuity we have to worry about how we train this person. One aspect of that training is the sort you had when you came to the United States in 1965. What is your feeling about its usefulness? I know you thought it was very useful for you to come, but give us some examples of the sort of things you could do as a result of the contacts you made, and what you learned in your direct contact with the American society when you were trained? What comments do you have on that?*

KRISHNAN: I see. One thing I would like to---Let me take this step by step. I think it is an absolute necessity for someone who is performing the labor function in the office as a specialist---it is a specialty---to get a proper orientation of the practices in a country which he is trying to represent. Quote end quote. Training is a serious question when national employees have representation and responsibility in that respect or, not talking about entertaining or anything, that has all been taken care of by the State Department. National employees these days are permitted to entertain and get reimbursed. When you were there you were reimbursing me out of your own allotment.

*Q: I did?*

KRISHNAN: Yes.

*Q: I didn't know that. You owe me any money on that?*

KRISHNAN: No. At least not in that sense. First, here is a person who is supposed to be constantly talking about the practices in a particular country. He, or even the labor attaché or the labor counselor, may not represent it in that fashion but they project the image, as it were. Unless the foreign service national employee has personal exposure to this I don't think he is really competent to discuss these things in that role.

Second, the local employee is really handicapped because he has only theoretical knowledge. There are any number of questions which come up frequently from all the types of contacts, from the wide range of contacts that we have, be it the management, trade unions, government or academic institutions and researchers who ask very pertinent questions on the nuances of the labor law or an actual practice in an industry. For example how is an arbitration of grievance carried on during an arbitration of a dispute. Very often, as you have very clearly portrayed while you were in India, people have misunderstood details from arbitration to arbitration. They want to discuss overall wage disputes or matters of interest disputes rather than individual grievances arising out of contracts being---

*Q: Adjudication of rights and adjudication of interests.*

KRISHNAN: How is this individual going to be able to distinguish between the two and discuss it very intelligently without training? Most often what happens is when you go to any of these meetings, there is always a certain reluctance that you can discern from the meetings that the Indian contact is not really openly asking the kind of clarifications he would be normally asking. He would prefer to ask this question of the Indian national who is accompanying him in separate meetings or even using local language to communicate with him and trying to get an answer.

*Q: Can you give specific examples? For instance I was hoping that you could give us a specific example of something where you would not have had enough information or grasped the nuances of the problem that you appreciated. Perhaps note a specific thing that you did while you were here. I would like you to comment on the value you expressed as you indicated by the invitation of McNamara to have you come to Milwaukee to see him. Aside from any knowledge the person gains, it is the contacts. You know who suggested you to the labor attaché because you were there, you had visited the union or something like that.*

KRISHNAN: Oh yes.

*Q: You mentioned that to me so many times and yet you haven't---*

KRISHNAN: Yes, but then we have not gotten talking about this . We were talking only about the value. We have just begun to talk about the value. That's why I said let me go step by step and here is an opportunity. I had put in by that time nearly eleven years of work in the embassy. I had had exchanges of information benefit---

*Q: This is tape no. 3, September 4, 1992.*

KRISHNAN: Here is the experience that I gained over the ten-year period or eleven-year period in the context of the background of the various individual labor officers under whom I had worked. You need a wide background, wide range of interests from the individual's point of view, trying to serve foreign policy objectives. With that kind of experience, I probably could have considered myself as an expert by that time itself but then I somehow had developed the quality of trying to always keep an open mind on anything. Here I come to the United States under this orientation program.

*Q: You might describe the program in more detail. There were how many of you?*

KRISHNAN: In all there were ten foreign service national employees who were selected from various parts of the world, out of which four were labor people, one from Spain, one from Italy, one from India and another from Japan. Individuals had totally varied backgrounds, totally different labor scenarios in their respective countries. Individuals were interacting with each other and trying to learn from each other and to share experiences. This opportunity would never have arisen otherwise. It was wonderful for me to have had the opportunity to discuss the nuances of individual labor movements and relate them in some manner, if possible (or not), and to see whether there was any adaptability in some of those nuances. It was also useful to compare the involvement of the various political parties in their respective countries vis-a-vis their trade union organizations and how they controlled issues or the other way round.

