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

JAMES MATTSON

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Initial interview date: May 4, 1995

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INTERVIEW

[Note: this interview was not edited by Mr. Mattson.]

Q: Jim, do you want to begin with some background on your family, your education, and your pre-Foreign Service experience?

MATTSON: Certainly. I grew up in Minnesota, living for a while in Minneapolis, but most of my teen years in a small town called Park Rapids up about 200 miles north of Minneapolis. I suppose you could say that the fact that I grew up in Minnesota gave me my first interest and identification with labor. Minnesota was a strong labor state, even though it didn't have heavy industry. In fact, for quite a number of years going back to the '30s, the Democratic party was known as the Farmer Labor Party. In Park Rapids, the small town where I grew up, there wasn't organized labor to speak of. It was a town of perhaps 2,500. Tourists would come in the summertime, and those who could afford to go south would leave before the wintertime.

But in any event, I became acquainted with labor and labor issues there and particularly when I went on to college. I went to a small college in southern Minnesota called Gustavus Adolphus College, and there one of my best friends—and, in fact, one of my senior year roommates—was a fellow named Floyd Olson, who is named for his uncle who had been the New Deal governor in Minnesota in the 1930s and whose father at the time was then president of the state Federation of AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations]. So we used to talk politics and labor quite often.

Q: One question: Was your family involved in politics at all?

MATTSON: No. No. Not at all. Not my immediate family or even my extended family on either side. Politics was, I guess, an interest that I developed first of all in the family.

Q: Were any of them involved in the labor movement?

MATTSON: No. For those of us living in Park Rapids, there was really no labor movement to speak of there. And otherwise, most of them were working in farms or in small towns. But anyway, I had a year and a half of college and then the Korean War came along. So I dropped out and enlisted in the Army and after three years returned to college. After graduating, I had a fellowship and studied a year at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. Went back home and joined the Foreign Service.

Q: What was your major in college?

MATTSON: I majored in languages and political science. But I was trying to take many courses in different fields and didn't really concentrate on a major.

Q: And when did you get into the Foreign Service?

MATTSON: In August of 1957, the end of August.

Q: This was right after your year abroad?

MATTSON: Yeah, in fact, the same day, in the spring of my senior year, I received letters saying that I'd been awarded this fellowship and saying that I'd passed the Foreign Service written exam, so I didn't do anything about it, figuring it would probably take a year or two before I'd be considered for entry into the Foreign Service, but then, in July, I was invited to Minneapolis to take the oral exam and passed that and then I had to write a letter to the State Department asking for a year's delay in—

Q: That was July 1956?

MATTSON: '57. No—'56, right!

Q: Then you went abroad in 1956–57? What was the focus of your academic work in Belgium?

MATTSON: '56-57. Well, I thought that I would rather have a European focus rather than that of any particular country. That happened to be about the only school on the continent then that offered courses with a European focus. Most of its faculty members were from different countries and would come for a week or two at a time or, if they were close enough, one day a week for a semester. I took courses in European economics, European politics, political parties in Europe, public administration in Europe. I found it very, very rewarding. It was a very small school, in its seventh year. There were, I think, forty-five of us, no more than five from any particular country. Two Americans who, oddly enough, both came from northern Minnesota. The other is, I guess, in his fifteenth year as a congressman from northern Minnesota.

Q: What's his name?

MATTSON: Jim Oberstar. He and I remain good friends. It was funny, because when we first met each other there, we sort of shunned each other, because we hadn't come to Europe to meet another Minnesotan. But after about three months, we got together more and more often and used to discuss everything imaginable, including politics. In any event, I joined the Foreign Service in August 1957. After basic training, was sent overseas on the first tour doing consular work, first in Vienna, then after about four months being transferred to Salzburg to start up a Hungarian refugee visa program, then a year later moving on to Bonn, where I was the local consular officer of a district of 49 square miles. And that's where I had my next encounter with labor, this time with the labor attachés. While I was there, Richard Eldridge, the labor attaché, died. Since he had no immediate relatives nearby I had to take charge of the estate and I was told there's an impressive library of books in English, in German, in French and in Italian, about labor.

Q: Did you actually meet Richard Eldridge before he died?

MATTSON: Never. I was very very low in the totem pole at a very large Embassy. I just, as it were, became acquainted with him after his death and subsequently arranged to have somebody else who had had labor assignments, Jim Engle, was in Düsseldorf, work out arrangements for his library of books, to be given to the proper university.

Q: Was that a German university?

MATTSON: No, in the United States. I don't recall which one it was. At that point in time, I didn't know where to start. In any event, after my two years abroad, I had two years, four years I guess, back in Washington.

Q: Now you were going back to Washington in 1959?

MATTSON: Well, it was actually 1960. And after four years in Washington -- two years working detail in AID and two years in INR, where I worked on the French desk -- I went overseas to Casablanca, Morocco.

Q: This was in 1964 then?

MATTSON: '62. I'm sorry. I guess I was back in Washington for just two years. That was my assignment in INR working on French affairs. December of 1962 I arrived in Casablanca where I was to be a consular officer for about six months, mainly because we were closing our air bases in Morocco the following year and they expected there would be a great deal of business involving the Americans who'd be leaving as a result of the closings. After the six months, I moved into the junior political office to a position as the consulate general in Casablanca. And there I had my next encounter with labor or labor work. The labor officer of the consulate general was, in fact, labor attaché for the country and the position had been initially in Rabat after establishment of independence and then moved to Casablanca because that was the big city. That was the economic capital of the country. That's where the labor movement was and a lot of the politics took place.

Q: Independence was in late '50s, '57?

MATTSON: Late '50s. I think '58 but I'm not positive.

Q: Who was the labor attaché at that time?

MATTSON: The first attaché had been Steve McClintock—subsequently returned to Washington as the desk officer—[he] was the desk officer when I went out there. The second one was Bill Schaufele, who was subsequently ambassador to Upper Volta and to Poland. The third was Peter Spicer and I was the fourth. And there have been a variety of people since then.

Q: And you became labor attaché when?

MATTSON: Well, let me go back. Back in the fall of 1963, when I was in the political officer position, the then-labor officer, Peter Spicer, went on home leave and I filled in for him for about a three-month period. Then about six months later I went off to Tangier to study Arabic, or the western form of Arabic, and that was a 21-month course, so I didn't finish that until January of 1966. In the meantime, I had expressed an interest in and lobbied for the labor job in Casablanca. I knew the people involved and I was fascinated by the work there. In fact, I consider it the best job for an officer of my rank anywhere in Africa, bar none. Even though I wasn't physically stationed in the capital.

Q: And the living conditions are fantastic!

MATTSON: Well, that was nice too, but it was just a lot of fun. I got the job but I ultimately found out that there was a lot of competition. I think the advantage I had was—one, having filled in for three months, so I knew the people and they knew me, and secondly, having first French and then just finished a course in Moroccan Arabic. So I returned to Washington in January of 1966 and, after home leave, took labor training at the Department of Labor together with Bob Hare. Bob had already been working over there on African labor affairs, but he had been shifted to the Foreign Service and was named attaché to Algeria. So we were both going to neighboring countries and had this course which really consisted of visits to various people, mainly in Labor Department and in State Department—but also other agencies as well—and a week's visit to New York and New Jersey. Altogether I suppose I spent about four months in the course, I found it very useful because I, of course, had come from Morocco. I knew the people that I would be dealing with—the job I would be getting into—and so I could ask pointed questions of virtually everyone. What might apply in Morocco, what interest might I have in knowing the people? So I found this a very very useful course. And then on my way out to Morocco I stopped in Brussels for a couple of days, and then in Geneva for a couple of days, and had—in June, the course was still going on—I had a good chat with the head of our delegation, George L.P. Weaver, and then a number of others—of course, the Moroccans attending the annual conference. And then off to Morocco, where I spent the following three years. Looking back, you could say that nothing dramatic took place there, but still, it was an incredible learning experience for a brand new labor attaché.

Q: Do you want to describe briefly the three major labor federations that existed in Morocco at that time?

MATTSON: Well, there were quite a few altogether. The largest one, which was generally known as the UMT [Moroccan Workers' Union]. But it had been started by the French during the protectorate and was run essentially by the French—with Moroccan members—and it gradually became shop-steward-like. However, since it was one of the organizations at which there were large numbers of Moroccan members, it inevitably became involved in the free independence stirrings of Moroccan nationalism. And upon independence, the Moroccans took over the organization. It became from the beginning the largest and most influential of the labor organizations. Secondly, there was a separate labor federation of the Istiqlal party. There were also labor federations of minor parties.

Morocco, after its independence, was a country with a number of political parties and shifting parties and merging and dissolving parties. While there were a number of federations, the UMT was by far the most important and its leadership after the war, or rather after independence, continues to the present day.

Q: Are there outstanding leaders that you'd like to mention by name?

MATTSON: Well, the president of the federation was Mahjoub Ben Seddik, who was president from independence on—and still active. There were young men at the time. His deputy, Mohammed Abdurazak, I think has retired—but if so only within the last few years. There were quite a few others. Abuwahab Awab, who was their international affairs director and delegate at the ILO [International Labour Organization] conferences every year. There was the head of the UMT branch organization in Rabat, a fellow who'd been a high school teacher, who about 10, 15 years ago, was named the general secretary of the Arab Labor Organization.

Q: Regional?

MATTSON: No, it's not regional. It's the Arab organization modeled after the ILO. The unions had another one, ICATU [International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions], which was modeled after the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions]. They liked to do that. In any event, he had been in that position because he was one of the few Moroccans at the time in the labor movement who had a good command of classical Arabic so he could operate in the Middle East.

Q: How many nations or labor movements participated in that Arab grouping, and how important was it in the overall scheme?

MATTSON: At the time I was in Morocco, the UMT was involved in ICATU, but it was paying much more attention to Africa. In fact, before I got there in the early years of independence, there was a great deal of rivalry between the UMT and the Tunisian UGT [Tunisian General Labour Union] about gaining influence in Africa. Both of them started and headed competing African labor organizations. I don't quite remember the correct names any more. The UMT headed all African trade union federations. The Tunisian-created organization was the African Trade Union Confederation. Both dwindled and finally disappeared during the time I was there and it was clear that for both the Tunisians and the Moroccans part of the reason for being so active overseas was to gain protection at home since they were furthering Morocco's and Tunisia's interests, even though the UMT was in the opposition—or maybe because it was in the opposition they valued these international contacts. One of the reasons that we had a labor attaché in Morocco early on after independence was that the American trade union movement had been active in North Africa, getting to know and working with the native trade unionists well before independence.

Q: This was Irving Brown working out of the Paris office?

MATTSON: This was particularly Irving Brown and the people that worked for him in what was then—and I guess still is the African American—labor center.

Q: What kinds of activities did the AFL-CIO motivate?

MATTSON: At the time, not very many. I can't think of any particular projects at all, however, Irving Brown or David Brombard or one of the other people would come down at least once a year. They were always invited by the Moroccans. I have to go back one step. The Moroccans and the Tunisians and the Algerian labor movement all joined the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), but then when this rivalry came up between the Tunisians and the Moroccans, UNT dropped, disaffiliated from the IFCTU, as did the Algerians. The Tunisians, however, remained in.

Q: Could you put a date on the disaffiliation?

MATTSON: I suppose it was before my arrival there. It was probably around 1960, '59 or '60. And interestingly enough, now the Moroccans have rejoined the ICFTU. They did that a couple of years ago. And they are still very close. Mahjoub Ben Seddik has been invited and has attended the last two AFL-CIO conventions and probably several before that.

Q: So there was a close personal relationship between Irving and the leaders?

MATTSON: There was a personal relationship and I guess you'd say there was something else, too. There was a recognition of the importance of the connection with the Americans. And this was not true just with trade union leaders, but I would say Moroccans generally. They–

Q: Was this for protection against the regime while they were in opposition?

MATTSON: No. I think that to really understand the Moroccans, you have to go back in history. They have a long history of being an independent state and their self-identity as Moroccans. So the years of the protectorate from 1912 until the late 1950s were a period in which they resented being under the rule of the French but they had enough self-identity so that when they were able to end that with independence, they did not have the same kind of after effects as the Algerians in particular had, and to some extent, the Tunisians.

Q: And the French didn't try to integrate Morocco into the French?

MATTSON: No, again because Moroccans had this self-identity. Look back, for example—they took pride in noting that the first American president, George Washington, corresponded with the then-king of Morocco. In fact, the school I went to, the Arabic Language School in Tangier, under FSI [Foreign Service Institute], was in fact in the building that had been given by the Moroccan government to the U.S. government decades ago. That's one reason the school was there, because there was an available

building.

Q: Did Irving Brown, the AFL-CIO, have contact with the other federations in Morocco besides the UFT?

MATTSON: Not to the best of my knowledge. I imagine it was because while the UFT was the largest, there was this earlier association, and as you pointed out this continuing friendship.

Q: What about labor negotiations in Morocco? You said the UFT was independent of the government. Were they able to sort of promote effective collective bargaining in Morocco?

MATTSON: There was a great deal in the private sector and even negotiations of varying types in the public sector. But, yes, there was. In fact one of my side roles was to be the ambassador's representative at negotiations involving the base workers, wherever the bases had closed. But there was still a residual Naval installation at Kenitra near Rabat. While I was there, there were wage negotiations two times. Each time lasted about six months. There were weekly meetings and I would go to Rabat for the weekly meeting and listen to the two sides and report back to the ambassador. Then occasionally I would make visits to Kenitra myself and talk to the base labor relations fellow, Harold Yazi, and the base commander. Then, about once a year, the base commander would fly down to Casablanca with Yazi and meet with the Moroccans down there and then maybe go out for a big lunch. I have to add that at that time, as in a number of other countries, the Moroccan government had a nominal employer that it affected to be the nominal negotiator for the management side. However, as in so much of the Navy, officials were concerned with keeping in touch and closely involved with the Moroccan legal employer.

Q: Did your role ever go beyond simply reporting the developments to any type of mediation or intervention?

MATTSON: Not in that case. I would get involved also in following negotiations involving large American employers such as the General Tire Co., which had a plant there, which employed 500 workers. I recall one set of negotiations where things broke down. While I was in touch with both sides, it was purely on a fact-finding informational basis. One particular occasion, one of the leaders of the UNT, who was not directly involved with the negotiations, asked if I would communicate to the other side their willingness to start the negotiations over in Highgate. They got together and they were wound up within a week.

Q: Did the Embassy ever get involved in the negotiations between American firms and the local union?

MATTSON: Not really. I have to explain. The embassy was in Rabat, which was about an hour away from Casablanca, but it was largely the administrative capital. There wasn't much there. There was the university. Whereas Casablanca had a population of over a

million. It had most of your modern industry. It was a large port for imports and exports. That's where the action was. So when the Ambassador and others wanted to find out what was going on in the business community, they'd come to Casablanca.

Q: But they didn't intervene in these negotiations?

MATTSON: No. In fact, the consulate had its consul general, who, for most of the time I was there, was a very experienced economic officer. And then there'd been an economic officer besides him. The position was finally cut out in the mid-'60s. And then there was a commercial officer position, all in Casablanca. And were busy.

Q: Could you kind of describe or characterize the working relationship between you working out of Casablanca and the embassy. How'd that work out? It's sometimes rather difficult to work from the constituent post.

MATTSON: That's what I—It was a very good learning experience for me. First of all, I had an ambassador most of the time, Henry Tasca, who understood and appreciated the role of labor. He and I got together with labor leaders about every six months or so, sometimes in Casablanca, sometimes at his residence. I found it fascinating because the UMT leaders had connections through the unions and through their own personal relationships all around the country. They not only knew a great deal of what was going on, but they had their own interpretation of things, an analysis as it were. The ambassador used to remind Mark that he could ask the same questions of people with contacts in Rabat but the answers he'd get from the UMT people were clearer and seemed to be more honest.

Q: Did he deal directly with the UMT people?

MATTSON: Through me, yes. And through these periodic get-togethers. There were lunches and there would typically be three on the union side and the two of us. And if we were in Casablanca we'd include the consul general.

Q: Did you also include some of these other federations in these contact meetings?

MATTSON: Not at the time, no. I don't think the meetings would have taken place under those circumstances and they certainly wouldn't have been as informative.

Q: There weren't other meetings?

MATTSON: No, there weren't. The other unions were pretty much appendages of political parties. They were not very active in negotiations. They did not have the same influence on labor legislation and were not normally selected as the worker-delegate at ILO conferences. It was the UMT. They were generally recognized as the largest, most important. Even though they were in the opposition.

Q: Did you have any contact with these other federations? You personally?

MATTSON: Oh, yes, yes. There wasn't very much to discuss because they didn't do very much.

Q: And they didn't represent many workers?

MATTSON: No. They were mainly representative of whatever their political parties were and to some extent their membership. I should add a little bit more about my role. There were, I guess, about a dozen Americans at the Consulate-General when I was there. Everyone else was involved or working within the jurisdiction of the consular general, the consulate district. I was not. I was the labor officer for the whole country. And I would periodically take field trips elsewhere in the country. I also was a member of the country team. Every Thursday the consul general and I would independently drive up to Rabat to attend the country team meetings. He would come back afterwards and I would stay for the day, because that was where I had not only my contacts in the labor ministry and the other Moroccan government agencies, but also, perhaps equally if not more importantly, with the Embassy. And I would go section to section checking with them, sharing information, finding out where I could be helpful and useful to them, where they could be helpful to me.

Q: Aside from Casablanca, and of course, Rabat, which you visited to consult with the Embassy, were there other concentrations of workers and labor union activity in Morocco?

MATTSON: Yes, large cities that had active labor movements included Meknes, Marrakesh, and Fez. There were also smaller cities that had active labor movements. I might add that when I was in Tangiers studying Arabic, I got to know some of the labor leaders and through one of them who headed the union programs, I was able to get the USIS [U.S. Information Service] program to show at Union Hall. Every Saturday evening they had a program for entertainment for union members and their families. They would get maybe two, three, four hundred people. In the course of about six months, they went through all the films in the USIS library, not only in Tangiers but in Rabat.

Q: And you showed these films in both Arabic and French?

MATTSON: Everything we had, we showed. They wanted to see it all. They had a very good dramatic sense. They would take a subject—without developing a script or anything they'd just play off on it. That was their main entertainment. I don't think the people came just for the films, but they saw the films too, for a while.

Q: Were the union structures and halls supported by dues alone or other sources of funding?

MATTSON: That's a very good question. The Moroccans followed many French practices and one of them was for the government to provide the facilities for the union halls. For example, in Casablanca, the big nine-story building of the UNT was

government-owned and leased on a no-cost basis. Secondly, and this was very important, too, union representatives in government organizations were kept on full salary, even though they worked full time for the union.

Q: So it was a hidden subsidy that wasn't so hidden.

MATTSON: Exactly. Majudeek, for example, was a member of the railway workers' union, so he was getting his salary as a railway worker. Abdulzazz was a member of the electricity workers union so—

I should mention one other aspect of the UMT. There was a left-wing party in Morocco, called the UNFP, or the National Union of Popular Forces. It was largely led by intellectuals from Rabat and elsewhere. Its leaders looked at the UMT as a potential vehicle, but the UNFP leadership did not want to come under the thumb of the UMT, so they were essentially independent from that as well as other political parties, and in fact, had their own choice for political leader, a fellow named Abdallah Ibrahim, who had been prime minister for a year or two shortly after independence. And he, again, was separate, apart from the UNFP political leadership and lived and worked out of his home. Now it happened when I returned to Morocco from Tangier, my house was located just down the street from his and down another street and around the corner from Abruzak's home. So I visited Ibrahim periodically at his home or we'd go out for lunch or something. During a certain period which I'll come to, I visited Abruzak mainly at his home. Ibrahim was a fascinating person—very very interested in modernization, getting ideas from abroad. I remember he'd been to Japan on a visit while I was there in Casablanca. He was simply there to pick up information that could help them in modernizing and developing the country without going to the French model.

I'd just add that in the spring of 1967 I was invited to a conference in Beirut. It's an odd sort of affair. There was a political appointee, an ambassador to Ireland, who had decided that foreign service officers did not have enough management training, so he donated a sum of money for a series of training courses abroad and I was one of the people selected to go to one in Beirut. Essentially they brought in trainers from a private company in the U.S. They gave us a book and material. We were to be the managers of a storm door and window company. We'd get a series of questions and problems to resolve. We did that for about five days. The following week in the Beirut press there were a number of articles about this secret meeting of American intelligence in Beirut.

Q: What year was that?

MATTSON: This was March of 1967. Anyway, back in Casablanca, next time I saw Ibrahim, I told him I'd been in Beirut for this conference and he became very interested in the subject, so I gave him the book and I spent a couple of hours going through the exercises with him. He was busy taking notes. That was the kind of person he was. He always felt that after independence, the critical thing for the newly independent Moroccan government to do was to build open schools. And the Moroccan government did not do that. This was before he was prime minister. They just—for the government

leaders' own reasons, they felt that they could not expand education too quickly.

Q: Did he mean job training?