Anyway, I could not have considered myself as an expert unless I had kept a completely open mind so as to try to learn as much as possible. When I came here and began to see things on a personal basis face-to-face, I found there were any number of nuances which I had missed understanding despite conversations I had with them or despite discussions with visitors that I have had. Trade union people were coming in a stream in those days. This was an aspect we forgot to cover.

One of the things Dave Burgess did straightaway was to begin to emphasize the need for trade union visitors from the U.S. In spite of all the discussions that I had with them when I came there, and when I came here to observe personally some of these things I could, my horizon was totally widened. I really wish that after a period of about ten or fifteen years more I had the opportunity to revisit this country to refurbish my own knowledge, and at the same time observe the changes that have taken place during this period if any.

There were many changes that had taken place during this period. With follow-on training, I would have been much better equipped to serve the embassy for the remaining ten years I was there. I very much emphasize the need for such training. If training could be given at an earlier stage and to a younger person who has the possibility of long years of service and development of his career, this would be the most wonderful thing that could happen to the U.S. government.

*Q: What sort of exposure did you have? I know the answer basically about the labor problems, but what sort of things were done for you, what types of people did you meet, what types of travel*



*was permitted, etc.?*

KRISHNAN: As far as the participants in this program were concerned, we had the freedom to develop our own travel itinerary. In fact, they invited suggestions from us and they worked out the program.

*Q: Who were they? Who was in charge of that?*

KRISHNAN: The International Labor Affairs Bureau.

*Q: The Labor Department programmed your trip?*

KRISHNAN: The Labor Department programmed us completely.

*Q: Who was in charge, Harold?*

KRISHNAN: Harold Davey was in charge. Then there was a lady officer who was made the program manager, program officer, very nice person, Chinese orientation.

*Q: Oh, Yes. B.C. Lavell.*

KRISHNAN: B.C. Lavell. Wonderful lady. She worked out the program the way I had desired myself. She made her own suggestions out of her own knowledge to see if I would like to make some changes. I was willing to accept those changes except that she felt strongly I was working myself to death on this occasion.

*Q: That is how she reacted to this.*

KRISHNAN: She was worried at the pace at which I was working.

*Q: Whose idea was it to include Madison?*

KRISHNAN: I think Bruce suggested that.

*Q: Because he had a great experience.*

KRISHNAN: That got included for the remaining labor people also.

*Q: Did all of you participate in this fascinating conversation with Perlman or just you?*

KRISHNAN: Myself, Ozan, Kassalow and Barbash. I don't think anyone else was present there. I had the unique experience of not only visiting with the National Labor Relations Board and hearing the lectures on various procedures and the demonstration in the films and what not but I had the opportunity to see the actual union secret ballot voting in terms of representational election. Similarly, thanks to Bert McNamara, I was able to sit in on a voluntary arbitration case the whole day; the proceedings went on for a whole day. Here I was sitting right through the

morning till later in the afternoon. Bert got special permission from the union, and management, and the arbitrator himself. Normally people are not allowed to sit in these things other than those who are concerned with it.

*Q: That was a good experience.*

KRISHNAN: It was a very very valuable experience that I went through. To see the distinction between the adjudication system that is prevailing today in India even for individual cases as opposed to the grievances arising out of---now here is an example where I could very clearly appreciate the nuance involved in rights disputes as well as interest disputes. You can hear any---

*Q: I am only asking a question that will expose the details of the procedures of the NLRB, arbitration procedures, etc. One of the things when I came to India and I don't know if you were specifically guilty on this was the tendency to transfer that experience in toto to India, i.e. people from my point of view were attracted by that idea. Let's have an election like the one you saw in the United States without any appreciation of the fact that that kind of election has to be changed considerably before it will be applicable to India. Did you get the feeling that this is something you are going to come back and give the wisdom to India or did you understand the fact that it had to be adapted to your country?*

KRISHNAN: Murray, even today I have a difference of opinion on this.