MATTSON: No, he meant education per se. In fact, when I was there, one of the fascinating things was seeing how a country was changing rapidly. One of the problems was an intergenerational one. He found a number of young men going off to high school. First person in their families. Typically these were interned high schools, where there were dorms, and probably in many of the cases they were attending a school outside of their hometown. The problem then was the relationship between the sons and the fathers, because the sons had more education, had new ideas, and they weren't obedient to the fathers any more. This led to all kinds of friction. One major event took place when I was in Tangiers—

--TAPE BREAK--

—In early 1965, student demonstrations in Casablanca led to riots, which led to the intervention of the army with tanks. There was a battle, very one-sided, and estimates of the dead students and demonstrators ranged from 100 to 400 people, although nobody knows for sure because authorities took the bodies away and buried them without notification of families. But you could lay the causes of this to a number—

One was the disaffection of young people. It started with the problem within their families and then went on to generational things, the feeling that they weren't being treated as the educated young people that they were. Another element may well have been the fact that a year before, the American air bases had been closed and all of the Moroccan employees had been let go with about a year's severance pay. If you add on the number of people whose job income was partly linked to the presence of these Americans there, you probably had a considerable economic effect six months to a year later. This may well have been part of the reason, not for the students' unrest, but for the other unemployed and other demonstrators. However, I was in Tangier the whole time so I didn't see a thing.

Q: Was Islamic fundamentalism an issue at that time, during your stay in Morocco?

MATTSON: Not really, because the Istiqlal party had pretty much pre-empted the issue. The Istiqlal party was not able to deliver on jobs and bright futures for people who studied entirely in the traditional educational system. Going back to the very, very basic traditional system, you went to a school where you memorized the Koran, verse by verse, chapter by chapter—

Q: I see, this was not the French system of education?

MATTSON: No. I should add I was talking about the changes that were taking place. I'll never forget once when I visited the labor ministry. He said, "I've got a special surprise for you today." He buzzed and in came this Moroccan girl. He said, "This is my new

secretary, the first Moroccan secretary we have in the ministry, and I'm sending her off to study typing."

That was an incredible jump, because when I first got there, there were no Moroccan secretaries to speak of. They were all foreigners. 'Course Casablanca had maybe 50,000 French living there, 20,000 Spanish, 10,000 Italians, 10,000 Portuguese, and others. You could get educated employees from the foreign community, particularly the French.

Q: Were there young Moroccans studying abroad, either in Paris or in the States?

MATTSON: Yeah, there were some.

Q: What'd they do when they returned to Morocco?

MATTSON: Well, here you come to another curious thing, and that is status. The fellow I knew who was the chief labor inspector in Casablanca, a very important position in the scheme of the ministry, was living with a married woman and her husband. He was her lover.

Q: In the same house!

MATTSON: In the same house, yeah.

Q: That sounds more like the Italian or the French.

MATTSON: Yeah, I couldn't figure it out. But then it turns out this woman came from a high-class family. Not royalty, but well-connected, so she had the say in that household. She had her husband and she had her lover.

Q: Little strange for Americans, I think, this type of relationship. Anyhow, you want to refer to your notes and any other things you'd like to refer to in Morocco.

MATTSON: When I arrived in Casablanca the second time, I—as I've said—was very interested in the job, did a great deal of contact work, traveling around the country, as well as spending a considerable amount of time in Rabat doing a variety of reporting, taking to heed this basic function of a labor attaché, of listening to and reporting on the views of organized labor, of the workers of the country, but also getting involved in a variety of other types of reporting, particularly economic as it applied to AID [US Agency for International Development]. I regularly saw the AID officials in Rabat and often, at their request, would make particular stops during my travels at places they were involved in.

Q: Was the position officially a 100% labor position?

MATTSON: Yes. In fact, I was not number one in labor at the consulate. Later on there were—the labor position tended to be number two and there was also the deputy

consulate principal officer. But I found I learned a great deal from these other aspects, what worked and what didn't. I found that the human element was very, very important. In fact, one of my good friends who was the chief government appointed representative in the provincial city emphasized over and over again to me that any type of project is liable to be successful if it is led by conscientious people. If a squad sets up a project without taking into account the people who'll be running it, it'll more than likely fail or be at least a non-producer.

Midway in my three years in Casablanca, we had a team that came from Washington. As I recall, they were inspectors and their mission was to determine whether the consulate general should be closed. After all, it was within an hour of the capital and the embassy and, after all, that was one of those times that the State Department was looking for places they could close to save a little money. To my utter surprise, the consul general and the embassy decided to defend the operation of the consulate general on the basis of the need to have a labor officer based in Casablanca. 'Course they were able to draw on the fact that there'd been riots in Casablanca a couple years earlier, that the political opposition was centered in Casablanca, that the labor movement was part of the political opposition, etcetera, etcetera. All the other functions of the consulate general could be moved to Rabat, but you wouldn't be able to have a plugged-in labor attaché if the person had to operate out of Rabat. It wasn't my doing and it was only because of this team that came up. They convinced them and the consulate general stayed open.

I should add that there was a great deal of interest in Northern Africa at that time. I had a British counterpart in Rabat—reminds me that once when there were some dramatic developments taking place in labor negotiations, the British consulate general, whose office was right across the square from the American consulate general, used to come weekly to see me and ask me to read through the dispatch on the labor scene that he had just composed. I would basically read it through and suggest a few changes. There was a German labor attaché also in Rabat who covered all of Northern Africa. There was, at that time, in France so much interest in Northern African labor that there was a yearbook beginning to be put out about this thick each year, devoted entirely to the labor movements in these three North African countries. And finally, and this I still can't explain, but it was happening, at that time the University of Southern California, had a quarterly publication called the Maghreb Labor Digest with articles and items about labor in North Africa.

Q: Why was there so much interest about labor in North Africa at that time?

MATTSON: I can't really explain it, other than to say that the Americans had discovered and connected with the native labor movements and labor leaders early on.

Q: Was there a special relationship between Moroccan labor leaders and French labor leaders?

MATTSON: No.

Q: Or any of the other European—

MATTSON: One of my unforgettable—I have to go back and talk a little bit about Majupensideek [sp?]. He was a short, slight person, but he had a big voice and above all, he kept people off balance. He was one of the very few people I've ever known when you ask him, "how are you, how are things?" he'd always find something wrong to talk about. "I got a headache." It wasn't because he felt bad, but just that it was part of his style. He finally decided to do away with something that he and the other leaders had depended on a great deal. They had in the headquarters building an Agence France Presse ticker—a news ticker. He decided to rip it out. His reason was very simple. He said the French put a spin on all their news stories, that they were not getting the hard facts but were getting their interpretation of things. And I think this is something that bothered all of them. They used French, but they didn't trust the French. That's another reason they liked the Americans. They were far enough away and there was this long standing relationship. And then they went back to thinking about World War II, the Casablanca Conference. President Roosevelt had insisted upon having a meeting with the King of Morocco even during the protectorate period. And he came along with his son who was very young. By the time I got to Casablanca, the king had died unexpectedly and his son had taken over.

Q: Did they install an American ticker in place of the—

MATTSON: No, they just wanted to rely on their own reading and what people told them. Another thing I learned was that the Moroccans are very, very difficult to get to know. In fact, the people who were most frustrated about that were the Middle Easterners who said, "In our part of the world, Arabs don't behave the way these Moroccans do."

Q: They were standoffish, then?

MATTSON: Standoffish and not easily forthcoming. In fact, this seems to be something that goes way back. During the war, Robert Murphy went to Morocco—this was when it was still technically under the Vichy government—and had these dozen or so vice-consuls to work out of the various American diplomatic installations there, including Casablanca. Several of the vice-consuls wrote books after the war. One of them, I recall, talked about dealing with the Moroccans, wrote that you could have a meeting with Moroccan nationalists, write down a series of notes and then after the meeting read the notes over and be surprised because the Moroccans had been left with another impression, the way they were saying things, from the actual words. Then you had to figure out which was right.

Q: Did you find the Moroccans remote and difficult to deal with?

MATTSON: No. I think probably because I was the labor officer. Many of the people I met had had no dealings with Americans at all. And those that had, we got farther along than they had with others. No. They weren't. In fact, the Moroccans were very hospitable. They'd invite you to their homes. I had the feeling with the Moroccans I'd come to know that you could go back thirty years later and they'd still be good friends. In

fact, I did return about ten years later and saw a number of them, and that was borne out.

Q: Is that right? Any other comments you'd like to make about Morocco?

MATTSON: Well, I recall one young Moroccan I'd met in one of the provincial capitals, who was the chief of cabinet for the provincial governor. Now the governor was from that province, which was rather a backward province. He was related to the governor's family, and he'd gotten the job through special connections, but he was an able, hard-working fellow, but like most Moroccans had never left the country. Well, I arranged for AID to send him to a conference in the States. I forget how long it was, two or three weeks. It probably was a mistake, because he was so affected by it that he only lasted another three months working for the governor because he wanted to change everything. You just have to be careful about people who've not been exposed to the rest of the world, particularly the U.S.

Q: It must have been a real cultural shock.

MATTSON: Yeah, yeah. A few other things I'd like to note about the Moroccan labor. The labor leaders often would talk about how much time they had to spend discussing things. The point I would make was that it was an egalitarian movement. The top leaders felt they had to talk everything over with the others. Before coming to a decision they would have deep meetings and expect that everyone would speak at the meetings, even if they just competed with what somebody else had said. Meetings would go on for eight, ten, twelve hours.

Q: So there was a consensus.

MATTSON: There was very much a consensus. There was also a kind of particular ethos. The labor leaders had come from different parts of the country. They'd come from different tribal backgrounds. But they were all part of this new institution. This was much more the case than most organizations in the country. The Istilah, for example, found most influence in its membership in several parts of the country. Maybe another great institution would be the Army, but that's the kind of thing.

Q: It transcended the tribal or regional differences.

MATTSON: And there were important differences, like language. Students at the university in Rabat used to tell me the first year at the university they would sit down for hours with the other students and talk about what they say in their part of the country, the same things and the different words and phrases that were used.

Another aspect is that they talked about the union leaders being within the political opposition. It was a particular kind of opposition. It was an opposition to be able to stake out an independent position and to be able to attract a larger number of people. It was, particularly in the cities, left-wing influence that was largely French language and was also located in the union headquarters, particularly people involved in the union

newspaper. The main newspaper was half-French, half-Arabic, with the same articles. It would normally be much more strident than union leaders would be in person or than certainly the union's deeds would be.

There was one important episode in 1967, in June, you had the trouble in the Middle East that led to the war, the Six Day War, and in Morocco, based upon the news stories coming from Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, things started heating up. They started worrying a little bit about what was going on. Then the war came. It was launched by the Israelis and therefore the reaction in Morocco and in the press was negative. Now the king was going to be sure that nothing traumatic happened, but Mohammed ben Steek [sp?] was not quite in that position. He, it turned out, was weak enough so that he went along with this agitation, finally was picked up, arrested and put in jail.

Q: Agitation for intervention?

MATTSON: No, no, no, about "something should be done," nothing specific. But as I interpreted it was basically because he was under pressure and was trying to be all things to all people in the labor movement and went too far. He was arrested, was in jail for about two years with a television set and everything. During that period of time, their number two, Mohammend Abdurzak [Sp?] ran the union. But he seldom went in the office, so that's when I started meeting with him regularly in his home, which was just down the street and around the corner.

Q: Did you meet with ben Steek at all in jail?

MATTSON: No. I thought that would be going too far under the circumstances, particularly since it was a very political affair. Now, I would meet regularly with Abdurzak. I discovered that quite often he would get calls from the prime minister. That reminded me of something very important in a country like Morocco—that the political elite, including the opposition, is quite small and everyone knows each other. It just happened that there was lots of business that the government had with the union at that time. One of the developments that had taken place a year or so earlier was that the government had set up an export organization, particularly for the export of fruit and vegetables and wines, agricultural produce, processed agricultural produce. Under the arrangement the UMT was invited to select people to head up and to form the middle management of this new organization. So they did. Again, this was part and parcel of the king's idea overall, which was to involve the opposition and people in different organizations.

Q: Did the king support the concept of trade unions, and could they have existed without his support?

MATTSON: Yeah, yeah. I don't think he had much choice when he became king, because they had been well planted then as part of the nationalist movement that had contributed to the fight and victory of independence. I recall one middle level UMT officer I got to know quite well, Mohammed Feshtali. Oddly enough, he once told me the

high point of his life was when he was a teenager, he'd gone to the French language lycée in Meknes and he'd been selected when he was about 18 years old—I don't know if he'd graduated from the lycée—as part of the contributing team that accompanied the king when he went to France for the final independence negotiations. So there this eighteen-year-old kid was. He said being involved with that was the high point of his life. He'd had a number of jobs in the UMT. His good language, French and Arabic, made him a distinct asset. Because of his Arabic, in fact, he'd been assigned to be on the staff of ICATU in Cairo. So he was there for a couple years and then came back and said he couldn't take it there any more. He used to go to Moscow every year for May Day. The UMT would get these invitations all over and they'd send him because they knew he wouldn't be tempted. He'd bring back a bottle of vodka. One year he gave it to me, another year he gave it to other people. He said, "I don't drink it."

I should say a little bit about the labor law, Labor Ministry. Labor law and the Labor Ministry were modeled after the French example, but there was a tremendous gap between law and practice. Moroccans didn't really fit the French model at all. Not very much was happening in the Labor Ministry—or the Labor Ministry wasn't really having much effect on, say, the real world, with the exception of a few serious and skilled labor ministry officials. When I was there I found that most of the labor inspectors I met could not—I use the word "inspector" loosely, because I'd meet the heads of their labor offices, city offices—most of the inspectors had taken the time to memorize many of the regulations and much of the law and could give you these rote exercises and explanations, but they weren't really able to do very much.

My second year there, because not everyone who graduated from the university was able to find a job, the government took it upon itself to help them find jobs. They decided that one way would be to upgrade entering qualifications for the labor inspectors from high school diploma to university degree. Those were the sort of things that were going on.

I might note that when I went to Casablanca there was a very strong network of supporting people in the agencies in Washington. Morocco was in the African bureau, so there was a full-time regional labor adviser for Africa, Alvin Rucker. He had his counterpart in the Labor Department. There was a counterpart in ILAB [International Labor Affairs], whose name escapes me now. He had one in USIA [U.S. Information Agency]. Rucker and Steen and the others used to meet once a week for lunch, so there was a great deal of coordination. Unfortunately, in Morocco, there wasn't much that I needed to ask for from them. The sources I used were USIA for grants and AID occasionally for grants. In any event, Steen and Rucker once came out on a visit, spent about three useful days in the country. I mentioned that AFL-CIO had visitors that would come regularly at the invitation of UMT. We once had a couple senators who made a special point of wanting to meet with organized labor, Ted Kennedy and John Tunney. So I set up an appointment with them for the labor leaders.

By the way, when I was first in Casablanca, I lived on another street in a smaller house and just down the street was the home, very modest, of Mahjoub Ben Seddik. It was clear at that point in time he was living modestly. He subsequently married. I don't know

where he lives now, but he lives somewhere else and has several children. Anyway, it was his very modest house where I took the two senators and I interpreted for them, and then at the end, Kennedy started speaking in French. Didn't say very much, but he said a few things. He said when he was a kid he'd had a nanny who'd taught them French.

Q: How was his French?

MATTSON: It wasn't bad. He didn't say very much, just enough to get by socially. He wouldn't have been able to carry on a conversation.

That leads me to one other thing. Early on, in my days as labor officer over there, on a visit to the union leaders, I guess it was after they had met with the ambassador for one of those periodic get-togethers, I was chatting with them and they started talking about the difference between State Department people and White House people they'd met, and they made it very clear that in the years of independence they'd met their share of White House people who'd come out and visit with Morocco. They found dealing with White House officials easier than dealing with State Department officials because usually they'd seem to be able to promise things and deliver things. And the State Department people—again they weren't talking about me or my predecessors, but just visitors—

Q: They equivocated and didn't deliver.

MATTSON: But it was interesting. Well, I can't think of anything else to discuss in Morocco. It was, as I said, a relatively quiet time. I learned a great deal about labor work for one. Working for a demanding ambassador who wanted to be kept in the picture, and taking initiative to see lots of people in-house and around the country, and defining my role in labor as broadly as possible, so that it covered a lot of different things going on. If nobody else seemed to have an interest in doing something, I would take it on. There were, as I said, important negotiations with firms, our periodic negotiations with the base workers' union, indirectly, and then special occasions. For example, at the very beginning of the 1967 war in the Middle East, the UMT announced that it was going to stop loading and unloading ships in the ports of Morocco. At the time our ambassador and the country team were concerned because there was a lot of AID wheat and other items coming in.

Q: Was Morocco officially neutral in the War?

MATTSON: Yeah. The ambassador called and asked if I would talk to Ben Seddik about this. So I did. We negotiated a bit and he said, well as soon as the war is over, we'll lift it, but I can't do it in the meantime. So I passed the word back. At the end of the war, he was in prison.

Q: Fortunately, it was only six days long! Anyhow, after Morocco?

MATTSON: I returned to Washington for four years. I spent two years in INR, working on North African affairs.

Q: In a labor capacity, or non-labor?

MATTSON: No. I would have been interested in having a labor job in Washington, but there was none offered and obviously none available. So I did other things. I had two years working in AID. The AID had become a new agency then. I forget the name of the agency it replaced. But the new director, a Wall Street lawyer, picked—

Q: ICA. International Cooperation Association [Administration], or something.

MATTSON: —picked a Foreign Service officer named Don Eason as his first executive secretary. Don had worked in the exec[utive] of the State Department so he knew about it. He wanted to bring a few people over, so I was coming available, so he asked me if I would join him, so I did. Then my second year in this assignment Dale Goode, who was in the S/IL, phoned me and asked if I would be interested in going to Beirut.

Q: And this was when?

MATTSON: This was '72. I expressed an interest. I thought it was a logical thing, because I'd had a labor assignment and I'd studied Arabic. So I went to Beirut in August of 1973. The regional labor job there had been established by Harold Snell some—I guess—fifteen years earlier. And he had recruited and developed an outstanding local employee, Habib Haddad, who had been, as a teenager, a labor leader and who was very very well-acquainted around town and around the country. He knew the labor leaders, knew businessmen, knew government officials and understood what was going on. In fact, I guess the best way of lauding him was to say that while I was gone traveling more than half the time, he was continuously in Beirut in the embassy and my ambassador, Matt Gottlieb [William B. Buffum], decided that he wanted to have the labor attaché's office next door to his—not because of me or because of any labor attaché but because of Habib Haddad. This fellow was better than his own Lebanese political analyst.

Q: He was quite a guy.

MATTSON: My use of the Arabic was not as extensive as you might have thought, because in the Middle East people speak different versions of Arabic from country to country. I only twice had occasion to use my Moroccan dialect. Once I was called anxiously by the ambassador's secretary, who figured I was likely traveling, but I happened to be there. There was a new Moroccan ambassador in town who was calling on Ambassador Gottlieb [Buffum] and who, in the middle of their conversation, which had been in French, said, "now I would like to say something important in my own language," and started speaking Moroccan Arabic. Ambassador Gottlieb [Buffum] called in his interpreter, who couldn't make head or tails of it, so they got me. It was just some basic voice about the Moroccan position, which was very nuanced for these Middle Easterners.

Q: Was the Moroccan Arabic close enough to the Lebanese Arabic so that you could convert at all?

MATTSON: No, you could understand much of it. But Moroccan Arabic was spoken as people write Arabic, without vowel sounds, so it was very guttural. Well, for a Middle Easterner, it seemed very low class. Whereas in Beirut the local dialect was sort of like Brooklynese. It wasn't high class but it wasn't as low class. Moroccan dialect was sort of like a country Arabic. In Lebanon, they're the city slickers. The other time was at an airport in Oman. Once I met a Moroccan grain trader who was in the Middle East for about three weeks and he said finally he'd met somebody who could understand him!

Q: You spoke mostly French then, with the Lebanese?

MATTSON: Yeah, but a lot of them spoke English, too. You had the American University of Beirut. But you found that the Lebanese were very hyperactive and ambitious. Just like when I was there, one of the big issues in the country was getting Disney to come in and set up a Disney World. But a very small one, the size for Lebanon.

Q: Was Habib interested in setting up a Disney World?

MATTSON: No. Nowhere in the Middle East. There were too many bomb threats around there. The Lebanese were engaged in all kinds of activities and having Habib there made it possible to cover it, even though I was traveling half the time. If I might go back and say that Harold Stelig started this idea of travels and contacts in different countries in the Middle East and his successor, John Condon had followed up on that, as did John's successor, my predecessor, Dick Searing. However, when I got there, there had just been another civil war in '73, or just after I got there. And at the same time, there was the—

END OF TAPE ONE

Q: Today is May 4, 1995. This is Side A of Tape 2 of the interview with James Arthur Mattson by Don Kienzle. There is some background noise from the lawnmowers next door but, hopefully, I think that we can hear you, Jim. Please go ahead.

MATTSON: I might note another thing about Habib Haddad, my labor assistant at the embassy in Beirut, particularly since he has died. He had tremendous rapport with his fellow Lebanese. I recall that once we had a visitor from Detroit, Michigan—Bill Marshall by name. He was then the head of the Michigan State Federation of the AFL/CIO [American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations]. Marshall had been travelling around the Middle East for three or four days. We had set up a meeting for him with a number of labor leaders from different unions. He was invited to speak to them. Marshall, of course, didn't speak anything but English. Most of these labor leaders didn't speak English, so we enlisted Habib Haddad to interpret. For the first and only time in my life, I saw an interpreter translate so well that he brought the group to their feet for a standing ovation half a dozen times!

Afterwards, Bill Marshall said that he normally didn't get even one standing ovation back home, so it must have been Habib Haddad. At the time I served there, Lebanon was a

very small community in which everybody knew one another. I joined the Lebanese Management Association, not because it was an employer dominated group, but because it included both employers and trade union leaders. I attended their monthly luncheons at least twice a year, when the luncheon speakers were trade unionists.

To give you an idea of how labor worked in Lebanon when I served there, there were annual negotiations over private sector wage increases. These were then generally followed by wage increases in the public sector. For a number of years before I arrived in Lebanon, the negotiations took place between the Lebanese Employers Association and the Confederation of Lebanese Labor, without the direct involvement of the Lebanese Government. Finally, one year the Lebanese Government decided that, since it had to adopt the results of these negotiations, it wanted to be involved in them as well.

So, for the next few years the Lebanese Government was involved in these negotiations. However, both the Lebanese employers and union representatives noticed that the increases approved were less and less each year. Finally, the employers and the union representatives got together on the side and agreed that this situation was not going to work over the long term. They said, "let's agree to tell the Lebanese government that we don't need their involvement any more." This happened while I was in Lebanon. Then they went back to the "old routine" with the Lebanese government no longer involved in these negotiations. The Lebanese government then had to accept the results of these negotiations, which provided for somewhat higher wages.

Q: So the trade unions were generally independent of the government and able to negotiate on their own.

MATTSON: The unions were independent of the Lebanese Government and, with one exception, of political parties. I believe that there were roughly ten or twelve unions in the Confederation of Lebanese Labor. Two of them were communist-controlled and were associated with the Lebanese Communist Party.

Q: For the record, which two unions were communist-controlled?

MATTSON: I can't remember their names. Let me explain here a little bit about trade unions in Lebanon. There were no big industries there. So when the trade unions started to organize, most of them tended to be like some of the early, British trade unions. They were "conglomerates" of people working in various sectors. There were “general” unions.

Q: “General” workers' unions.

MATTSON: That's where the communists were. In fact, the communists, as is their custom when they have the chance, had cleverly started up a second union, but the membership pretty much "overlapped."

The union leaders were also somewhat different from the usual pattern. A number of them were what we would call “managers.” For example, the head of the Petroleum

Workers Union was a “manager” at Mobil Oil Company, named George Socker. For even a few years before he “disappeared” from the scene, George was the general secretary of the International Petroleum Workers Federation.

Perhaps the oddest trade union leader when I was in Lebanon was the head of the Public Sector Employees Union. He was also the president of the Lebanese Bridge Association.

Q: “Bridge,” as in playing cards?

MATTSON: Yes. He was a fanatic bridge player. He was one of those people who would play bridge for 24 hours at a stretch. His main difficulty in life was being able to "balance" his two roles as a fanatic bridge player and the leader of a trade union.

There were a number of American companies in Lebanon at the time. For the most part, they were very small but still active. To make it possible for me to get some feel for what was going on, I offered my services in doing a wage survey for them. We're talking essentially about white collar jobs, including accountants, secretaries, sales people, and that sort of thing. I drew up a questionnaire, showed it to some people, and then sent it around to the members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Lebanon. I think that I received fifteen or sixteen responses.

Q: That's not bad!

MATTSON: No. I wrote up a little analysis of the results and sent it to each of them. In the following year I did the same thing again. This time I saw the difference, in the sense of how much wage rates had gone up. I should say “salaries,” because we're really talking about white collar salaries.

Q: Did the Lebanese Ministry of Labor do any statistical work on wages and so forth?

MATTSON: They didn't do very much of anything. Government ministries were all very small. They got involved in major disputes but they didn't do much of this kind of analysis in Lebanon.

I got to know the man in the Ministry of Labor who was their point person on ILO [International Labor Organizations] matters. He went to the annual ILO conference for about twenty years or so. He used to tell me about all of the texts of recommended legislation and so forth that he brought back from these meetings and which he had been able to have enacted into Lebanese law. However, their model was French law and French labor ministry structures. They didn't have the resources and people to do very much. He got all of these laws enacted, but they weren't really followed.

Q: So there was some disparity between what was in the law and in actual practice.

MATTSON: Yes. This was another case where the Lebanese were following a European model instead of developing laws and institutions which directly corresponded with their

practices.

Q: Isn't the Lebanese legal system very complicated? Didn't they have a negotiated constitution and ethnic quotas for the different groups? Did that have an impact at all on the labor scene?

MATTSON: No. Again, the labor unions represented people from different backgrounds. In Lebanon it was not so much a matter of different tribes but different religious sects or affiliations. The political system was cleverly designed to focus conflict among people of the same sect, rather than between different sects. This was because the country was divided into ninety-nine parliamentary constituencies. Each constituency had a designated sect which it was supposed to represent.

Q: I see.

MATTSON: So, let's say, Constituency A was to be represented by a Maronite Christian. Constituency B was to be represented by a Shia Muslim. Constituency C was for a Greek Orthodox representative. Constituency D was for an Armenian Catholic. And so on.

Q: And these constituencies were regionally based?

MATTSON: Each constituency was for a seat in the Parliament.

Q: So they were regionally based?

MATTSON: Yes, and the principal figures in the Lebanese Government had to be from one sect or another. For example, the president had to be a Maronite Christian. I believe that the prime minister had to be a Sunni Muslim. The president of the Parliament was a Shia Muslim.

Then, each prime minister would assemble a cabinet composed of people from the different sects, rather than political parties. There were few people who tried to organize political parties. Well, there was the Communist Party of Lebanon, but that wasn't "serious" in the sense of running people for office.

Otherwise, there was conflict or rivalries involved in getting elected to a seat in Parliament or being selected for a cabinet post in a given government. That system kept things going for a remarkably long time.

Q: Until the Lebanese civil war began [in 1975].

MATTSON: Yes. For the union leadership, the question really wasn't political parties or who was in what position in government, because they tended to know or have connections to reach anyone.

I guess that in Lebanon one of the things that I was proud of was something which owed

much to Habib Haddad. Working with the Asian-American Free Labor Institute [AAFLI], we were able to get their representatives to visit Lebanon quite often and to undertake a number of small projects. For example, the communists had wrecked the union hall in the town of Tripoli. AAFLI was able to donate a couple of typewriters with Arabic language keyboards. There were small things like this.

Q: Who was the representative of AAFLI in Lebanon? Did AAFLI send a particular person in on these missions?

MATTSON: No. I should say that my region included Jordan. In Jordan we had a relationship between AAFLI and the Jordanian labor organization of chauffeurs and truckers, which was headed by a guy who had been King Hussein's chauffeur. However, the important thing was that they wanted to work "all out" with the Americans. A major project involved construction of a health clinic which AAFLI built and opened. There would often be AAFLI visitors coming to Jordan. Invariably, they'd stop in Lebanon on the way to Jordan.

Q: Did the AAFLI presence predate your arrival in Lebanon as labor attaché?

MATTSON: Oh, yes. The big project was there, and it all came to a head. We wanted AAFLI to put somebody in full-time in Jordan. They picked out someone who came out on a visit. Jordan is a pretty austere place. There isn't very much going on there. He complained that there was no golf course in the country. [Laughter]

Q: Who was this man?

MATTSON: I can't remember his name. He'd been stationed at some of the more plush, AAFLI posts in the Far East.

Q: Welcome to the Middle East.

MATTSON: So things sort of went along there in this way. Then I got involved in Egypt. I started visiting that country. We had an ambassador who had a very, very big staff, but nothing was going on in the labor field there at all. I started visiting Egypt for a week at a stretch and got some things going.

Then I recommended to Washington that, since AAFLI had activities under way in Lebanon and Jordan, why not have AAFLI extend its efforts to Egypt as well? However, I forgot one thing. That is, in the labor field as elsewhere, there are very strong territorial instincts. As soon as the AAFLI people proposed extending their activities to Egypt, the AFL/CIO people in the AALC [African-American Labor Center] heard about it. They started fighting tooth and nail to prevent this extension of AAFLI activity to Egypt.

Q: Was Irving Brown the head of the AALC at that time? Or was it Pat...

MATTSON: I think that it was probably Pat. I don't know what Irving Brown was doing

then. He was still technically in charge, but Pat, I guess, was the man who became active in this fight. Out of this fight eventually came an AALC office in Cairo which began conducting quite a few programs. Also there is now a number of AALC programs involving the new Maghreb Regional Organization. This covers Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

Q: But that was after your tour of duty in Lebanon.

MATTSON: Oh, yes. This development has taken place over the past five or 10 years. However, let me talk a little bit about my travels. Because these programs had been started by my predecessors, I went to Cyprus a couple of times. I would tend to go in the morning and return to Lebanon in the early evening. I was able to accomplish quite a bit.

There were two, major labor movements or federations in Greece. One was non-communist and one was communist-controlled. The communist federation was headed by a man who was very important in the WFTU [World Federation of Trade Unions] over the decades. Before my arrival in Greece, the non-communist federation, for reasons which I cannot recall and probably never knew, was essentially taken over by the Greek government in the sense that a government diplomat was named its general secretary. He ran this federation for a couple of years. At the time of my first visit to Greece, he had left this non-communist federation.

He had been replaced by an elected successor, Michael Eleanu, who had studied in the U.S. and had a master's degree from Wayne State University. He understood labor. When I called on him at the time of my first and succeeding visits to Greece, he made a point of keeping the door of his office open and inviting whoever happened to be around to join us in the conversation, as he explained to me at the time of my first call on him. My predecessor as Regional Labor Attaché not only did not come from the labor movement but kept the door closed when he had visitors. Nobody ever knew what he was talking about.

Q: Was the labor movement in Greece independent of the Greek government?

MATTSON: Yes. There was a variety of allegiances of people within the labor movement, although, technically, it was independent. By “allegiances” I do not mean simply orientations to political parties, but to individuals. For example, there were supporters of General George Grivas, Archbishop Makarios, and so forth. Undoubtedly, within this particular non-communist organization there were people who supported all of these movements and beliefs. However, this was not part of the trade union movement.

The communist-controlled federation was actually larger than the non communist group. It was prone to give “sweetheart” deals to certain companies so that it would be able to maintain its inside track as a negotiating partner. In Turkey there were also two labor federations: one communist-controlled and one non-communist oriented. I would meet with officials of the non-communist federation there.

Q: Could you travel back and forth easily at that time between the predominantly Turkish and Greek parts of the island?

MATTSON: I would travel with embassy officers. For example, I would travel with Jimmy Williams, who has just been appointed as the new State Department negotiator on Cyprus, with the rank of ambassador. He spoke both Turkish and Greek and was assigned to the embassies in Athens and Ankara on various tours of duty.

We were trying to do what the AFL/CIO and the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions] were trying to do. That is, to encourage a quiet dialogue among the non-communist Turkish and Greek labor federations.

Q: Did this effort work?

MATTSON: They occasionally met, but nothing much could come out of such meetings because of the overall environment.

Q: Did you attend these meetings?

MATTSON: No. I was only there in Greece and Turkey about three or four times. I lived in Beirut essentially for two years.

Q: Two years, beginning...?

MATTSON: At the end of August, 1973. Then I went on home leave in 1975 and returned to Lebanon. However, I traveled most of the time that I was assigned to Lebanon. I was transferred to Washington in February, 1976.

Q: You were the last labor attaché in Lebanon. Can you explain what happened?

MATTSON: The problem was that, while I was safe enough, traveling all over, my family was not safe in Beirut. I should go back and say that, when I first arrived in Beirut, Habib Haddad met me at the airport. He said, "You're lucky. Your plane arrived late. The airport was rocketed half an hour ago." [Laughter] Every Friday at our embassy country team meeting in Beirut, the most important point was always the security officer telling us which parts of Lebanon were safe to visit over the weekend. In some cases even parts of Beirut weren't safe to visit.

Well, the situation in Lebanon really broke down in the spring of 1975. A curfew was proclaimed from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. every night.

Q: This was in connection with the Lebanese civil war that was going on. Your wife, Ilse, and your children were in Beirut at that time?

MATTSON: Yes. The American school was near our apartment. The children walked to school in the morning. She would pick them up at school and bring them home.

There were fascinating parts of Beirut. However, things became increasingly dangerous. After a few months of this situation we discovered that, without social life, there wasn't much contact with anyone else any more. I stayed on for the July 4 reception in 1975 before going on home leave.

The Ambassador decided to have the traditional July 4 reception at his residence at noon. All of the staff appeared. We found out who had left Beirut on reassignment, who had arrived in the different embassies, and even who was in the Lebanese government. The people you would normally see on social occasions you hadn't seen previously at all. So it was a fascinating time.

Then the situation got worse during the fall of 1975. When I returned to Beirut in the fall of 1975, the Department of State decided to evacuate the families. I just left Ilse and the children in Europe. They were living in Munich. The children went to the American school there during the fall semester.

Q: This was the fall of 1976?

MATTSON: This was from the fall of 1975 until February, 1976. Meanwhile, I began traveling, because there was nothing that I could do in Lebanon. With the curfew the Ministry of Labor was closed and nothing was going on in the labor field. I could talk to people in their homes. They could tell me what was going on in their streets.

Q: There was no significant labor union activity.

MATTSON: No, so I was traveling all the time. The last time I returned to Beirut was in December, 1975. I was met at the Beirut airport and was brought directly to the embassy. I was told that I couldn't return to my apartment, as that area was no longer safe. However, there was a hotel right next door to the embassy, and the embassy put me in there. There was a twenty-four hour a day curfew at that time, so for a couple of days I would just sneak between the embassy and the hotel and vice versa. One day the embassy let me go home and pack some bags with clothing and so forth. So I did that. Then I returned to the hotel and the embassy.

On the day I planned to leave Beirut for reassignment, my flight was scheduled for 7:00 p.m. The only way of going out to the airport was in an armored convoy, arranged by the embassy. It picked me up at 9:00 a.m. in front of the embassy. I got into one of three cars, along with a number of people, not many. Already by that time the daily shelling had begun, and billowing smoke was coming out of the downtown area, from the high buildings. So I went out to the airport.

Now, Beirut normally had a very efficient airport. When I had arrived back in Beirut a few days earlier, I got off the airplane and went right into the terminal building, went through Lebanese customs, and was out. So I really didn't have a chance to see the airport building. When I entered Beirut itself, I discovered that the city was filthy! Nobody had

been cleaning up the airport for weeks, if not months. You could not buy anything to eat or drink there. You just hoped that the situation would be quiet while you were there and could find a place to sit down while you waited for your plane.

Q: This was at the end of December...?

MATTSON: The end of December, 1975.

Q: The end of December, 1975, when you left Beirut.

MATTSON: It was fairly noisy out at the airport, but finally my plane came. It flew first to Damascus. However, I was going on to Doha, the capital of Qatar. However, it was so late when we finally arrived in Doha that whoever was sent out by the embassy to meet me had given up and gone home. I knew the hotel I was staying at, so I grabbed a cab, went there, and checked in. I found that I couldn't go to sleep for about three or four hours. Finally, I realized why. It was too quiet! [Laughter] The previous three nights, when I had been in Beirut, the noise of the shelling was overwhelming.

That was the situation in Beirut. For a while the Department thought that I should relocate to Athens, but there was nothing really Arabic there. I would be really out of things in Athens. Then the Department proposed that I go to Kuwait, because the people in the embassy there thought that they would be getting a “freebie.” I said, "No, I am supposed to cover the whole region."

Personally, I wanted to go to Cairo, but the ambassador there was keeping his staff as lean as possible.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Egypt at that time?

MATTSON: Hermann Eilts. So after traveling for two months I ended up, going back to the Department of State in Washington and trying to work out of the regional office in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

Q: NEA/RA [Office of Regional Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs]?

MATTSON: That arrangement didn't work out at all. I started making arrangements for my first trip and was told, somewhat bureaucratically, that I had to give them at least a month's notice before traveling! I finally did this. I left Washington at the beginning of May, 1976, and spent a month traveling around the Middle East. Then I went to Geneva to attend an ILO [International Labor Organization] conference. This assignment to NEA/RA didn't really work out. I was gone from the Department for two months and on the road. It wasn't in my report. In my own mind I went back to what I had been doing normally.

Q: So you were back in Washington, working out of NEA/RA?

MATTSON: As I said, it was really impossible for me to cover the Middle East as a Regional Labor Attaché operating out of Washington.

Let me go back to the time I was working out of Beirut. There it was easy to work on the phone. I had fax connections and telegrams, of course. I could travel regularly to the different countries, based on how much need there was. On most occasions I would take the initiative. However once, I recall, I received a cable the first thing one morning from our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, asking whether I could attend a meeting which would start at 6:00 p.m. that day in Riyadh.

Q: Wow!

MATTSON: I phoned my wife and asked her to pack my bag. I asked my secretary to do the necessary paperwork covering my travel orders. I gave Habib Haddad my passport and asked him to get a visa for me from the Saudi Arabian embassy. Everything came together, and I was on a flight leaving at 1:00 p.m. to Dhahran. There I changed planes and arrived in Riyadh at about 5:00 p.m. I couldn't do anything close to that, operating out of Washington.

Q: Which countries were you assigned to?

MATTSON: We've talked about Cyprus and a little bit about Egypt. Egypt was very, very important because there was a tremendous background concerning labor affairs in Egypt. This was the country in which both the Arab Labor Organization and the International Federation of Arab Trade Unions, as well as a variety of secretariats of organizations, were located. Invariably, they were headed by Egyptians. So they had a great deal of knowledge and background. At the same time, the flip-flop away from Arab Socialism and Nasser to Anwar Sadat [Nasser's successor as president of Egypt] had occurred just about a year previously.

When I first visited the embassy in Cairo, I discovered that, first of all, nobody was paying any attention to labor affairs. I had to develop my own contacts. I might add that the Egyptian telephone system was so bad that during the first day of a trip to Cairo I always had to program my time, making a few phone calls to set up appointments for the rest of the week.

Q: You mean in Egypt?

MATTSON: Yes. The embassy in Cairo essentially worked a seven-day week. The Egyptians took Friday off and the American embassy essentially took Saturday and Sunday off. So when I came as a visitor, it didn't really matter what day of the week I came, because I could work every day.

Early on, I recall visiting the Arab Socialist Union. I entered a big room, at the far end of which were windows, a couple of desks, and a few people standing around, waiting for me. There were a few other people standing along the walls. There were heavy drapes on

the windows. As I slowly walked to the other end of the room, a fellow standing by the drapes pulled at my sleeve and whispered in my ear: “Don't trust them!” [Laughter]

Q: Who was he?

MATTSON: I never found out. He didn't introduce himself to me and evidently didn't want them to know what he said to me. I think that this was an example of the changes then taking place in Egypt and the extent of the distrust.

I found the same thing in the labor movement. Some of the labor leaders had gained more prominence, while others had lost prominence. This was an ongoing process. For example, at the training institute that the labor movement ran, new leaders were put in a couple of times. I met one of these new leaders shortly after he came in. He had been a professor at a local business school. He was still a young man and spoke good English. He wanted help from the Americans in totally revamping the curriculum.

Well, it turned out that this proposal came too early. There was still no particular focus on Egypt in Washington, and certainly not by the American labor movement. We hadn't even gotten to the point where I'd set off that quarrel over which AFL/CIO institute should be established in Egypt. Over time and in the course of various visits I was able to develop a number of programs, and particularly visitor programs under the auspices of AID for people from the Egyptian trade union movement and from the Egyptian Ministry of Labor.

I was able to get to know the key figure there, who was then the minister of labor and the president of the Egyptian Federation of Labor. This was something that we usually frowned on, in that we have found generally that you can't serve two masters of this kind at the same time. However, Egypt was a place where there was a need to have something like that at the time to navigate the labor movement, as well as the economy, through this transition.

A few years later, when I was back in Washington and attending the AFL/CIO convention in Los Angeles, which would have been in 1977, this same Egyptian was still wearing his two hats as minister of labor and president of the Egyptian Federation of Labor. On this occasion he appeared at the AFL/CIO convention with George Meany and Joachim Meshel.

Q: Is that right!

MATTSON: Yes. Meany introduced Meshel and this Egyptian cabinet minister. They shook hands.

Q: I think that he held those two offices until around 1987, didn't he?

MATTSON: I don't know. I wasn't able to follow later developments in this situation. That was certainly a promising development.

I recall that, when I was back in Washington for home leave after having been evacuated from the Middle East, Dale Good and others asked me a lot of questions about the Egyptians. They were already beginning to see that there was some movement in the Arab-Israeli relationship, although it was hard for them to get started in sending their own labor people on. Anyway, that was Egypt.

With regard to Saudi Arabia, this was a fascinating country. During my first visit there, I met an embassy officer in Riyadh. I had flown into Dhahran, as I mentioned, and took a plane to Riyadh. You couldn't fly directly from Beirut to Riyadh at the time. You had to go by way of Jeddah or Dhahran. Anyway, I met Chuck Cecil at the embassy. I explained to him what I had already heard at other stops around the Middle East that nobody in the Embassy had any real contacts in the labor field and nobody had a chance to talk to anyone.

The situation in Saudi Arabia was rather more complicated at the time because the American embassy was in Jeddah, and the Saudi Arabian government was in Riyadh. The only people we had permanently based in Riyadh were a couple of USIS [United States Information Service] personnel. The USIS people ran an English language institute in Riyadh. They weren't really involved in labor affairs.

Q: Was there an independent labor movement in Saudi Arabia at the time?

MATTSON: No. In any event I met Chuck Cecil in Riyadh at the Yamama Hotel. He explained that they had been able to make some phone calls and had set me up with two days of appointments, mainly in the Ministry of Labor but also in the Ministry of Education, covering petroleum questions and so forth.

Q: Hmph!

MATTSON: Chuck said that he wouldn't be able to stay in Riyadh and that he had to go back to Jeddah. However, he wished me good luck and so forth. Most of the people in the embassy didn't know personally any of the people on my appointment list. They had never met them.

So I was starting out from scratch. This was a period during which petroleum prices had gone up, and suddenly these Arab countries had a lot of money to spend. It turned out later that this was the same time that the Saudis were talking to the U.S. about setting up a joint commission. In effect, the Saudis said: "You bring in the experts, because you can pick them better than we can, and we'll pay them."

Q: Was this building up to the Dollatek [as heard] period?

MATTSON: Dollatek was in Washington. It was just providing experts on demand for Saudi Arabia.

Anyway, I had a very good series of discussions, particularly with the deputy minister of Labor. Petur [as heard] went on to Jeddah on the day after my appointment with him. There he met with the ambassador. He told him that the Saudi Ministry of Labor was very interested in setting up a vocational training program with American help. The Saudis would be willing to pay the trainers. They gave the usual reasons that they didn't want to rely entirely on foreign labor. They wanted to be able to develop skills among Saudi labor and so forth.

It turned out that Petur had been in Riyadh himself for discussions about setting up a joint commission. He proposed that I write up a report of my discussions with the Saudi deputy minister of Labor and send it in to Washington as a proposed initial project. Washington bought this proposal and it ultimately became a very large project for the U.S. Department of Labor. In fact, in terms of the amount spent on it, it was the largest single project under the whole joint commission.

Q: It's still going strong, isn't it?

MATTSON: I guess it is, but they've got so much under way. This proposal involved setting up a series of training institutes throughout Saudi Arabia and developing appropriate curricula in the Saudi dialect of Arabic for them. So it worked out very well. What it meant for me, then, was that afterwards, for the first year or so most of the experts or the key people who would be going into Saudi Arabia to work on this program would first stop off and see me in Beirut beforehand. I would try to make sure that I was there for a preliminary briefing and so forth. Only when they finally got established in Saudi Arabia with the mission in Riyadh was that practice discontinued and the load on me lessened.

That was the key to the development of this program. Then, a little bit later, the Saudis decided to join the ILO [International Labor Organization]. I was not directly involved in anything in that connection, but I was able to give the Saudi officials a little background on the ILO and what to expect there.

Q: What did the Saudis do for a labor representative?

MATTSON: They sent some people who were said to be “workers.” They just didn't have any trade unions.

Q: Are trade unions allowed under Saudi law, or were they at that time?

MATTSON: I don't think so, although I don't know that they were specifically prohibited. There just were no unions.

Q: How could the ILO accept Saudi Arabia when it basically does not accept the concept of freedom of association?

MATTSON: This was a period of time in which we were taking our knocks from the

Arabs and others in the ILO. In fact, we left the ILO, not because of the Saudis—

Q: We left the ILO in 1977, I think.

MATTSON: This was just before that. I recall that I attended the next ILO conference. I think that on the first day of this conference I was walking down the corridor outside the plenary session. One of the Saudis came up and said to me: "Help, help! We need help! Our minister has the director general's report which he's been reading. There is one word which he asked us about, and nobody could answer him. What does the word 'ergonomics' mean?"

Every time I was at an ILO conference, the Saudis—they would make a point of meeting me and saying hello to the principal American representative. They were not the leaders of the Arab pack on the various issues. They wanted to maintain their identity as friends of the Americans, even though they didn't always vote that way.

Q: Did the Saudi representative of the workers vote independently of the Saudi Government representative?

MATTSON: I have no idea.

Moving on, I periodically, although not as often, went to Yemen, where a couple of our Ambassadors were good friends of mine. This was particularly the case with Ambassador Bill Crawford. He would use my occasional visits to Yemen for local reasons. For example, the Chinese communists had set up a textile plant in Yemen, and there were still some Chinese working there. One of the things that they did was to teach the Yemenis to repair the machinery when it broke down, so that they were not dependent on any outside source.

Anyway, Ambassador Bill Crawford was very interested in what was going on at the Chinese-communist-built textile plant. I made it my business to ask the Yemeni government, as a visiting labor attaché, if Ambassador Crawford and I could make a tour of this textile plant. So arrangements were made for us to visit it, and it was fascinating. Even in a country like Yemen, where there seemed to be no "labor activity" going on, as we understand the term, we found that historically there had once been labor unions there. For example, there was a Yemeni who was working for the AID [Agency for International Development] mission in the American embassy. One day he was arrested and later on was found dead in prison under somewhat mysterious circumstances. He allegedly broke his neck falling down a stairway.

When I visited Yemen, there were no trade unions. However, there was a minister of Labor in the Yemeni cabinet. In fact, he was the "landlord" of the American embassy. [Laughter] Subsequent to my first visit and before I went back to Yemen, he was shot for some reason or another.

What I was especially interested in was the fact that Yemen was changing very rapidly

because of the economic boom in Saudi Arabia, Yemen's neighbor next door. It seemed that most of the Yemeni men were going over to Saudi Arabia to work. They could make much more money there than they could at home. Overnight, it seemed, although I'm really talking about a period of a couple of years, this situation had a number of far reaching effects on Yemen. First of all, agriculture. With many of the Yemeni men gone to Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni women weren't able to do very much about taking care of the farms. So agricultural production declined. Secondly, with lots of money coming in through worker remittances, there was a great deal of demand for food and other products imported from abroad.

For example, one little thing. Even Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, was a very traditional and almost primitive place. In the course of two years, I saw a change from clean streets to streets filled with wrappers and tin cans from the foreign produce that people were buying and using.

Q: This was an improvement?

MATTSON: It wasn't an improvement. It was a change! I suppose that the people living in Sana'a would say that it was an improvement. They were now able to eat better and do things that they weren't previously able to do. However, it also exposed the glaring deficiencies there. For example, they had no garbage collection system.

It was a fascinating change. I recall the first time I went to Sana'a. The plane I was on circled the field a couple of times before it landed. When we got down on the ground, I asked one of the pilots what the circling was all about. He said: “Well, we always do that to make sure that there are no sheep on the landing strip.” [Laughter]

Q: Welcome to Sana'a!

MATTSON: On another occasion when I was leaving there, the Yemeni flight I was leaving on was cancelled, so they found a foreign carrier that was free and in the neighborhood, a charter plane from Norway which had just come in. Instead of flying from Sana'a to Jeddah in the morning, I arrived in Jeddah at about 6:00 p.m. I rushed to my hotel and found a message there saying that my schedule started that evening with dinner with the ambassador! [Laughter]

So there I went from Sana'a, this fourteenth century, primitive place in the morning, waiting for a plane to arrive. Then, in the evening, I was a guest at a big dinner at a long table, listening to a Saudi, seated two places away from me, explain that he had just made a marvelous purchase that day of 100,000 bottles of French wine!

Q: How incongruous!

MATTSON: Well, Saudi Arabia was an incredible place at that time, where the strangest things were happening.

I went on to other countries. The Gulf countries were all in the same predicament, to one extent or another. That was, they lacked manpower for the local population to develop modern economies. So they had to bring in lots and lots of foreign workers.

Q: Lots of Palestinians, too.

MATTSON: The first groups brought in were Palestinians. You could tell where they were really focused. For example, in Qatar, the person in charge of civil service recruitment was a Palestinian. They had a lot of them. You could go to the United Arab Emirates. At least 95 percent of the labor force was composed of foreign nationals.

There were also lots of other foreign workers, in addition to the Palestinians. There were Egyptians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Filipinos. Koreans started coming in, particularly in the construction field. There were a lot of Filipinos. The early money was spent on construction. Many buildings were put up. In fact, in Saudi Arabia, a couple of new cities were built. Places like Sri Lanka provided economists and bookkeepers. Anyway, these changes were taking place quite rapidly. However, in the case of countries like Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, there was no labor movement.

Q: Were labor unions prohibited by law or just...?

MATTSON: They just didn't exist. Let's take the case of the one labor movement, in Kuwait, which had a mainly foreign labor force. The Palestinians, who were quite active there, were pushing for things like a labor movement. One day the Emir decided to allow a labor movement to be formed. It sprang up overnight among the oil workers. I've been told that, as a result, there were conniptions in the royal palace for quite a while. Finally, they realized that they could live with a labor movement. In subsequent negotiations, the workers in the oil fields obtained very sizable pay increases. Then unions were formed in the public sector and among the bank workers. There were about seven or eight different trade unions in the labor federation in Kuwait.

I met several times with the president of the labor federation. He was very much dependent on his Palestinian advisers.

Q: Was he a Kuwaiti?

MATTSON: Yes. The labor federation was a member of the WFTU [World Federation of Trade Unions].

Q: He was a Kuwaiti national?

MATTSON: Yes. He was provided with guidance on what he was doing.

Q: Were these Kuwaiti trade unions totally independent of the Kuwaiti Government?

MATTSON: Yes, but it was really a small and weak labor movement. The Kuwaiti

Government didn't dare to test it for a long time. It allowed the trade unions to do things like playing games with the WFTU.

Q: They didn't pick up any visas as a result for labor activities?

MATTSON: No. Again, Kuwait was a rich country. The real issue for the Gulf countries was: "How are we going to be able to improve things for our native people?" This included matters like more and better educational facilities, improved living conditions, and bettering the lives of the people.

I once attended a regional conference on the future of the Gulf area, at which a Kuwaiti professor said: "What should be our ultimate goal? Should it be that when the oil runs out, we have enough money to give every citizen $25,000 and wish them well, wherever they move to?" [Laughter] It was that kind of thing.

Now, in Bahrain, I had talks with the Ministry of Labor which led to a U. S. Department of Labor adviser going out to Bahrain for a couple of years to help the Bahraini Government to set up their first manpower plan. They were in pretty good shape in Bahrain. There were some industries there. There was a shipbuilding industry, an aluminum smelting industry, and a number of others. Bahrain was a poorer country than Kuwait. It didn't produce much of its own oil.

Q: In Bahrain?

MATTSON: Yes. Then, after I left the area, Bahrain built a bridge connecting it with the mainland of Saudi Arabia, so it became even more of a tourist attraction for the Saudis. In Saudi Arabia you're not supposed to find any alcoholic drinks anywhere.

Q: But in Bahrain you could. [Laughter]

MATTSON: In Bahrain you could. I remember that during one of the first nights I was in Bahrain there was a group of Saudis sitting at another table in the hotel restaurant. I think that they started drinking gin and then went on to wine with their meal and to whisky after the meal. They must have finished off three bottles of gin, three or four bottles of wine, and three or four bottles of whisky by the time I left! There were only about four or five of them. In Bahrain, as it was explained to me, you drank like a camel and saved it up for six months, or something like that.

Now, where else did I go during this assignment to Beirut? I was in Syria a few times, but that was just a hop, skip, and a jump away from Beirut. The main thing that I did there was to gather some information for the embassy to report and to introduce embassy people to potential, Syrian contacts. They didn't follow up very much with these Syrian contacts.

Q: Wasn't there a labor movement in Syria, which was independent of the Syrian government at one point, at least in theory?

MATTSON: Well, not really. It was very much under the Baath Party. It had some influence, or at least its leaders had influence in getting legislation passed, and that sort of thing. However, it had a narrow area in which to operate. Otherwise, its leaders would no longer be leaders.

When I traveled around the region, and I would typically be gone from Beirut for two weeks out of every month, I tried to make the rounds of labor contacts that I developed. I reported to the American ambassador in the country concerned, depending on the time available, write up a cable or two, and then try to take along one of the embassy officers to meet my contacts. I tried to leave the impression that these embassy officers should follow up, keep in touch with these contacts, and prepare reports, if any needed to be done.

Q: Was there very much response on the part of the career "Arabists" in the State Department?

MATTSON: It varied. In Jordan there was a good response. In Egypt there would have been a good response if they had enough staff. However, the embassy didn't have enough staff on hand. In Saudi Arabia the problem was really that the embassy staff in Jeddah was far away from where the trade unions operated and the embassy personnel didn't have the necessary background. That's why I was used, even in Beirut, as the contact point until our labor program was really well established.

In the Gulf countries, I received good cooperation—from our embassies in Bahrain and Kuwait. I had good cooperation from our embassy in Damascus, Syria. Two Arab countries I didn't go to were Iraq, which I had no particular need to visit, and South Yemen, where we didn't have diplomatic relations.

Q: How about Iran?

MATTSON: That was outside of my turf. I wasn't really interested. I went to Iran once a few years later, but it was near the end for the Shah. At that time the labor situation was deteriorating fast. There was a lot of competition for skilled workers. The skilled workers were moving from job to job and from company to company, looking for more pay. That would cause the company that they left to pay more to retain their workers. It was just an unhealthy situation.

Q: Were there independent unions in Iran at that point?

MATTSON: No, there was one so-called union movement. I was just there for a couple of days and I didn't meet anyone. Nobody in the embassy seemed to have any contact with the unions. After I returned to Washington, I reported that the situation in Iran was not at all healthy. At the time I was detailed to the U. S. Department of Labor. I believe that Ray Marshall, then secretary of Labor, read my report and started using this argument: “If we had had a labor attaché in Iran, things wouldn't have turned out the way

they did." I didn't quite say that in my report but I said—

Q: You didn't recommend that a labor attaché be posted to Iran at that time?

MATTSON: No. I stopped off in Tehran on my way to a Labor Attaché Conference in New Delhi. I just reported on my visit to Iran after I returned to Washington.

Q: Were there any other countries in your region of responsibility?

MATTSON: I guess that the other important aspect of serving in the Middle East at the time was that it got me involved in ILO [International Labor Organization] affairs. After my first visit to Geneva on my way back to Morocco in 1966 I was a member of the U.S. Delegation to the ILO Conference during the last two years before the U.S. left the organization, as well as the first year after we returned.

I was in a critical situation because the major issue or focal point which involved the Arab World, Israel, and the Occupied Territories—

Q: This was in 1976 and 1977? We returned to the ILO in 1979 or 1980?

MATTSON: Yes. I recall a couple of the things that I did at the ILO Conferences. I would spend part of my time in the coffee bars, talking to people and so forth. Having served in the Middle East for a couple of years, I knew quite a few of the Arabs there, except for the so-called "worker delegations" from these countries.

I recall meeting some Moroccans there who were very, very helpful and friendly. However, they insisted that we couldn't meet inside the ILO building. We had to meet outside in the parking lot. They didn't want to be seen talking to an official American representative.

Q: Were these worker delegates or what?

MATTSON: These were government delegates. By this time, you see, the Arab Labor Organization had developed as its main cause assembling the issues and votes for the annual ILO Conference.

Q: I see. And the annual condemnation of Israel?

MATTSON: Yes. Things would start in February or March at the annual ILO Conference, and they would go on from there, developing the texts of their resolutions and things like that. I recall setting up, the last year before the U.S. left the ILO, a couple of things. That was when Daniel Horowitz was—

Q: Appointed by Secretary of Labor Dunlop.

MATTSON: And things were not going well at the ILO Conference. At this time the

Jordanians were particularly helpful. The senior Arab on the staff of the ILO, an assistant secretary general of the organization, was also trying to be helpful. Then the Jordanian embassy arranged for Dan Horowitz to be invited to meet with Prince Hassan, King Hussein's brother, who happened to have a house just outside of Geneva and was there for the summer. He also volunteered to be helpful. Meanwhile, at my level, I tried to arrange a meeting for Horowitz and finally was able to set up a luncheon for Arab labor ministers with Dan Horowitz. This seemed to go well.

However, we didn't invite the Palestinians, and they were upset. [Laughter] They were trying to show the Arabs that they couldn't make any decisions without consulting with the Palestinians first. I'll tell you, the Palestinians at the ILO Conference were tough cookies.

Q: Is that right?

MATTSON: Yes. I occasionally talked to them on the side. I followed Irving Brown's *modus operandi* at Geneva. He used to say that he was willing to talk to anyone outside the plenary sessions and would tell them what he thought.

Q: Did he deal with communists well, outside of the plenary sessions?

MATTSON: Sure. He wouldn't have been embarrassed by anything that would have been reported. He told them straight out. They had to realize, when they talked to him, that they were not going to get any special favors.

The ILO disaster, or our withdrawal from the ILO, as it were, was probably the best thing that we could have done at the time. It made a difference when we returned. It helped to equip me for my next overseas job, which was in Brussels, helping the AFL/CIO to return to the ICFTU [International Conference of Free Trade Unions]. The AFL/CIO had also walked out of the ICFTU, but earlier than the U. S. Government walked out of the ILO.

Q: So after your assignment to Washington you went to Brussels.

MATTSON: Let me go back a bit. As I already said, I returned to Washington and tried to operate out of the NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] Regional Affairs Office. Sean Holley was already there as the regional adviser for labor affairs in the NEA Bureau. He really didn't need me. I could only be effective when I was in the field. In any event, after being gone on home leave for two months, I returned to the Department of State. I saw that there was no future in a job in NEA/RA, so I signed up for a six-months economic course and took it, beginning in January, 1976.

Q: This was at the Foreign Service Institute?

MATTSON: Yes, at the Foreign Service Institute. I found this course very helpful, although I was surprised that there was really no labor economics in it. It was much more

slanted toward trade issues in the 1970's and that sort of thing. Those were the kinds of things that we're dealing with today.

Midway through that economics course, I was invited by Howard Samuel to join the staff of our delegation to the ILO, specifically as an adviser for the Near East. So I took that position. I had a daughter who was going to be completing high school here in Washington three years later, so I stayed on. I knew that I had another two years in Washington and I decided to stay on for a third year. This made it possible for her to graduate. During that time I helped to develop the area advisers group and made a point of following events in the Near East. I traveled through the Near East occasionally, mainly to labor attaché conferences.

However, I also did two advance trips for U.S. Secretary of Labor Marshall. The first one was to Israel, where I proposed—and he accepted—the idea of developing a relationship between the U.S. Department of Labor and the Israeli Ministry of Labor. So we brought out a team of assistant secretaries for three areas. One of the assistant secretaries dealt with OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration], but I can't remember the functions of the other two. I went out to Israel a week ahead of time with Don Avery. We worked out the program for Secretary Marshall and prepared a series of briefing papers. It turned out, for example, that Marshall and the then Israeli minister of labor were both orphans. Both of them had been raised in orphanages.

Q: Who was the Israeli minister of labor?

MATTSON: I think that his name was Cohen but I'm not sure. I can't remember now.

Q: That's interesting.

MATTSON: Anyway, I think that this was the first Department of Labor to Ministry of Labor program developed, and it worked out very well. We had a two-day conference. We had chosen three different topics on which the Americans and their Israeli counterparts exchanged views and experiences.

Then I went out to New Delhi to do the same thing and set up a program with the Indians for a visit by Secretary of Labor Marshall. This involved just a visit by Secretary Marshall and did not involve a Department to Ministry program. However, at the last minute Secretary Marshall was forced to stay back in Washington to do some work up on Capitol Hill. So he never went out to India.

This assignment was interesting to me because it made it possible for me to get the domestic perspective as seen from the Department of Labor. I won't go into any detail on that, but I always took the view that, whenever there's an AFL/CIO convention, the area labor advisers should be sent to it. Our area adviser group would meet weekly with Howard Samuel, who was then the deputy secretary of labor for international labor affairs. Once a month we would invite one of the assistant secretaries in the building, and occasionally former secretaries of labor, to a luncheon where we would question them

about their experiences and what they were doing. We were able to get funding, first for Abe Raskin and then for Gordon Cowle to be hired to prepare articles for the labor attachés to use, placing them wherever they wanted to do it.

Q: Could you give us some background on Gordon Cowle? What was his specialty?

MATTSON: He was a long time editor of trade union publications and one of the top writers on labor affairs in the United States. I can't remember, off hand, what union he belonged to. I think that it was the International Association of Machinists, but I'm not sure.

Q: Any more details on these two men?

MATTSON: Abe Raskin would come down from New York every two weeks or so.

Q: He had worked for the New York Times?

MATTSON: Yes, then he retired from there. We were also preparing a monthly publication on labor developments in the U.S. I played a particularly constructive role in that connection in going over the final language of the articles, to make sure that they were clear, not simply for the labor attachés, but particularly for their contacts. There are so many words and phrases that are used in different countries in the labor field that can be misunderstood abroad!

I did that for a while, and then we developed a program of gathering feedback from the different bureaus in the Department of Labor on the annual labor reports that were coming in from the field. Then we channeled these comments back to the Department of State.

Q: These comments were evaluating these annual labor reports?

MATTSON: To some extent, but I wasn't looking for critical evaluations so much as examples of people who had read the various reports and used them, as well as the requests people made for other things that they would like to see in future labor reports. Of course, these requests were made in terms of their own organization.

Q: Anything else about your assignment to the Department of Labor which you would like to mention?

MATTSON: Well, I enjoyed this assignment as an opportunity to broaden my background. I also had the chance to go to one more ILO Conference, when we returned to the ILO.

Actually, my last months on detail to the Department of Labor were somewhat peculiar. I was loaned to the U.S. delegation to the ILO conference. However, about two months earlier the new S/IL [International Labor Adviser in the office of the Secretary] in the

Department of State...

Q: Would that have been John Warnock?

MATTSON: No, before John.

Q: Dale Good?

MATTSON: No, after Dale. It was Harry Pollock.

Q: Harry Pollock. He was there very briefly.

MATTSON: Harry had been there for a little while, I guess, working with Dale Good. However, in any event, since John Warnock was scheduled to come back to Washington to be his deputy in the late summer of _____, Harry was alone during that spring. So he asked the Department of Labor to detail me back to S/IL. So I worked for Harry Pollock for a couple of months. I went out to Geneva for the ILO Conference and then came back to Washington. I guess that I worked with Harry Pollock until I left in August for Brussels.

That was a lot of fun, too, because Harry knew a number of people in Geneva. In particular he had just come back from London and so knew the British very well. The British were still very important in the scheme of things. He introduced me to a number of those people.

His first assignment overseas had been to Brussels, some twenty years before. He was very interested in my going there.

Q: What were the main issues of contention facing S/IL at that time, besides the ILO question, of course?

MATTSON: I can't think of any burning issue in particular. The U.S. had returned to the ILO. That was the first ILO conference after our return. Harry Pollock was just beginning to put his stamp on things. He is a very personable guy. He liked people and liked to talk to them. I had the feeling that, once John Warnock arrived, he was going to start moving ahead. However, it turned out that a few weeks after John Warnock arrived in S/IL, he died of a heart attack one Saturday morning, across the street from the Department of State. John could tell a lot of his own stories.

Q: John promised to tell his own story. Do we want to stop here, then?

MATTSON: OK.

Q: This is Side A of Tape 3 of the interview with Jim Mattson on his career in the Foreign Service. Today is May 19, 1995. I am Don Kienzle. Jim, I think that we left off after your tour in Washington. You were just about ready to go out on assignment to the embassy in

Brussels. Would you pick up the story there?

MATTSON: I saw myself as having one prime qualification for the job. That was, that I had spent a year at the College of Europe several decades before and knew or potentially knew a number of graduates of this school in all of the European institutions in Brussels and that area. Once I arrived in Brussels, I also discovered that there was a College of Europe graduate working as one of the Belgian staffers in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. So as I attended the College of Europe, this gave me a leg up in terms of contacts.

Q: What were your main duties in Belgium during that tour in Brussels? You were attached to the EC [European Community]?

MATTSON: I was assigned to the U. S. Mission to the European Communities [USEC] and I spent part of my time following labor and social affairs within the European Communities, both through its institutions and during occasional trips to the various countries. In that respect I considered myself as assigned to the European Community and all of its countries, rather than just Brussels.

Q: So it was a regional assignment.

MATTSON: Yes. At that time there was enough money in the USEC budget for me to take occasional trips. I went to Holland several times. In Great Britain I attended, among other things, the annual Congress of the British TUC [Trades Union Congress] in Blackpool. I visited Luxembourg several times, I went to Paris for a two or three day visit, and I attended the DGB [German Trade Union Federation] Congress for a week in 1982. I attended the European Metal Workers' Congress in Italy in Naples. So I got around.

Q: What years were you in Brussels?

MATTSON: I was in Brussels on this assignment from August, 1980, through July, 1983. So it was essentially a three-year assignment.

Q: What were the primary issues that faced the EC at that time? There were a lot of interesting issues then.

MATTSON: As far as the EC was concerned, there were lots of issues. The whole question was to identify those that were likely to reach a decisive stage. For me, the key issue during those three years turned out to be a draft regulation, although in the EC they are called “directives,” on information sharing by management with the workers.

Q: Was this also called the transparency issue?

MATTSON: Yes. At the time it was called the “Vredeling Draft,” because [Henk] Vredeling, the former Dutch minister of labor, then became the EC commissioner

responsible for labor and social affairs. He had developed this particular draft during his years in Brussels, probably during the period between 1976 and 1980. In any event, Vredeling had left Brussels by the time I arrived. He left behind him this draft directive on information sharing.

I found that very little of any consequence had been done by the EC in the labor and social affairs field, prior to my arrival in Brussels. So the question was how serious this Vredeling Draft was and how likely it was to be enacted while I was there. I came to the conclusion fairly early that it was not likely to be enacted. However, that didn't discourage adversaries of the Vredeling Draft among the American community, both those living in Europe and those visiting from the United States from playing it up. This was particularly the case with lawyers, who saw a chance to use the issue of the Vredeling Draft to get more business from American firms in Europe. So there was a lot of interest in this particular subject back in the Department of State in Washington. Periodically, I would send in an update on what the status of the Vredeling Draft was and all of that.

That was the main issue on the EC side, but I had quite a few contacts around the European Community, both in its various institutions and in the permanent representations of the member states.

Q: What happened to the Vredeling Draft?

MATTSON: As I had earlier concluded, nothing ever came of it, in terms of enactment. To this day it has never been enacted. In fact, a subsequent piece of legislation has been enacted within the last few years and is now gradually being implemented.

Q: Some of the member countries of the EC had similar proposals earlier, didn't they?

MATTSON: Some of the countries had more than proposals. They had laws that require domestic firms to follow prescribed action to share certain types of information with their employees and, in most cases, their trade unions.

However, that was essentially all there was on the EC side. Lots of other things came up. For example, the Economic and Social Committee of the EC decided to send its senior staff people to the U.S. on a visit to find out what was going on in the field of labor and social affairs. So I helped them by providing briefings and lining up appointments, although essentially the appointments were made for them in the U.S., both by the EC Delegation in Washington and by the U. S. Department of Labor.

Q: Did you have much contact with the ICFTU as an institution? What were the main issues involved?

MATTSON: I had much more to do with the ICFTU than I initially anticipated. First of all, when I arrived in Brussels, there was no American organization belonging to the ICFTU. The AFL/CIO had left the ICFTU about ten years earlier. While Irving Brown of

the AFL/CIO, who had his headquarters in Paris, was often in touch with ICFTU officials, particularly with John Vandervecken, the then general secretary of the organization, Brown seldom came to Brussels. There was no other American representative in Brussels from the U.S. trade union movement who kept a closer eye on things.

However, about the time that I went to Brussels from Washington, the AFL/CIO decided to pursue a policy of rejoining the ICFTU, after taking a careful look at the organization and where it was going. So during my first year or so in Brussels I spent a bit of time with the ICFTU, simply keeping in touch with what was going on and getting a sense of those elements within the ICFTU in favor of the re-entry of the AFL/CIO in the ICFTU, as well as those opposed to such a return of the AFL/CIO. There were always some people opposed. Not the top leadership, but in the ranks.

Q: Could you mention some of the major problems that the AFL/CIO had with the ICFTU at that time?

MATTSON: At that time there were no real problems. All or most of the things that the AFL/CIO feared when it left the ICFTU never really happened. The communists never really gained a foothold within the ICFTU. It continued to be an anti-communist organization.

However, one thing that happened in August 1980 really enhanced the re-entry of the AFL/CIO into the ICFTU. That was the creation of Solidarnosc [Solidarity] as an independent trade union movement in Poland. For the first year and a half *Solidarnosc* was permitted to exist freely by the Polish government. Very quickly a stream of *Solidarnosc* people found their way to Belgium. There had been a long-standing relationship between the Belgians and the Poles for a variety of reasons. It turned out that the Belgians, perhaps more than other Western Europeans, gave free access to Poles, issuing them visas for visits. So many Poles came to Belgium.

At that time the ICFTU was by far the most important international trade union movement, and it was anti-communist to boot. The *Solidarnosc* people also spent time with the World Confederation of Labor [WCL], which was much smaller than the ICFTU and which had once represented the Christian trade unions around the world. The WCL had de-emphasized the religious aspect and now had an audience that included quite a variety of small trade union movements in developing countries that had no Christian ties and often no religious ties at all.

So for both of these international trade union organizations the early encounters with Polish visitors quickly developed into programs of support for *Solidarnosc*, by which they channeled aid from their headquarters, as well as from their member unions. As far as the AFL/CIO was concerned, even though it had not yet rejoined the ICFTU, the association with *Solidarnosc* represented another advantage to rejoining the ICFTU. In fact, even before the AFL/CIO rejoined the ICFTU, it was active in providing some aid to the ICFTU to pass on to the Poles.

Q: How was the aid actually sent to Solidarnosc*?*

MATTSON: As far as I know—and I have no first-hand knowledge of this—I learned, on the basis of the talks I had with the ICFTU people, that their aid to *Solidarnosc* went pretty much via Sweden. There was regular ferry service between Gdansk and Swedish ports. Apparently, in most cases, it was possible to even get equipment, like printing presses, into Poland without trouble using the Swedish ferry service. That's pretty much how they operated from the ICFTU side. As far as the WCL was concerned, they had much less to give *Solidarnosc* in terms of equipment, because it was a much smaller and less affluent organization. However, they had one tower of strength. That was that the general secretary of the WCL when I was in Brussels was, in fact, a Pole who had moved to the West some ten or fifteen years earlier and happened to be very close to some of the leaders of the new *Solidarnosc.*

Q: What was his name?

MATTSON: The general secretary of the WCL was Kulakowski. I suspect that he, personally, was the channel of much of the WCL aid to the Poles in *Solidarnosc*. By the way, when I was in Brussels, Kulakowski used to go to Poland to spend three or four weeks of summer vacation, taking his family and enjoying it on the beaches on the Baltic Sea with the families of his *Solidarnosc* friends.

Q: So he wasn't afraid that the Polish authorities would incarcerate him or anything like that?

MATTSON: No, he wasn't. By that time I think that he had Belgian citizenship, which he could use as a form of protection. You know, from August 1980 until December 1981, when the Polish government cracked down on *Solidarnosc* and declared martial law, things were pretty open. As far as *Solidarnosc* was concerned, they were active. They had strikes and negotiated with the authorities. *Solidarnosc* became a sophisticated movement very quickly.

Q: What happened after the crack down on Solidarnosc *in terms of assistance and support from the ICFTU and the WCL?*

MATTSON: It became more important. The crack down took place in Poland. It meant that *Solidarnosc* had to limit or abandon certain overt activities and do many more things quietly. As I say, this meant that the aid it was getting from Western unions was even more important.

Q: Did Solidarnosc *have an official representative in Belgium at that time?*

MATTSON: Yes, after the crack down. They named Jerzy Malewski. One of the hardest things that I had to do was to try to spell all of the Polish names in the reporting I did. They were all brand new to me.

Q: What role did Malewski play after the crack down?

MATTSON: First of all, he worked with the local Belgian unions, which provided him with facilities, in the sense of office equipment and a place to work out of. Then the international trade union organizations provided help to him. I recall that, at first, he had some difficulty until he was able to get a letter from the head of *Solidarnosc* to the ICFTU and to the WCL. This gave him the credentials to represent *Solidarnosc* in the eyes of these two trade union internationals.

Q: At that time was the head of Solidarnosc *Lech Walesa?*

MATTSON: Yes, Lech Walesa. He signed this letter, and from that point on things were okay. Malewski had previously been a scientist. He had a Ph.D. in the physics field. He happened to have been outside of Poland when the crack down occurred. He stayed outside and was eventually picked up to perform this task of representing *Solidarnosc*.

There were Polish communities in places like Stockholm, Paris, and Geneva. However, Brussels was picked for this particular position of Western representative of Solidarnosc because of the presence there of the ICFTU, the WCL, and I suspect, to some extent, of the EC.

Q: How did the AFL/CIO and the U. S. government respond to the Solidarnosc *representative in Brussels? Did they recognize and work with him?*

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: Both the U. S. government and the AFL/CIO? Maybe we should differentiate between them.

MATTSON: The AFL/CIO worked with the *Solidarnosc* representative, but it had no representative permanently in Brussels at the time. Once the AFL/CIO re-entered the ICFTU—which, I believe, was in the late spring or early summer of 1981—AFL/CIO representatives began showing up more often at the ICFTU. Eventually, after my departure from Brussels, some Americans from the AFL/CIO were assigned to the ICFTU, on a full-time basis.

Q: But while you were in Brussels Irving Brown and his office in Paris was responsible for contact with the ICFTU?

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: How about the U.S. government? Did the U.S. government recognize the Solidarnosc *representative?*

MATTSON: I did and I dealt quite often with him. However, I had no aid for him or

anything like that. I thought that it was much better for the aid to come through the AFL/CIO and the ICFTU, rather than directly from the U.S. government.

I should also note that there was a series of Americans of Polish origin who came to Brussels and worked in the *Solidarnosc* office, usually for short stints—from three to six months. They worked under Malewski. I recall meeting four or five of these Polish-Americans there. They were part of this really voluntary organization, which was trying to exist on the basis of minimum expenditures so that they could send on the maximum amount of funds to Poland, which they had gotten from various donor organizations.

Q: At that point did Solidarnosc *have any relationship with the ILO? Did they work that channel very effectively?*

MATTSON: This was more the case later on. As I said, the real point of contact which *Solidarnosc* had in the West was its representative in the Brussels office and, to some extent, in other places when this representative traveled around. He didn't travel so much at first.

I was in Brussels until mid-1983, so I wasn't there for much of what ensued after that time. When I was in Brussels, one of the things that I discovered, which turned out to be very important, was sending copies of the various statements which both the ICFTU and the WCL made about Poland and their support for *Solidarnosc*, particularly after the crack down occurred in Poland in December 1981. I was told subsequently that that kind of reporting was very instrumental in President Reagan's decision to launch his "Let Poland be Poland" campaign.

Q: OK. Were there other issues which sort of stand out during your tour in Brussels?

MATTSON: The key developments were the ongoing situation in Poland and AFL/CIO re-entry into the ICFTU. However, I got involved in many different issues. On the ICFTU side, they were following events throughout the world, and there were very often announcements and press statements made. I recall, for example, being invited one day when the then Nigerian minister of labor was visiting the ICFTU. Along with my labor attaché colleagues from a few Western countries, we met with the Nigerian minister of labor and discussed with him developments in Nigeria, particularly what he planned to do at that point in time in restoring a Nigerian government relationship with the labor movement in his country. Of course, things have changed very much since then. I don't recall the labor minister's name. However, at that time this kind of contact was important for the then Nigerian government to redevelop a relationship with labor. As part of this effort, they made a point of sending the labor minister to Brussels to meet with the ICFTU.

Of course, every day there were visitors coming in to the ICFTU. Sometimes, when I would go there, I would hesitate to visit many of the ICFTU offices because I would quickly end up with all kinds of information to report to the State Department. I just didn't have time to handle it all!

I will say that one could be very efficient while working in Brussels, particularly for the U.S. Mission to the European Communities. Our office, which was down the street from the U.S. Embassy to Belgium, was about five minutes away by foot from the ICFTU, the European Trade Union Confederation, and the other, labor offices. Maybe it was a maximum of fifteen minutes by foot to walk to the EC organization.

Q: What a blessing for the mission's motor pool!

MATTSON: Yes. In fact, I never used an automobile to get around, because I also lived not too far away from there. I lived about a fifteen minute walk from the office. However, aside from being so close together, one had an open door everywhere. It may be that at a given moment, I couldn't see the general secretary of the ICFTU, but he would be available in an hour's time. That was the kind of situation.

Q: That's a pretty good and convenient situation to be in.

MATTSON: That was the situation affecting both sides. That is, both the European organizations and the trade union organizations. There was a high degree of accessibility, and they would answer my questions. However, of course, you had to initiate these contacts. You had to know what you were talking about. They wouldn't necessarily volunteer information. However, I found that it helped enormously to make the rounds when I would go to the various organizations, so that the people I saw would see that I was seeing other people as well.

That was beneficial in several regards. First of all, I didn't have to depend on any particular individual for information. Sometimes, it would not be helpful to the person involved if I asked him questions. At other times, it might tend to cut me off with the person if I were gone, traveling for a little while. Secondly, people assumed that others had told me a great deal, usually more than they in fact had told me. So I was able to get the benefit of the doubt and people were more forthcoming than they would have been otherwise.

However, there was another problem of getting too much information. So I would try to limit my contacts to some extent.

Q: Were there a lot of bureaucratic rivalries inside the EC that caused difficulty for you?

MATTSON: I wouldn't call them "rivalries" so much as the fact that there were naturally sub-organizations of people from different countries. I often found that most of the people from an individual country came from a sub-group within the country. For instance, when I was in Brussels, most of the British working there came from Wales. At that time also, one of the two British commissioners of the EC was from Wales. In fact, both of them were from Wales. It just happened, then, that people from Wales would come to Brussels and be recruited for positions open to British candidates.

Q: I seem to recall that Turkey was a major issue for the ICFTU at about this time.

MATTSON: Well, it was a continuing issue. There were episodes which came up and then declined in significance. However, basically, Turkey was trying to get into the European Community at the earliest opportunity, and it had two major problems in that regard. First of all, in many respects the country was not ready to join the EC. Its laws were not, in fact, compatible with the EC, particularly in the fields of labor and social affairs. There was already the problem of the Kurds, whom the Turkish Government called the "Mountain Turks," refusing to recognize them as being a distinct community. I suppose that the second reason was that there had been some incidents at the time involving Turkey and its longtime rival, Greece, which was already a member of the European Community and was exerting its influence to slow down any movement toward the final acceptance of the Turks in the EC. So I think that the Turks already were aware that they would not be able to join the EC until late in the decade of the 1990s, if not later.

Q: Wasn't there some concern about the independence or autonomy of the trade union movement in Turkey?

MATTSON: There were two separate trade union movements in Turkey. One was pro-Turkish government, and the other one was anti-Turkish government. The one that was anti-Turkish government had suffered from several crack downs. As I recall, it was unable to do much. It may even have been temporarily outlawed. However, that was one source of difficulty for the Turkish government, because there was considerable criticism of what the Turkish government was doing or not doing. So this situation complicated things for the Turkish government.

In Europe a number of national trade union movements had worked very closely with this union movement that was against the Turkish government, while others were associated with the trade union organization which was more favorable to the Turkish government. This trade union organization wasn't under the Turkish government, but it was willing to work with the government on most issues.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the EC issues concerned with "North-South" type problems, involving equalizing working conditions with the rich countries?

MATTSON: There was a little bit about this but, for the most part, the "North-South" issues concerned the periodic negotiations on the amount of aid which the EC would give to third-world countries, most of which are located in the Southern Hemisphere. This involved trade union movements as well, because in the preliminary conversations there were sessions which required the third-world countries to send representatives to trade union conferences as well. These representatives may or may not have been independent, depending on the country involved. However, they were officially included in what were called "negotiations," but they really weren't that. They were conversations which led up to the EC decision on how much aid the Community would provide to these countries during the following two or five-year period, whichever it was.

Q: These were third-world countries rather than the poorer countries in the EC itself.

MATTSON: Yes. These were countries which had relationships with EC member countries, like the Francophone countries and a number of former British colonies, including those in the Caribbean Sea area and so forth.

Q: Are there other issues that you would like to mention?

MATTSON: I should mention in passing that there was also a need to pay some attention to the business community. Therefore, I periodically met in Brussels with people from UNISAY, which was the European business counterpart to the European Trade Union Confederation. There we would talk about issues like the Vredeling Draft. They would give their views. They were not very happy with this document because the individual member states of the EC had different views and opinions. Often, they didn't want to go public with them. However, as I had quiet talks with them, I got a clearer sense of where their different organizations were coming from.

Then I was invited to be a member of the monthly meeting of the EC Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Brussels. That was important because that chamber had been designated the lead chamber of commerce in Europe in following European matters. As a consequence, not only did this committee have a large membership, but a number of the members came each month from the U.S. to attend the meetings. For example, the vice president of General Electric and so forth. That was the place where I tried to cool any hysteria developing over the Vredeling Draft, for example, and anything else that might come up in the labor field.

Shortly after I arrived in Brussels, I met a British member of the EC Commission, named John Peele—or Jack Peele, really. He was a very good speaker and a good writer. In fact, he wrote a book which was published when I was in Brussels about labor and social affairs, as they were handled in the European Community. This book was quite good, one of the best of its kind. However, he did not stay more than half a dozen years with the European Commission because he hadn't learned any second language and wasn't interested in learning one. [Laughter] He finally had to be released from the European Commission.

However, his book spelled out the reasons or the rationale for the little that was accomplished in the field of labor and social affairs within the European Community. That rationale was that in most of the member states of the EC, labor and social affairs were so important for domestic political reasons that they didn't want to give up their own laws and practices in order to have a Europe-wide code or series of laws and practices.

Q: What was the title of Jack Peele's book?

MATTSON: I can't remember it any more. I left my copy of the book in the office when I left Brussels for Jack Booth, who succeeded me.

Q: Did you have any contact with the European Trade Union Confederation, the ETUC?

MATTSON: No. The ETUC was located in the ICFTU building when I was in Brussels. They rented part of the building at a low rental.

Q: Could you describe what the ETUC was, whom they represented, and how they fit in with the other organizations? I don't think that we've ever covered the ETUC in our interviews.

MATTSON: The European Trade Union Confederation was a trade union body recognized by the European Commission and the European Communities. It was their interlocutor on labor matters and it was largely funded by the European Commission. I say "largely," in the sense that many of its activities involved different languages. It held periodic conferences and so forth. Recognizing that the trade unions were not very wealthy, the EC provided the funding for these conferences and much of the work that the ETUC did.

The ETUC was composed of people from the different European trade unions. When I was in Brussels, the general secretary of the ETUC was a man from Luxembourg, the former head of the largest labor federation in Luxembourg. His deputy, Peter Cockerell, was British and, I believe, is still in that position. There was a senior German official in the ETUC, named Ernst Piehl, who is now the Director of the EC Vocational Training Center, which is located in Berlin. There were maybe a dozen other people, from different countries, in the ETUC headquarters staff. The public affairs officer was a young Dutchman. Offhand, I can't recall the names of the others at that time. Most of the ETUC headquarters staff were just there for a limited period of time and then moved on. On the whole, they were very active and prepared all kinds of papers for their national member unions to use in trying to explain what the ETUC did.

Q: Was there much interaction between the AFL/CIO and the ETUC?

MATTSON: No. The AFL/CIO was just getting back into Brussels at the time. I assume that there was more contact after I left Brussels than when I was there. The AFL/CIO dealt exclusively with the ICFTU and really didn't have the time or the people on scene to get involved with the ETUC.

Now, as part of the European structure in Brussels there was also a European Trade Union Institute [ETUI]. This consisted essentially of what the Europeans would call "experts," or knowledgeable people in the different trade union organizations who wrote papers or studies.

Q: Was this separate from the ETUC or a part of it?

MATTSON: It was physically separate, but it was under the ETUC, though largely autonomous. A German from the German Metal Workers Union was the head of the

ETUI then and, I think, until a couple of years ago. There were, perhaps eight to ten others on its staff. They were each responsible for producing a number of papers each year.

The papers were about trade union subjects. For example, there was an annual paper on collective bargaining which covered the previous year. After a while it became quite interesting because you were able to see, over a period of time, what was happening.

Q: But these were primarily for study purposes, rather than as advocacy papers.

MATTSON: Right. Some of the papers could be adapted for advocacy purposes about issues that were coming up or were already under consideration on the European scene.

Then there were series of papers that were really short descriptions, perhaps thirty pages long, of member organizations. The trade union movement of the Netherlands, for example.

Q: Did the ETUC have much impact on EC social and economic policy?

MATTSON: Well, yes and no. Its views were often reflected in EC papers, but everything in the end which became a directive also had to be approved by the member governments of the European Community. Except in the labor and social field they didn't accept very much of real import. So in that sense the ETUC wasn't able to accomplish very much in terms of changes and additions to European labor law.

Q: So the EC might draft a directive. However, until it was approved by the member governments, it didn't have any real impact.

MATTSON: No, it had no impact at all. By the time I was in Brussels a number of draft directives had been pending such approval for years, but it was clear that they weren't going anywhere.

Q: Was there any direct relationship between the EC and the European Parliament in the process of formulating Community policy?

MATTSON: A draft directive would first be approved by the members of the European Commission. This process might take three or four years and go through a number of changes. Then it would go through the European Parliament for its views and it would go to the Economic and Social Committee. One-third of the membership of the Economic and Social Committee was composed of trade union leaders, one-third of management representatives, and one-third of people representing other special interests. They took labor and social affairs questions very, very carefully.

Q: This is Side B of Tape 3 of the interview with Jim Mattson. Jim, please continue.

MATTSON: When the draft directive had gone through this organizational review, it was

returned to the European Commission for final review and possible further changes. It would then be submitted to the Council of Ministers and, in effect, to the European Governments for final approval. That's where the draft directive would often be stymied.

Q: The Governments would then draft a final version of the directive? How did that work?

MATTSON: Well, in most cases the Governments didn't approve anything. However, if they made any changes in the draft directive, it would have to go back to the European Commission for its approval of these changes.

*Q: And then transmission on an "*ad referendum*" basis to the separate governments?*

MATTSON: And then to the separate governments. They would be given a period of time, perhaps three years, in which to implement it.

Q: Could the member governments choose to implement or not to implement it?

MATTSON: At that time this would be a draft directive which had been already approved by the Council of Ministers, which meant all of the member state governments. If some of the governments didn't approve the draft directive, then it wouldn't go forward.

Now, under the new system that they have, a number of things can be approved with less than the total support of all of the member governments.

Q: Would this be binding on the member governments which did not approve this draft directive?

MATTSON: No. However, at that time everything had to be approved by all of the member governments, so not much was approved in delicate fields like labor and social affairs. Such matters were left to the member states.

There was also a series of what were called "Trade Committees" under the ETUC. These were like the International Trade Secretariats [ITS] but at a European level. There was a wide variety of them. Some of them, in effect, were simply adjuncts of the ITS.

Q: Like the metal workers?

MATTSON: Yes. Others were totally separate. Some of them had communist members aiming for universality in their field. Others kept the communists out. They did not have very much in the way of funds or staff, which typically consisted of one or two people in Brussels. They didn't accomplish very much.

When I was in Europe before going on to Brussels, in June 1980, I attended the annual ILO Conference. That was the year when the U.S. returned to the ILO. I had a chance, then, to attend a press conference given by the leaders of the ICFTU after they had had

one of the periodic meetings of their executive board in Brussels. They happened to be there because of the ILO meeting. At this press conference,—which was given by the then president of the board of the ETUC, Wim Kok, who was then the head of the Dutch FNV [Netherlands Trade Union Confederation], the largest of the two Dutch labor federations—the big issue, and the reason why I attended, was the question of "new affiliations." A number of the Western European communist-controlled trade unions had applied to affiliate over previous years. These applications had just been sitting there. Nobody had taken final action on them. Finally, it was decided, when Wim Kok was president, that the organization had to take action on these applications and decide whether to take these communist-controlled unions in or not.

So Kok announced that a number of unions had been granted admission to the ETUC. However, the French communist controlled organization, CGT [General Labor Confederation], was not admitted. The Portuguese trade union federation also was not admitted. The Spanish federation was admitted. The Italian, communist-controlled federation was admitted, because they were considered to be less "hard line communist" in orientation. To a considerable extent they included non-communists, social democrats, and so forth. I think that a total of twenty or so unions were considered for entry into the ETUC. Most of them were accepted. The two big exceptions were the French and the Portuguese communist-controlled organizations. No action was taken for the moment on the applications of a few other organizations, and additional questions were asked of these federations.

So the ETUC sort of managed this collection of trade committees as well, although there were a couple that were pretty much outside its purview. One of these organizations, the Graphic Workers' union, was headquartered in East Germany, and there was another one in Switzerland outside of Geneva.

The ICFTU had an office in Geneva and so it was able to follow very closely what went on in the ILO and to make representations, proposals, and so forth.

Q: It had official status, didn't it, as a labor organization accredited to the ILO?

MATTSON: Well, in one respect it had no more status than any other, but typically, and I guess that I'm now going back at least 20 years or so, the successful election slates had a worker representative. Or the head of the worker group was the ICFTU slate, even though, for example, they included people from non-affiliated unions. For example, in Belgium there are two union federations: the socialist organization, which was affiliated to the ICFTU, and the Christian organization, which was affiliated to the WCL. They often included the head of the Christian organization on their slate, though not in the top position—

Q: But as a token of solidarity?

MATTSON: Right. Anyway, they had the votes to get their person elected, year after year. The elections were for three-year terms, an arrangement which had been in effect

for a long time.

Q: Okay. Are there other items that you'd like to cover concerning your tour of duty in Brussels?

MATTSON: Let me think. With the different organizations doing a variety of things there was always plenty to do every day, as long as you took the initiative. Every morning I would begin by reading the cable traffic. Then there were lots of publications to be read which were put out by and about the EC and, to some extent, about the trade union internationals. So I'd start the day by spending about an hour reading that and then go out and spend the rest of the morning making my rounds. Then I would come back to the office and spend the rest of the afternoon drafting telegrams!

Q: Sounds like a good life for a labor attaché.

MATTSON: It was a good life but it was always busy. There was always lots going on. Then there were things like press conferences. I had reached a "no solution" situation when I would be invited to three press conferences on the same day and at the same time. They were all press conferences which I knew I should cover.

Q: That's when you applied for re-assignment!

MATTSON: I had a half-time, very bright Belgian local employee who had been a journalist. He was able to cover press conferences when I couldn't do so. I recall once, on a Monday morning, I had gone to the ICFTU and dropped by to see the general secretary, who invited me into his office. He said that he had some big news. His deputy, Anzio Frizio, had just come back from a trip to Latin America. There he and his delegation had been arrested in Bolivia and held in jail for a couple of days. The Bolivian minister of the interior himself took away several checks which Frizio had to give to different trade unions and wouldn't return them. He finally let Frizio and the others leave Bolivia on a Sunday afternoon. On Monday morning, Frizio was in Brussels.

Q: He was just giving a press conference. Oh, man!

MATTSON: No, he was just telling General Secretary Vandervecken of the ICFTU about what had happened. Vandervecken said to me: "Come in and listen to this." So I listened to it all. Then I left, rushed back to my office, and sent in a classified cable about it. I got a phone call that afternoon from one of the deputy assistant secretaries in ARA [Bureau of American Republic Affairs], who was interested because of the direct involvement of the Bolivian minister of the interior.

Well, on the following day the ICFTU held a press conference. I was tied up with something else, so I sent my half-time Belgian assistant to attend it. Later in the day, after this assistant had prepared a cable and it had been sent off, my boss told me that there was nothing new in it. My cable on the previous day had covered that, and more! The important thing was that this incident was now unclassified, and it went out in

unclassified form. Otherwise, a lot of the reports which we were handling were classified for a variety of reasons. A lot of these reports involved negotiations with the EC.

Halfway through my tour in Brussels, when I was very, very busy, the American ambassador at the embassy asked my ambassador at the U.S. Mission to the European Communities if I could be available on a half-time basis to the embassy as well. When I was asked for my views on this request, I said no, because the Embassy already had our labor attaché from the embassy in the Netherlands transferred to Brussels.

Q: Who was that?

MATTSON: It was Wilbur Wright.

Q: How did that work out in terms of your working relationship with him?

MATTSON: It was fine. He covered Belgium. There were lots and lots of labor attachés at the various foreign embassies there in Brussels, covering either Belgium, the Netherlands, or Luxembourg. Or they were labor attachés just following developments in the EC. So there were enough. I'm talking about thirty or thirty-five labor attachés in all. So an informal organization developed that occasionally was invited to meet with the heads of the different Belgian unions and with management representatives in Belgium. We went along for the ride, although I didn't do any reporting on these visits. Since I was making trips to other countries, I said: “Well, this is the same thing here. In this case, this amounts to a trip to Belgium and following what's going on there.” I found that very useful.

I might note that my last full month in Brussels was June 1983. At the beginning of June, I got a phone call from Washington asking if I would go to Geneva to fill in at the ILO conference. I said: ""Well look, I'm already slated to go up to Oslo for a week in mid-June, because the ICFTU is having its quadrennial world congress.” My caller said that maybe I could fit in the trip to Geneva before and after the Oslo trip. I said that I couldn't cover things very well in that way but I added that if they couldn't find anyone else available full-time, I'd try to help out on a part-time basis. However, I suggested that they find somebody else. They finally got Roger Schrader, who was then in London and didn't have any major commitment coming up in that month.

So I just went up to Oslo. I wrote about twenty-five or twenty-six cables during that assignment. When I was in Brussels, I did four or five cables a day, and maybe as many as seven. Not every day but at least one day every week. It took the embassy in Oslo about three weeks to send them all! [Laughter] Then I went back to Brussels and did a couple of more “wind up cables.”

I should mention that when I was in Brussels, I worked with Irving Brown, who would come to Brussels occasionally. During the first year that I was in Brussels, he came there maybe two or three times.

So the ICFTU readmitted the AFL/CIO. When that happened, Irving Brown immediately made sure that I was advised in advance who was coming for each of the meetings. I would make hotel reservations for them, in the case of Lane Kirkland and the top leadership of the organization, when they would come for the meeting of the governing board of the ICFTU, which was held every six months. I would also meet them at the airport and then they would go their own way.

My German counterpart came from the German trade union movement and was close to its leaders. He would sit in on the ICFTU meetings. Otherwise, the rest of us labor attachés could not do so. We would go to the press conferences afterwards and then talk with people.

Q: Other than dealing with administrative matters, did you have any contact with Irving Brown on substantive issues as well?

MATTSON: Oh, yes. And I remember that when I was first in Brussels, the then general secretary of the ICFTU, Otto Kersten, who preceded John Vandervecken, was a German. He was already in ill health but refused to see a doctor. Kersten would give me copies of papers that were going to be brought up at these meetings of the ICFTU Governing Board. For example, papers on disarmament. Then he would ask: "Do you have any recommendations to make on this?" I would send the paper back to Washington and hope to get some answer for Otto Kersten. I didn't always get one. But then, when the AFL/CIO actually returned to the ICFTU, I also arranged for our ambassador to give a reception for the entire governing body of the organization.

That was one of my most frustrating experiences. I had heard of all of these people. I had been reporting on them around the world. And there they all were, together. I had a chance to meet them all, but there were just too many of them for me to have much of a conversation with them. There were about sixty members of the governing body of the ICFTU. There were three American members of the governing body, and then there were the alternates and sub-alternates.

Q: You say that there were sixty members of the governing body?

MATTSON: Yes. Sixty from all over the world. Since the Europeans then still had the organization in their grasp, as it were, because of the leadership of the general secretaries, they were very willing to give lots of seats to people from other parts of the world.

The Headquarters Staff of the ICFTU consisted of Otto Kersten and his deputy, John Vandervecken. Then, when Kersten died, Vandervecken and his deputy, Henzo Frizio, became the two top leaders. Then there were several departments and a total staff of, perhaps, 125 to 150 people or so, over half of whom were Belgian. They were very bright and worked together particularly well under Vandervecken. The headquarters staff would shift from what they were doing this week to something else next week because that's what the organization needed. For example, there might be a conference coming up involving Latin America.

There were curious aspects of the ICFTU, also. Even though the AFL/CIO had withdrawn from the organization, it still participated in the ICFTU's regional organization for Latin America.

Q: Was that called the ORIT [Inter-American Regional Labor Organization]?

MATTSON: Yes. The AFL/CIO not only participated in the sense of attending meetings but it had people on the staff, including Paul Sumochi, who was the Treasurer of ORIT. He was there when I was in Brussels. He would come for these meetings of the governing body. However, the European members of the ICFTU had set up a separate committee which met periodically in Brussels on Latin America. There were no Latin Americans involved in these meetings and, of course, the AFL/CIO was not involved.

So that was the sort of thing that I was watching. There were people who didn't want the AFL/CIO to return to the ICFTU. Others really didn't care, one way or the other, since it had been out of the organization so long. However, the top leadership of the ICFTU, including Kersten and Vandervecken in particular, wanted the AFL/CIO back in the ICFTU, and as soon as possible. This was also the view of the major ICFTU affiliates, like the Germans and the British, who were strongly in favor of it.

Q: Have we fairly well exhausted the period when you were in Brussels?

MATTSON: I think so. Let's stop there.

Q: All right, we're ready to resume now. This is Don Kienzle, and I'm resuming the interview with James Mattson. Today is Friday, May 26, 1995. Jim, we left off last time at the end of your tour in Brussels. You were in the process of transferring to Bonn, I believe.

MATTSON: I thought at first that it would be a very easy move, because Bonn is just a couple of hours away by car from Brussels. We packed up our car. Everything else had been given to a moving firm to bring over, and we drove off to Bonn, arriving a couple of hours later. Then it became apparent that we didn't have a place to live. We would be in temporary quarters for at least a few weeks. This turned out, in fact, to be about three months.

Part of that was my fault, because I quickly got into a schedule under which I was out of Bonn on official business for eight weeks, for either one or both of the weekend days. There was a series of trade union conferences and other events that either started on a Saturday or Sunday. I went to my eighth “missing” weekend in Vienna, where there was a labor attaché conference which had been scheduled on rather short notice.

By that time my wife had finally found a place for us to live in the Bonn suburb of Bad Godesberg. I guess that we moved in there in November 1983.

I had been stationed in Bonn previously in the late 1950s. My first impression of Bonn was that it had grown enormously and was full of all kinds of German civil servants. However, it was by no means an important place in social affairs. The Ministry of Labor was there, to be sure, but that was located on the other side of Bonn. Our embassy was in Bad Godesberg, about a fifteen minute drive away from Bonn. You had to go through Bonn to get to the other side of the city, where the Ministry of Labor was located. So I didn't go there very often. I tried to stop off there as I went to other places.

However, I found out that as soon as the season began, in late August, there was a lot going on in other parts of Germany, and I had to travel to keep up with it. So I traveled week after week. This was an exceptional period because so many things happened, one right after the other. Normally, I was traveling at least every other week. Often I traveled every week.

Q: What were the major trade union issues at that time, in early 1984?

MATTSON: When I got to Bonn, a major question was the whole arms issue and nuclear weapons in particular.

Q: Was there a labor component to this issue that you focused on in particular?

MATTSON: There was no labor component per se, and, by and large, the German labor movement took its position from the SPD [Socialist Party of Germany], which was opposed to the new round of arms deliveries which was going to be delivered to Germany and other European countries.

Q: Was the German government controlled by the CDU [Christian Democratic Party] or a conservative coalition?

MATTSON: Yes. In the fall of 1983, before I arrived in Bonn, the Christian Democrats took power in Germany, in coalition with the FDP [Free Democratic Party]. The Free Democrats had previously been in a coalition with the SPD. The new government, under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, is the same government which still runs Germany, although its majority in Parliament is very small now. I think that it has a majority of one or two.

Q: Which were the major unions that you followed closely? Was it the Metal Workers and, what, eighteen different unions?

MATTSON: There were thirteen or fourteen at the time, and this number was reduced by a couple of mergers while I was in Bonn. In fact, the last such merger took place after I left. However, the largest union by far was the Metal Workers. They were always important. This union was headquartered in Frankfurt. I would go down to visit them every few months for chats with Metal Workers union people.

I arranged for periodic meetings for our ambassador with the head of the Metal Workers' union. When I arrived in Bonn in 1983, the head of the union was an older man. He was

replaced in 1985 by a young upstart named Franz Steinkuhler. For a long time Steinkuhler had been an opponent of the established order in the DGB [German Trade Union Movement] and went his own way. When he became head of the Metal Workers, he continued to go his own way, but not to the same extent as before. He worked with the other unions but he didn't want to be considered a follower of any other union. In fact, his style probably led to his ouster some years later, when he was found to have been engaged in some unusual practices involving money.

Q: What percentage of the labor force in Germany was organized into trade unions during this period?

MATTSON: I think that it was something on the order of 35%, mainly affiliated with unions in the DGB. However, there were other trade union movements. There was a small Christian Democratic trade union central. It was very, very small in comparison to the DGB and relatively inactive in most respects. Then there was a separate union of government employees. It had its headquarters up in Hamburg. It had a very active office in Bonn where, of course, the main government bodies concerned with government workers were located.

Q: Were all of the white collar workers in the DGB as well, besides the government workers?

MATTSON: No. There were many government white collar workers in the DGB as well, but most of the organized federal employees were in this other union. It was quite active. It would normally engage, together with the DGB white collar union for government employees, in the federal bargaining process. There was a form of bargaining which took place in the federal sector for two kinds of workers: the *Angestellte* and the *Arbeiter*.

The top category of civil servants did not have the right to bargain collectively and was not actively or largely organized.

Q: The Angestellte *and* Arbeiter *categories could largely be translated as "white collar" and "blue collar" workers. Is that right?*

MATTSON: Right. There is a third category, the *Beamte.*

Q: Which would include officers of the government?

MATTSON: Yes. This would include people who were thought to be so loyal to the government that, no matter what party was in power, they would essentially be running most of the government operations.

Q: They could roughly be categorized as management employees.

MATTSON: Yes, you could call them that, although they were hard to define. They included categories like all school teachers, as well as full-time, government employees

who had a certain level of education. That is, typically, at least one university degree, in contrast to the *Arbeiter* who had a low level of education and the *Angestellte,* who had completed a high school education. However, they had gone through a special three or four year training program after completing their high school education, even though it wasn't the same kind of high school education as people going on to university.

Q: How long were you in Bonn? From 1983 to...?

MATTSON: That was a long four-year tour.

Q: Longer than most four-year tours?

MATTSON: Well, I'll tell you. It all depends, in part, on where you came from. I came from Brussels, where everything had been easy, nearby, and accessible. In Bonn, as I said, nothing was easy. Even to go the Ministry of Labor was about a forty-five minute drive. Whether it was the unions, the employer organizations, or conferences or congresses of different sorts, they all seemed to take place outside of Bonn. And Germany, of course, is a much bigger country than Belgium is. They all seemed to be at least a few hours away by train or however one went there.

Initially, I did some travel by air. However, the embassy started running out of travel money. By the time of my final year in Bonn we were depending entirely on these bulk tickets that the embassy had for second class travel. We did no more first class travel, no more air travel, and that sort of thing. However, I never had to cancel out because of lack of travel funds. We just had to travel in different ways.

Q: Did this create a lot of personal inconvenience, more than anything else?

MATTSON: Yes and no. I don't think that it was so much personal inconvenience as it was the fact that a lot of the places that I had to go to were far enough away so that I would need to take half a day going there and half a day coming back.

Q: How about your relationships within the embassy? Did you get support from the various substantive components of the embassy for your labor work?

MATTSON: Yes. I was technically in the Political Section but I was physically separated from it and closer to the entrance of the building so that people could visit me more easily. That may sound fine, but, in practice, very few people visited the labor attaché in a place like Bonn. They didn't go to Bonn very often at all. When people would come to the embassy, usually they had made a special trip to Bonn in order to go to the embassy.

Q: Okay. Do you have any special observations to make about your tour in Bonn that we should record?

MATTSON: As I said, I learned very early that the action in Germany takes place outside of Bonn, so I had to travel to be there or miss out on knowing what the action was all

about.

My initial travel involved a long spurt. As I said, for two months I was on the road every week and gone for at least one of the two weekend days. After that things became somewhat more subdued. I still traveled a lot, but it wasn't “go, go, go” every week. This gave me a chance to do my regular work at the embassy. I found during my first year at the embassy in Bonn that doing the annual labor report, which was fifty pages or so long, took a lot of time. This was partly because I hadn't been in Germany for the whole previous year. I just came during the second half of 1983. However, after the first year it was easier to prepare this report. I knew in advance what I was looking for and could keep track of it. Otherwise, it was just a question of keeping up with what was going on in the country.

Q: What kinds of things was Washington interested in hearing about at that time?

MATTSON: All kinds of things, certainly including government actions. For example, when I was in Bonn, the government added to its social security program allowances for people who cared for new-born infants. A mother or father of children could get one year's credit toward retirement for taking care of that child at home for that child's first year of life. Since people could qualify to get a reduced social security benefit after five years of coverage. This meant that a person, man or woman, could qualify to receive a reduced social security pension by taking care of five infants during their first year of life.

That was one legal provision, but there were quite a few laws that entered into effect which attracted some interest in Washington. There was a general interest in some of the major standards in the social security field, such as standards concerning health care. We had a number of groups of Americans who came to Germany just to study the health care situation. They would stop off in Bonn to see us but primarily to spend some time with the German government. Then they would travel and make their visits and first case findings around the country.

I became aware that a number of Americans had been following events in Germany at a distance for some years. Periodically, they would turn up in Bonn. They would tend to be more knowledgeable, in part, than a labor attaché was on some things, but not as up to date as a labor attaché was on what was going on in Germany.

Q: So you covered more than the labor field. You covered the social areas and categories as well.

MATTSON: I learned that at my first post in Morocco. I did that everywhere. There was always plenty to do. I defined my duties in my field fairly broadly, and that's the way it worked out in practice.

Then one of the major events that took place during my time in Bonn was a strike by the Metal Workers. To explain this strike, I have to explain how collective bargaining negotiations took place there. In the case of the Metal Workers, like most of the others,

the union itself engaged in negotiations with the employers' association. In fact, this was directed at the national level but tended to take place at a regional level in one or another region of the country. During that particular year, the region for the negotiations was Baden-Württemberg, which was one of the centers of the metal working industry, but it was far from being the only one.

These negotiations took place prior to the entry into office of the new leadership in the Metal Workers' union. The negotiations took place as a result of the inability of the two sides, management and labor, to compromise on an agreement beforehand. So the Metal Workers' Union called on its members in a handful of companies to go on strike on a specific day. As a result, the employers' association called on a comparable number of employers to shut down by locking out the workers at their plants. Over a period of time the strike expanded to a few other companies, and the lock out expanded as well. Most of the employers and most of the workers were not directly affected by the strike or lock out, because their companies remained open, and they could continue to work.

However, some of the companies that were directly affected by the strike or were locked out, and particularly those on strike, had been selected because they provided products for a wide number of other companies. For example, one company had some American companies concerned because, among other things, it produced catalytic converters for automobiles. Some American companies were buying their converters from this German firm. These American companies wanted to keep up on how the strike was going on and whether there was a chance of an early settlement. Well, it took seven weeks before the strike ended and a settlement took place.

Q: That's a long time!

MATTSON: A very long time. This strike was a costly event for both sides. However, probably this was the kind of event that could only have gone on so long in that particular sector, because it was so large and so important.

Q: The union must have had quite a strike fund to be able to last that long.

MATTSON: They had been collecting money for years for their strike fund. So the union had its strike fund. The employers, as well, had a comparable kind of arrangement, whereby—

Q: This is Side A of Tape 4 of the interview with Jim Mattson. Go ahead, Jim.

MATTSON: Let me go back and review the negotiations and the Metal Workers' strike a little bit. I said that the negotiations generally took place at a regional level. In this particular year, the region selected was Baden-Württemberg. Over a period of months that's where the two sides engaged in periodic talks. When the talks didn't produce enough compromise on the two sides for an agreement, the union organized a vote by its membership on whether or not they were in favor of a strike. The overwhelming majority of the workers voted in favor of a strike, if need be. After that, even though negotiations

continued, off and on, the two sides really prepared for the eventual decision to go on strike.

Once a strike begins, eventually there is a series of further negotiations, but, often they are escalated to the national level. In this case the negotiations continued at the regional level. Eventually, the strike cost the two sides so much that both were willing to settle and reach an agreement. At that time the settlement work took place at Baden-Württemberg and then, with minor changes, in the other Metal Workers' regions.

Q: Was there a victor or was it pretty much a compromise on both sides?

MATTSON: It was a compromise on both sides, but the Metal Workers' Union got one of the important things which it wanted, which was a reduction in working time. This was not as much as they thought it would be and wanted, but still—

Q: Was that the thirty-five hour work week?

MATTSON: That was the reduction of the work week to thirty-five hours. However, to get it, the Metal Workers had to sign a contract which, I believe, was for three or four years. That was exceptional, because normally they had one year contracts.

Q: Was there a comparable reduction in pay as a result of the reduction in hours worked?

MATTSON: No, but there was a smaller increase in pay than otherwise would have been the case. Out of it all came the conclusion that there would be a reduction in working time, and that was considered more important. Now, it wasn't that easy or clear cut. The union had engaged in a campaign for several years before that in promoting the idea of a reduced working week, as an important aspect of bargaining. Some people were really against the idea but, over this period, the union leaders' concept of reduced working time finally won the day.

Q: How long had the working week been prior to the strike? Was it a thirty-six hour working week?

MATTSON: No, it was forty hours. Afterwards, in fact, for many of the workers it remained a forty hour week. However, they were paid more money for—

Q: The higher rate.

MATTSON: The additional hours beyond the thirty-five hour week. And the thirty-five hour work week did not come about immediately. There was a gradual reduction in the length of the work week, I think over a four year period.

Q: Were the workers satisfied after the fact with the reduction in the work week?

MATTSON: Well, they were more than satisfied, because those who were willing to work longer could work beyond forty hours. The employers were less willing to hire additional workers. They could have their main working force work longer hours, which they did. And a lot of the workers were willing to do that. The younger workers, particularly the unmarried ones, were more interested in the extra free time involved in a shorter work week. However, most of the workers were older, married, and were more interested in maximizing their income.

That strike was an important event because this dispute went on for such a long time and had direct implications for a number of American companies operating in Germany. So both companies and their offices in Washington, as well as the U.S. federal government, were in touch with us regarding this dispute. We would have journalists and so forth coming to Germany from London or Paris just to follow up on the strike. They would stop off at the embassy as well as in Frankfurt and Cologne, where the employers' association was located.

Q: Was there any permanent disruption to trade patterns as a result of this strike? Were catalytic converters, for instance, purchased from other countries?

MATTSON: No. As a matter of fact, what impressed me most of all was that in the German situation the workers at a particular plant did not make any decisions about the strike. They were simply workers there. If the union at the national or regional level called on them to go out on strike, they did so, following orders. However, they would tell their employers that the strike was not their doing. They said that they were just doing what the union told them to do. The same situation applied to the employers. A single employer did not engage in lock-outs or any particular action. It was only the employers' association at the national and regional level which asked the employer to engage in a lock out. In that case the employer would do so. However, they would tell the workers, "We're not doing this of our own volition, but because we have been asked to do so by the employers' association." So, really, the Germans did everything they could to keep the climate warm and friendly at the local, company level.

In addition, there were the workers' councils, which engaged in discussions and worked with the employers on a number of issues. That is, when the plant would close for summer vacations and that sort of thing, but not labor issues related to negotiations with the unions which would involve money. Rather, they would consider all of these little issues which arise. For example, what time lunch would be, what would be the time for showers, and so forth.

Q: I wonder how the wives of the workers reacted to having their husbands home for five more hours a week.

MATTSON: I don't know actually how many of the workers were home any longer, because they engaged in different strike actions. They would picket the plant, they would have demonstrations in towns and so forth, or they would go to the nearest union office and operate out of there. The workers had to go to the union offices to pick up their strike

pay when they were on strike because they were no longer being paid by the company. So that was by far the most important and longest strike during my years in Germany.

After that, I think that the next two times that the Metal Workers' Union had a dispute with management, it didn't lead to a strike. This made things much easier. I think that both sides were asking for less.

Then we had the unification of West and East Germany.

Q: But you were gone by then.

MATTSON: I was gone by then. The unification of West and East Germany added a new element to all negotiations. That is, how much time would be needed to bring the wages of workers in the former East Germany up to those in West Germany. So far workers in the former East Germany haven't reached the level of West Germany. This will probably take another five years or more, depending on the sector.

Q: When you left Bonn in 1987, were there any hints that the reunification of the country would come two years later?

MATTSON: No, not that quickly. In fact, the Germans would often bring this subject up, but even they brought it up in the sense of "eventually, we have to get back together." Then they would ask, "How long do you think it will take?" I was never able to give a good answer. The Germans were also unable to give good answers to that question, but they wanted to maintain the hope that it would happen.

The fact is that the country was reunified because of a series of short term and long term events. Over the long term, East Germany was doing poorly in the economic sector. Its production and the quality of its work was declining. In the short term, there was a series of real blunders made by the regime in East Germany that left the country with really no other option but to join with West Germany.

Q: After 1987 you came back to Washington? What was your next assignment?

MATTSON: I came back to Washington and spent two years in the Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State on International Labor Affairs [S/IL]. The special assistant to the secretary was Tony Freeman. He and I worked together. For a time we had a third person working there, plus Tony's secretary, Freda Lunsman.

Q: Who was the third person in S/IL?

MATTSON: There was a young woman named Barbara. I can't remember her last name. She got married and then she and her husband moved out to Colorado. That was just a short term assignment for her.

Q: Was she replaced then?

MATTSON: No. Later on, Tony obtained an additional position in the office for a State Department officer. He got somebody who had just retired. He had been a labor attaché for much of his career. This person, Aldon Ayer, is still there.

Q: What were your major duties in S/IL at that time?

MATTSON: Perhaps first I could go back and talk some more about Germany.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry! I thought that you had finished.

MATTSON: No. In Brussels I had spent most of my time with people of different organizations who were willing to explain very openly what they were doing. They were very interested in asking about developments in the U.S. So Brussels was the first place that I really began to spend time passing on information as well as receiving it.

In Germany that process continued, but it was harder because I had to go to see two people in particular, because I wouldn't see them in Bonn. So in Germany I made a special point of keeping up to date on U.S. developments in order to share that information with the Germans. I also spent time explaining practices in the U.S. The Germans, for the most part, knew some English, but most of the people I met had never traveled to the U.S. Therefore, they didn't understand our practices very well. They assumed that American practices were the same as in Germany or didn't know that they were often very different. I quickly discovered that I had to keep aware of that situation and spend some time explaining how our system worked, particularly in the labor field, where there were some important differences. For example, beginning with the fact that we had so many different unions, and they acted differently from those in Germany.

In Germany, after World War II, they started with a small number of unions, I think seventeen or eighteen, which was later reduced down to twelve or thirteen. Because of that, the German unions could do a number of things that American unions couldn't afford to do.

Q: Were there many Germans around in Germany at that time who had previously participated in one of the exchange programs? Could they relate back to their experiences in the U.S. during the period of the Marshall Plan?

MATTSON: All of them related back, although I wasn't able to meet very many of them, since quite a few of them had retired. However, I knew a couple of them who worked in the headquarters of the DGB [German Trade Union] building in major positions. One of them was in charge of Public Affairs and Press Relations, and another one was in charge of International Affairs. They had been part of a German delegation which had gone to Wisconsin for a year of study at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1940s. After their year of study, they stayed on in the U.S. and worked in a factory in Chicago. They made a lot of money during the three months they worked in the factory in Chicago. Then they did some traveling and returned home to Germany, flush with money and happy. They

loved to talk about those days.

Q: Do you remember their names?

MATTSON: The one who worked in International Affairs is now dead. He died some years after I left Germany. I can't remember his name off hand or that of the other one, the Public Affairs guy, either. There were just so many people I knew there.

One of the interesting developments had been that some ten years earlier a private council in New York had initiated an annual program in which each side, the U.S. and Germany, would send two or three trade union members to the other country for a month of travel and education through travel. Under this program were some of the younger workers, in their thirties and forties, who were active and were in key positions in both the DGB and a number of unions.

In any event, during my third year in Germany, which marked the tenth anniversary of the beginning of this program, the American organization found the funds to sponsor a special conference in Germany in Dusseldorf. One day during this week-long conference the sponsors of this program brought the group down to Bonn for a morning of visits with German organizations and at the American embassy during the afternoon. At the time the ambassador was Richard Burt. I talked him into holding a reception for these trade unionists in the evening. Ambassador Burt had arrived in Germany only a few months earlier, so this was one of his first big parties. That went very, very well. Everyone seemed to like it—it renewed contacts, and really put the Americans in a special position. Some Americans had been wondering about their relationships and standing with the Germans.

I did a number of things during my four years in Germany, but I discovered once again that I had to get out and meet with the Germans. There is nothing comparable to that. So I accepted as many of these invitations as I could, especially invitations to make speeches that I didn't receive in previous assignments elsewhere. In my last year in Germany I first tried to accept one of these invitations every quarter, and then one a month. That kind of program turned out to be very useful to me, because, in addition to my talk, which typically lasted for about an hour, we would have a discussion afterwards. The longest discussion I ever had was eight hours afterwards.

Q: Wow!

MATTSON: It was not in the same place. We would go out to dinner and then talk on and on. Typically, these meetings would be in trade union halls or perhaps in one of their training centers.

Q: Accompanied by drinking lots of beer, of course, in the tall glasses.

MATTSON: Oh, yes, although we didn't drink that much, but just enough so that we could keep talking—

Q: And lubricate the discussion.

MATTSON: I was able to talk, not only with friends or potential friends but also with potential adversaries.

This was another thing. In Brussels the organizations were, by and large, all friendly. There were no real problems. As I mentioned in our last session, there were a few people in the ICFTU who were not enthused about the AFL/CIO rejoining, but they were few in number and were not key persons there.

In Germany I would meet really anti-American people in most organizations. They were relatively few in number, in most of the unions, and they didn't represent any real power, but they were there. When the conversation turned to discussing communists in the large unions, like the Metal Workers, the communists were among the most active because they were willing to work nights and weekends and do whatever needed to be done. As the head of the Metal Workers once told our ambassador: "We rely on the communists for certain things because our other members aren't willing to come out in the middle of the night or during the weekends." So that gave the communists a certain amount of influence, and meeting them gave me, first of all, an understanding of why some union members were opposed to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] policies and the "new generation" of nuclear weapons, as well as other elements and ideas that came from the West.

Q: Was this anti-Americanism a remnant of the Vietnam era?

MATTSON: No, I don't think it was. I think it was something that was purely German in character. It also meant that, during my travels, I would often encounter people who were opposed to America but didn't really understand much about America, at the same time. I would get hostile questions from them.

However, usually in the same crowd there would also be a number of people who were very favorably disposed toward the United States. They would want to answer the questions even before I could. So there was this hostile element, but it was not that strong in numbers. It was just that, in certain instances, they were active and troublesome.

Q: Was there a generational element to the anti-Americanism? Did you find that younger people tended to be more anti-American?

MATTSON: Not per se. I think that this situation did not reflect attitudes throughout Germany. There were certain areas and certain universities that had some of these people. I recall that at one such meeting I happened to be sitting next to a fellow who had been a communist. He was in his sixties. He said that his one regret was that he would like to visit the U.S. some time, and particularly visit a brother of his, who was living in San Diego, California, with his family. The brother had children and grandchildren. There were some younger people as well who seemed to be anti-American. This was not a

pronounced tendency. It was just something you encountered from time to time.

Q: Which German universities had a concentration of these people who were critical of the United States? You mentioned that there were some of them at some German universities.

MATTSON: Well, one of them that I particularly recall is the university near the former border with East Germany, in the northeastern part of the State of Hesse. I can't think of its name. I visited there once.

Apparently, the period of more concentrated East German influence in the universities was during the decade before I arrived in Bonn, the 1970s. There may have been a relationship with the Vietnam War in that case.

Q: Are there other points that you might like to mention?

MATTSON: I'd like to say a few words about some of my visits to various parts of Germany.

I often visited union headquarters but discovered that it was difficult to meet with many people there because the officials were on the road so much, as I was. The best place to meet with people was at union congresses, so I went to as many as I could. Since they were only held every three or four years, they were very, very important. The unions put a lot of money into arranging them, particularly the larger unions which could afford it. These meetings were important both in the selection and maintenance of union leadership, as well as casting light on the key issues that would come up, involving the fields in which their members were active in addition to general political issues.

My start on this program of visits to union congresses took place a year before I arrived in Bonn. When I was assigned to Brussels, I also attended labor events in different countries. In the spring of 1982, the DGB had its quadrennial congress. This happened to be an important meeting because this was the one which came up after stories came out about “Neue Heimat” [“New Home,” the name of a home building company owned by the DGB]. A new president of the DGB was elected at this meeting. There was going to be a new president of the DGB in any event, but the question of who the person would be had not been settled. Again, this was because of the Neue Heimat affair. The story got out in the German press during the months leading up to this DGB congress. More and more, potential candidates were ruled out because of their own association with Neue Heimat.

Q: Would you explain what Neue Heimat was? Wasn't it a building project?

MATTSON: Sure. Neue Heimat was one of the companies which was owned and operated by the DGB. However, like several of the other companies owned and operated by the DGB, it was not directly operated by the union leaders. Union officials sat on its boards and had connections with it, but other people had been hired to manage the company. In the case of Neue Heimat, it was initially set up to build housing for German

workers after World War II. However, by the 1980s it had reached a point where it owned a great deal of housing—amounting, I would say, to something like three-quarters of a million apartments and housing units, mostly in big blocks. These buildings were in and around most of the cities in Germany. Over time these housing units, however, were less and less attractive because they were getting run-down. For the most part, they were built during the first decade or two after World War II. They were located in what became the "wrong parts of town" and that sort of thing, whereas more and more people wanted to live outside of the towns and not in these units. People preferred to live in detached houses, with a yard, and so forth.

However, Neue Heimat continued on and was losing money. Finally, during the weeks before the DGB congress in 1982 they settled on Ernst Breit as candidate for the presidency of the DGB, because he had had no previous association with Neue Heimat. At the time he was president of the German Postal Workers.

Q: Wasn't there also a question of corruption in the Neue Heimat affair, with people taking payments—

MATTSON: That came out later when further investigation revealed that there were tremendous losses at Neue Heimat experienced over at least the previous five to ten years. That has not been publicized anywhere. In part, this involved corruption, but also the simple fact that Neue Heimat owned these housing units which they were no longer able to rent out.

When I was in Bonn, the long term upshot of this affair was that Ernst Breit tried to get rid of Neue Heimat completely but was unable to do so. He found a potential buyer who would take it, paying one Deutsche Mark. [Laughter] We're talking about a company which owned about 750,000 housing units around the country.

Q: Good Lord!

MATTSON: That showed just how the value of this company had been reduced. Of course, the value of this company was largely reduced because by that time Neue Heimat had borrowed so much money from a large variety of banks and savings and loan institutions that one could even wonder who would be willing to pay even one Deutsche Mark for it. As it turned out, the man who offered one Deutsche Mark was not able to take the company over because the creditors, who had a say in a decision like that, did not trust this person to take over these assets. This man had been a baker in Berlin and he owned a small number of bakeries there. He had some other business interests, but nothing big, and the banks simply didn't feel that he was up to handling the assets involved in Neue Heimat. Particularly since Neue Heimat had become used to "borrow to the hilt" in terms of the loans it had entered into. So this deal never went through. Neue Heimat then tried to sell off some of its housing assets on a regional basis. That process went on well after I left Germany. I think that Neue Heimat still owns some of these assets but much less than previously.

There was a series of other companies owned by the DGB. There was a bank in Frankfurt, the Frankfurt Gemeinwirtschaft.

Q: That was also a union-owned bank?

MATTSON: It was owned by the union. The DGB tried to sell a minority of shares in it, but none of the other banks was willing to accept that. However, finally, they sold a majority of the shares—51%—and that, in fact, meant that the DGB no longer was involved directly in bank issues. The new owners of a majority of the stock took over the role of working with the other banks and all that.

Then there was a cooperative which was not tied in directly with the DGB but was close to it. It went under and some of its leaders were accused and finally brought to trial and convicted of taking bribes from its suppliers and were found to be at least partly responsible for the losses it had suffered.

There was another firm that sold insurance to union members. Most of its salespeople were actually union members who were doing this on the side. This company also went under and eventually was sold. It still continues to exist, but is not as large as it was before.

Q: Were any of the union business institutions viable at that point? It sounds like a story of a continual demise of the DGB-owned business institutions.

MATTSON: It was a downhill process for many of them. I won't say that these business institutions weren't viable, but for periods of time they had borrowed money and, in fact, borrowed too much money. Some of their ideas on how to operate were no longer valid. The reason was that the people who were hired to run these business institutions were not professionals. They tried to deal with the business as “going concerns,” which would go on and continue to profit, even though they didn't change their methods of operation.