*Q: With me?*

KRISHNAN: With you. I honestly believe that this kind of a system is the one that has to be introduced and that is the only way that the economic content of the movement will receive its due recognition.

Look at the changes that have taken place in the industrial and economic policy for this country. Today, in the last one year of my country, what is going to be the role of the trade union movement in this context? Will it be just the negative context saying that no, you cannot retrench people, you cannot do this, you cannot do that but will the trade union movement be able to survive on this? When are they going to bring about the economic content? Who is going to take the responsibility for this?

*Q: The unions.*

KRISHNAN: Yes. If the people are not seeing the economic content very clearly and if they are not going to work together as one single organization the divisiveness in the trade union movement is definitely going to be exploited not only by the management but by the government

*Q: Well, this is an interesting point which we have discussed many times. My feeling is that the doctrinaire differences between unions and among the unions are so great that we cannot get them to agree to abide by the decisions of the majority. You know from your experience in India that no type of agreement will stand the test of time when there is an ideological, political, or economic difference that causes one union, which may have signed the agreement, to go out on*

*strike. This is a good example of the adaptation I mentioned. What I would have liked, when I came back there---I think it was 1983---was to find that in the steel industry they had adapted the United State's valiant experience. Very well, I was told that in the collective bargaining in the steel industry---Billimoria and others---they forced the unions to sit on one side of the table with the public sector or on the other side along with the private sector. They said we will discuss anything with you, any demand to get people to agree and that forced not one union to represent them but forced all the unions to get together with a joint position on a particular demand. Once we put the onus on the union for studying the demand, it is no matter whether you have one union or one hundred unions.*

KRISHNAN: Let me go back for a moment on this question in two different parts. One was the secret ballot election to get the bargaining agent; the other was a composite form of a body which will negotiate with a composite body of the management. It will be of considerable interest to you to learn that even the INTUC, which was alone opposing the secret ballot election, has accepted this as a solution for recognition of a bargaining agent. It has totally changed its position; you are aware of it.

*Q: Yes.*

KRISHNAN: It has in some cases also practiced it wherever of course it found it to be to its advantage. The experiment is being made. The second aspect is that I find that "undue credit" is being given to this composite form of bargaining that has taken place.

*Q: Is it continuing?*

KRISHNAN: It is continuing but it has become a farce, if I may use that expression. I think I am being very harsh on this but then it is not true bargaining that is taking place. In the process what is happening is it gets further delayed. Over a period of three years it goes back and forth, negotiating, then reaching an agreement, then applying it retroactively. By the time the whole thing is implemented, the arrears are paid and all that, you are again beginning to bargain. This is not really working out the way it should. How many unions have really concentrated on ensuring the implementation of these agreements? Where does this rivalry end? Simply because he reached an agreement even in the way of implementation of the various provisions of the agreement the unions may differ and continue to play a role based on their political interest. So you have not really solved the problem at all. On the contrary, if you decide on this as the procedure and you begin to really enforce it at whatever may be the cost, that cost is going to be of a temporary, transitory nature. Then you will begin to see the advantages of having a collective bargaining agent.

*Q: A single collective bargaining agent is qualified to bargain about the economic terms between, in particular, management and union. Some unions may feel free to oppose another union chosen by the people by secret ballot election. From their point of view, if that union is made up of people who will sacrifice the very existence of the collective bargaining agreement to some transitory, political objective that they may have, they may feel that their concern is not included in the agreement. What will you do? Is the government prepared to discriminate against the people who violate the agreement.*

KRISHNAN: Yes, see this is where once you begin to accept the principle of exclusive bargaining agency relationship or principle, the rest of things fall into place. It is a question of who bells the cat or where do we begin. Let's begin from the beginning. Otherwise when will this trade union movement get depoliticized from the point of view of bilateral labor management relationship? It should be the way it should.