Q: So they, in effect, postponed the problems by borrowing money.
The numbers didn't add up any more, and they were faced with a major decision.

MATTSON: Yes. That situation continued with virtually all of the DGB business institutions. The DGB still has an automobile association. However, there are so many union members in Germany that they can make at least a short term "go" of almost anything by bringing these people in as members. I think that the DGB automobile club still exists. However, the DGB sold some of its properties, and it has had a number of reductions in its staff since before I left Germany. The DGB closed down its weekly newspaper because it was not attractive to union members who got their union information from magazines and newspapers of their own unions. The DGB had never been in a position to require union members to pay for its magazine. It was a voluntary thing. Over the years the number of people who subscribed to DGB publications continued to decline. Finally, in about 1989, the DGB closed down its publication program completely. That was just another element in the DGB picture.

I'd like to go back to what I said about going to the DGB Congress in 1982 in Berlin. That was the congress at which Ernst Breit was nominated and elected as DGB president. Somebody gave him a broom just after he was elected, and he had all kinds of photos taken of him holding the broom out—

Q: As if for a "clean sweep."

MATTSON: However, it never worked out that way. He was in office and was re-elected to a second term in 1986, when I was still there. In 1986 the DGB Congress was held in Hamburg. There were only two cities in Germany, I believe, which had large enough buildings to house a DGB Congress. One of them was Berlin, with its new Congress Center, and the other one was Hamburg, which had a big conference center as well. That was true for all of the German unions. They had to hold their congresses in cities which had buildings which were large enough for them.

The second largest congress was held by the Metal Workers' Union. That could be held in only three places: Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich. The other unions were smaller, but, for the most part, they were of a size which limited where their congresses could be held in the style that they like to have. First, they feel that the congresses must be held in an impressive, modern building. A union congress would typically go on for six days or a week. Typically, the congresses would start on a Sunday. During that whole week all of the people present, including the delegates and people from all of the different business organizations connected with the union movement, other people, and representatives of political parties. Every congress would offer one evening to the political parties to hold their events. Because the DGB was considered a group which was independent of political parties, that meant that all of the political parties could do their own thing on that night.

Q: So the DGB was not an integral part of the Social Democratic Party [SDP]?

MATTSON: Not as an organization. Most of its members were supporters or sympathizers of the SDP. Certainly, union members felt that, to get ahead, they should join the SDP. However, when I was in Germany, for example, one union, the Police Workers Union, elected a Christian Democrat as its new President. These people were always a little different anyway.

Q: It was a little more conservative than most other unions.

MATTSON: Today I wouldn't be surprised if, perhaps, two or three unions have Christian Democrats as their Presidents. However, by and large, virtually every German union had among its top leadership at least one Christian Democrat.

Q: It wasn't like the Scandinavian union which had an integral relationship between the cooperative movement, the Socialist Party, and the labor movement.

MATTSON: No. It was an intimate relationship among individuals, but it did not involve any tie-ups between the organizations. It was very interesting to get to know that. After the first few congresses, it was helpful to realize what one should focus on and the kinds of people one could meet there. One of the considerations was that, since the congresses were held so seldom, you found people from virtually every union would go to the congresses of virtually every other union, at least for a day or two, not necessarily for the whole period of the congress.

What was discussed and done at these union congresses would be, to some extent, reported in the press. However, to a considerable extent, it would never be a matter of common knowledge. It would just be known to the people who had attended. That was another reason why people went to these union congresses.

Q: On balance, did you feel that the labor movement in Germany was stronger, weaker, or about the same at the end of your tour in Bonn as it was at the beginning?

MATTSON: I think that it was weaker. In fact it was definitely weaker, partly because the various union business institutions were falling apart, but also because the membership was not doing as well politically. This was due to the fact that the conservative government under Helmut Kohl as chancellor and Richard Von Weizsäcker as president, [both of whom] had been employees of the Employers' Association when they were young men. Kohl and Von Weizsäcker were not prepared to do away with the labor movement or anything like that, but they wanted to reduce some of its power and influence.

Q: And play political hardball.

MATTSON: Yes. The individual unions had different types of congresses, depending on their political mix and the fields they were in. The miners' union, for example, was a very conservative group and was dependent on one thing. That is—

Q: This is Side B of Tape 4 of the interview with Jim Mattson. Jim, you were saying...?

MATTSON: They felt that the union congress and the government should live up to its commitment to support mining coal over the long term.

Other unions had other ideas that were not based on coal at all but on their own immediate concerns. I went to the congresses of virtually every union at least once and, in a few cases, twice, because they had congresses every three years. I was able to attend the first congress during my first year in Bonn.

Q: Would you say a little bit about the issue of co-determination? Was that still an active concern for the unions by the time you were in Bonn?

MATTSON: An organization or foundation was set up—named after the first president of the DGB, Hans Berchler. The mission of this foundation was to promote co-

determination. Its income was the money contributed by union members and officials who had been on boards of directors of companies. Now, in fact, over the years—and this was another interesting development—fewer and fewer of these people were paying to the DGB the money that they had received for the Berchler Foundation. More and more of them were keeping this money. During my third year in Bonn, the Metal Workers' Union finally produced a list of the people who had not paid their money into the foundation. There were hundreds and hundreds of people on this list, including union presidents and vice presidents, who were not continuing the practice that had been originally agreed upon. The publication of this list convinced a few people to pay the money, but there were still a lot of contributions outstanding which hadn't been paid.

However, this was one of the changes that had been taking place in the trade union movement. The unions were having to operate differently. Let me give you a good example. In the period immediately after World War II, when the union movement started up again, one important activity of the unions was what they did on May Day. That was a national holiday, and the unions called on their members to come out and participate in a big rally on that day. They had good turnouts for many years. However, by the time I was in Germany, the unions were no longer even trying to mobilize the workers for May Day, because they weren't able to get many people to participate. People had other interests in mind. They felt that their jobs were secure. While they were union members and, in some cases, did a lot for the union, many of them felt that it was too much to go to a union rally on May Day. They felt that this was a holiday, not a work day.

We were talking about the different unions. One of the right-wing unions, one of a group of five such unions which took part in political activities, was the Tobacco Workers' Union, which was headquartered in Hamburg. I thought that it was doing well, because the tobacco industry was doing well, except that its president was getting free trips abroad from a cooperative. When this was revealed, he lost his job. The union survived, and there are some good people in it, but it lost its standing for a number of years. I don't know if it has regained it.

Another of the five conservative unions was the Chemical Workers' Union, headquartered in Hannover. It was doing quite well, economically, but it was part of this conservative group. It had a particularly good relationship with the employers in the chemical industry. It engaged in a number of practices which were questionable. I'm not talking about anything illegal, but these were practices which other unions did not follow or, at least, said that they didn't follow.

Another one of this group was the Textile Workers' Union, headquartered in Dusseldorf.

Q: And they were conservative? Usually, textile workers are low-skilled and more on the radical side.

MATTSON: They were considered conservative. They were simply trying to delay the inevitable reductions in the numbers of textile workers.

Another union in this conservative group was the Police Workers' Union, but this was really more a case by itself. Its headquarters were located outside of Dusseldorf in a small town in Rhineland-Westphalia. I went there once to meet the president of the union and its staff. It happened to be one union where most of the officers and staff were there that day.

The Metal Workers' Union was very large. They had a skyscraper building in downtown Frankfurt. They had a very sophisticated staff. They hired good people like the Teamsters' Union in the United States. The Metal Workers had the reputation of having a very, very good staff. The staff was not composed of metal workers. In their case they usually came from the union movement in general but worked for the Metal Workers' Union because they wouldn't work for just any union at all. The Metal Workers' Union was something special.

Q: One question about the Police Workers' Union. Weren't they part of the public sector within the DGB, rather than—

MATTSON: Yes. The Postal Workers' Union had its headquarters in Frankfurt and had a front office with a very effective man in Bonn. I would meet with him quite frequently because he knew everyone. He had been in Bonn for about ten years at this point. I went to the headquarters of the Postal Workers' Union a few times.

The Railway Workers' Union was also headquartered in Frankfurt. I saw them occasionally. They had some good people there, but had one problem. That was that during the decade before I arrived in Bonn, the Russians had succeeded in getting the Railway Workers' Union directly involved in a group of railway workers throughout the world. Of course, many of the railway workers in this larger group were from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They also had left-wing and right-wing railway workers from other countries. The German Railway Workers' Union felt that they had to belong to this larger grouping because of the East German situation. That was an argument that they generally used in defending their ties with the Russians and the East Germans. That is that it was something that was “required” of them. In this attitude, the Railway Workers' Union was supported by the SPD, which did not necessarily support everything that the union movement did.

For example, we'll come to the case of Poland, where the SPD, in the mid-1980s, actually started a contact program with the official union in Poland and sent delegations to visit them and ignore *Solidarnosc*. At the same time the DGB had its relationship with *Solidarnosc.* It wasn't much of a relationship, but at least it came out in favor of *Solidarnosc.* The DGB congress in 1986 supported a very strong resolution in favor of *Solidarnosc* and its activities.

Q: How did the AFL/CIO interact with the DGB and the unions headquartered in Germany?

MATTSON: At the time I was in Germany the AFL/CIO was still quite active, but I think that this was partly because of Irving Brown's presence and influence in Paris.

Shortly after I arrived in Bonn, Lane Kirkland, the President of the AFL/CIO, and a small delegation came from Washington for a periodic meeting with the DGB. It stayed in Bonn for a couple of days. I was invited to the dinner at the DGB headquarters for this delegation. At the dinner, Kirkland made a point of noticing my presence there, saying that he had worked with me at previous posts, particularly Brussels, and that I was a good friend of the labor movement. This comment was unexpected but very, very nice. It also made it a little more difficult for me in some quarters, among the Germans.

Q: Did relations between the AFL/CIO and the DGB cool during that period?

MATTSON: Not really. I have said that, a few years later, there was a meeting of people from the United States and Germany who had gone to the other country on visits. There were about fifteen or twenty Americans attending that meeting and a comparable number of Germans there.

There were other meetings between Lane Kirkland and the DGB, but they no longer took place every year. They were held about every two years. The next meeting was in Washington, and I wasn't involved in it. There were also periodic visitors. Jim Baker came a few times. He spent the whole week when the DGB had its congress in 1986 in Hamburg. During much of that time Baker was just sitting there, with the earphones on, listening to the debate. There were English translations provided, so that non-German speakers could understand it all.

When I was in Germany, the problems between the AFL/CIO and the DGB seemed to involve particular unions. One of them, curiously enough, was the German Chemical Workers' Union. Politically, they were quite right of center, but, at the same time, they were quite independent, both in Germany and abroad. At the time, the president of the union had never been to the U. . and was always too busy to take one of the month-long trips that I would offer him.

Q: You mean under the IV [International Visitor] program?

MATTSON: Yes. This was all I had to offer him. Anyway, some of his deputies went to the U.S. However, I guess that what really warmed things up was that he finally agreed to support the American candidate for the new president of the ITS [the international chemical workers union], to which the Chemical Workers' Union belonged.

Then there was a particular problem involving the Chemical Workers' Union. A German chemical firm had a factory in Louisiana, outside the city of New Orleans, in a zone largely set aside for factories. There had been a problem there which had led to a lock out of the workers. When I was in Germany, the lock out was still going on a couple of years later. The company had substitute workers at the plant. Eventually, the matter was settled, but it took about three or four years. This was partly because, while the union had some

influence over management in Germany, it didn't have any direct, first-hand knowledge of what was going on in the factory in Louisiana. The management side of the factory in Louisiana would tell the Chemical Workers' Union in Germany all kinds of stories.

Q: What was the name of this firm which had the plant in Louisiana?

MATTSON: I can't remember.

Q: Was it the Hoechst pharmaceutical company?

MATTSON: I don't recall off hand. I think that it was BASF [Baden Aniline and Soda Factory] but I'm not sure. I spent quite a bit of time with the Chemical Workers' Union, going up there fairly often and getting some of their people invited to the U.S. on one of these international visitor grants. I think that, in the end, this worked out well.

I've already mentioned that the Railway Workers' Union had a particular problem involving their meetings with people in this group of railway workers around the world. Every two years there was a meeting of this kind. However, otherwise, they were reasonable, fine people. There weren't any communists in their top leadership.

One of the smallest German unions was the Fire Workers' Union. It got together with another of the small unions, as I recall, for a merger of the two groups.

The first union congress that I went to in 1983 was that of the Printers' Union. This was also a fairly small union, but it was very, very active and had strong communist influence in it, including the number two official in the organization. After I left Germany, he moved up to become the number one official in the union, after it merged with a smaller union to become the Media Workers' Union. It was still fairly small but, at least, it was larger than it had been previously. We've already talked about the Miners' Union.

Another large union was the Construction Workers' Union, which had its headquarters in Frankfurt. It held a special evening dinner party in the middle of December every year. I went to that during my first year in Germany, had a good time, and went to this event every year after that. It was a couple of hours' drive away from Bonn, but I could go to Frankfurt in the afternoon, be there for the evening, and then take a late train back to Bonn. There were trains every hour between Frankfurt and Bonn.

Q: How about the Bank Workers? Were they organized?

MATTSON: Not as a separate union. They belonged to the Commercial Workers' Union, which had some strong leftist influence in it, but not at the top.

The second largest union in the DGB was the Public Service and Transport Workers' Union. It was a strange combination, because the Public Service union represented the *Arbeiter und Angestellte* in the federal government sector. The Transport Workers' part of this union was, for the most part, independent. It included workers for the airlines and

trucking companies. However, together they were strong. This was a union that had a president who had been very, very active. He involved the labor movement in political life and had been a German prisoner of war in the U.S. during World War II. He had spent a couple of years working on a farm in Mississippi, I believe.

Anyway, he returned to Germany after World War II. During his time in the States he had picked up English and that helped my contacts with him. He was bright and got into the Transport Workers' Union, where he rose to the top. When I was in Bonn, he retired but was still quite active. He came to the States fairly often. He would check with me in advance and let me know what he was doing in the U.S. Typically, he would get speaking engagements through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, both here in Washington and elsewhere. If there were anything particular coming up, they would let him know that he had an opportunity for doing this or that at an American university or other place. So he did very well.

His successor is going to be speaking tonight in Washington. She is now one of the two German commissioners on the European Commission. Her name is Monica Wolf-Loftus.

Q: This is at a luncheon?

MATTSON: Maybe it is a luncheon. I don't know. Anyway, the speech is on whatever portfolio now concerns regional affairs. The speech is on regional affairs policies in the European Union. I have to admit that I'm not that interested even to think of going to that event.

So those were the principal German unions. I probably left one of them out, but I can't remember it offhand.

Q: We can add it later.

MATTSON: I would occasionally go to meetings of the employers' associations. The principal such organization was the BDA, but there were also employers' associations under it for particular sectors, such as industry, construction, and so forth.

Q: BDA stood for?

MATTSON: *Bund von Deutschen Arbeitgeber* (Association of German Employers). What struck me about the employers in Germany was that they also followed the political process in the unions rather closely. For example, they knew who was a communist or close to the communists there. They had their reasons for doing this because of negotiations and so forth. However, I didn't keep up with that situation as much as they did. That was not that important a part of my mission.

There was a considerable amount of decentralization in the government, in the sense that not everything was located in Bonn. The German Ministries of Labor and Social Affairs or Social Order were there, but one of the key elements of the governments was

physically independent and technically was largely independent as well. That was the labor organization in Nuremberg, which included what we have in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as the activities of the labor exchanges around the country. I visited this organization several times, especially during a two-day congress of their tripartite organization on manpower developments in the U.S. and Germany. “Manpower” was what we would consider the employment side.

It was a fascinating organization. The original idea for it came from the employers' side of this board of outsiders that oversaw this unit of the Ministry of Labor. For the presentation of the situation on the American side, they asked the DGB to come up with a candidate, and, after talking with the AFL/CIO, they chose Ray Marshall. The employers came up with a candidate, a Canadian who had studied in the U.S. and who was teaching in Vancouver. He was sort of a nitwit [Laughter]. He was so one-sided in his views that they weren't really accepted by anyone—including, I think, many of the employers at that meeting. The tripartite organization itself then selected the then Commissioner of Labor Statistics. She came, and all three of these people spoke.

Q: This woman was the U.S. Commissioner of Labor Statistics?

MATTSON: Yes. This meeting lasted for two days. People invited to attend included the top leadership and people close to this German organization. Its proceedings were subsequently printed and published in German. They liked it a lot.

I found that, on occasions like this, when you are out with the Germans for several days and you get to talk to them, that's when you are really able, not simply to answer their questions but to make your points. You can't do this very well from Bonn, not on a broad enough basis to do it effectively.

However, I succeeded in developing a couple of techniques in Bonn which I wish I had started years before, at my first post. One such technique was to set up “dialogue days” at the embassy, where I could invite people from the unions and the DGB with particular backgrounds. One such dialogue day involved international affairs people. The people invited would come for a day of discussions on international affairs issues. We would have lunch at the Embassy Club. Then, after lunch, a group photo of the participants would be taken, and we would return to the embassy for a couple of hours' further discussion to wind up the day. To arrange this, I relied mainly on the political section of the embassy. I also got the economic section to help out in arranging a dialogue day for economists from the unions. That also went very well.

The second thing I did was to start up a newsletter, in German, taking material from the AFL/CIO news which the Germans would not have known about. Then I explained what this material meant, in language that did not contribute to the confusion that already existed.

Q: Did you have a local staff to help you with this newsletter?

MATTSON: I had a local German employee, who did wonders with this publication, and a secretary. First, I had an American secretary. Then, the embassy wanted me to have a German secretary. However, at that time too much of my reporting was classified, so that didn't work out. My first secretary was an American who spoke German. My second and third secretaries were Americans who did not speak German. That was the difference. Most of my material was in English, anyway, except with this newsletter in German.

The other thing I did was to increase my speaking engagements. I also sent my German assistant out after a couple of years.

Q: So he spoke to various groups as well.

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: Well, how old was he? Was he a young man?

MATTSON: He was in his mid thirties. He had two children. He was one of those people who probably made a mistake in taking out a ninety-nine year lease on ground on which to build a house in the suburbs—

Q: In Bonn?

MATTSON: In Bad Godesberg. No, it wasn't near Bonn. It was just one of those things where he said: "In ninety-nine years I'll be dead, my children will be dead, so I don't care about the rest." But he may be out of that house in a few years.

All of those efforts helped enormously in giving me the opportunity to tell the Germans what Americans thought, why, and what was going on in the U.S. The newsletter was very important, because it explained things which the Germans would have thought were done differently in Germany from the way they were done in the U.S. Then we also gave them information about the congresses of American unions and employers who work with them, which now take place about every two years. Up to 500,000 people attend these congresses, which are always held in different cities.

Q: 500,000? Wow!

MATTSON: They come to see the displays. It's a big thing, except that it hasn't been publicized very much in the U.S., and certainly not at all abroad.

Q: Where does this congress take place?

MATTSON: In different cities in the U.S., every two years. In the cities there is a lot of publicity given to it beforehand, but it's always held in a different city, and never in Washington, DC, or probably New York City.

Q: Okay. Is there anything else you want to talk about your time in Germany?

MATTSON: I'll tell you. We could go on talking for days, just about Germany and the things that have happened there.

During my final year in Bonn, I made my one trip to Bremen, where I found that I had been accused of being a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] agent. This went back to a book which the East Germans published in the 1960s. I had been in Bonn during my first tour overseas and then gone back to Washington, where I worked for a year in INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research] in the Department of State. I worked on French affairs at that time. A couple of years later this book was published, and I and almost everyone else who had served in INR in the late 1950s and early 1960s were listed as CIA agents!

Q: What was the name of the book?

MATTSON: I don't remember. [FYI: Actually, it was something like, "Who's Who in the CIA." END FYI] It was just one of the little books like that. It didn't cost very much, but they used it for a long time. Up there in Bremen somebody had found a copy of this book and my name in it. So when I arrived in Bremen, the consul up there, whom I had previously known in Bonn, asked me if I wanted to give the talk I had been scheduled to give that evening. I said: “Sure.” The organizers of the meeting had asked for something on social security. I said: “Definitely. I'm all ready. I've got my talk prepared.” I had had my German assistant translate it into German for me, so I could have read it completely, if I had wanted to.

However, in the event there were very few people who turned up for the meeting. I was asked several questions about my own background. I explained. It was really a non-event, except that there was this question from the consul as to whether I wanted to proceed on. The next morning I met with the top guy from the DGB in Bremen. We had a nice chat. Then I took the train back to Bonn. That was the only occasion that I experienced anything like that. I will say in general, though, that at several of my posts I've been accused, at one time or another and by various individuals, of being a CIA agent. I think that that is partly because many people really don't understand what a labor attaché is or what he does. They just assumed that I was a CIA agent and, in some places, at least, the CIA people in our embassies and consulates encourage this impression because it puts them under less pressure.

Q: Were there any problems with the CIA being involved with German labor leaders and causing this type of question to arise?

MATTSON: Not very much there in Germany. There wasn't very much CIA coverage at all of German labor. There was a little bit of CIA coverage of labor developments, though not very much. By and large, when they had something, they would ask me to write something up for them to use, and I did.

Q: They wanted you to interpret the information and what it meant?

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: All right then. Shall we turn back to your tour in