The act itself has not yet been passed.

*Q: By the way, has Ramanujam agreed to this?*

KRISHNAN: Yes, this is what I am trying to tell you. Ramanujam is the head of the INTUC. He found over a period of time that this was getting---

*Q: I don't think it is a solution for India. I certainly do think it has to be thought out: what compromises do we have to make to agree to this concept of one agreement. That I agree with. It's time you get the people of various unions to agree because unions are in fact in place. They won't give up that. You can take away the individual rights of the trade union---*

KRISHNAN: I think you can go on indefinitely..

*Q: You established to my satisfaction the sort of argument that we have to make in the State Department which is the fewer people you have who devote their total time to labor. We understand that there are budgetary limitations; you can't have a labor attaché in every country, we understand that. You have to have your foreign nationals capable of doing practically everything except the most secret cables or something. You have to do it. Anything else you want to say?*

KRISHNAN: I really can't think of anything, Morris. We have covered a lot as it were.

*Q: Thank you very much for devoting the last evening of your stay with us. Thanks, Krish.*

*What I plan to do is send a copy of these tapes to you and ask you when you can get this transcribed to your satisfaction, if you would send me a floppy disk. I will edit it and ask you to agree or change it in any way you want. The outcome should be a document which we would put in various files which would describe the role of the foreign service, and foreign nationals in the labor function. We want to have it available to students who will study the administration and foreign policy. I would appreciate it if you would transcribe tapes two and three first for our purposes and use the beginning of tape one to add a few comments and send it to us. We will get it back to you as soon as I can edit it. That will be an important part of our labor diplomacy or history project.*

KRISHNAN: Thank you very much, Murray, for giving me the opportunity to exchange some thoughts with you on this. Thanks again.

*End of interview*

Note on BALPA:

A special task force was established in the Office of the Under Secretary to coordinate implementation of a January 18, 1968 Presidential directive to deal with the U.S. balance of payments problem by reducing the number of U.S. overseas personnel.

March 30, 1968

President Johnson approved a plan to reduce the number of U.S. officials serving overseas by 12%. "Operation BALPA" planned to eliminate 200 Foreign Service positions by the end of June 2 to 300 by the end of the year, and 200 more by July 1, 1969.

August 13, 1968

President Johnson approved further reductions in U.S. official personnel overseas under Phase Two of Operation BALPA. The new goal was to reduce the number of U.S. personnel overseas by 18% and foreign national employees by 16% by September 30, 1969.

August 29, 1968

The Bureau of the Budget limited the Department of State's hiring of new full-time employees to 70% of those who were separated, starting on September 1.

August 30, 1968

The Department of State's BALPA Task Force concluded its operations and set new personnel ceilings for each region. In Africa, American personnel were to be reduced 19% and foreign nationals 13%. In Latin America, the reductions were 17% and 15%. In East Asia, the reductions were 17% and 16%. Europe and International Organizations lost 18% and 19%. The Near East and South Asia lost 18% and 16%. Overall reductions would be 18% in American personnel and 16% in foreign nationals.

November 8, 1968

Executive Order 11434 authorized the Secretary of State and the Director of USIA to promulgate regulations concerning the Foreign Service personnel and retirement systems.

March 7, 1969

In response to a February 17 message from President Richard M. Nixon that urged all federal agencies to reduce their personnel to a necessary minimum. Secretary of State [William P. Rogers](#) directed the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration to work with bureau chiefs to achieve the necessary reductions. Although there were no plans for lower BALPA ceilings, only essential vacancies were to be filled and employment reductions were likely to continue at least through Fiscal Year 1970.

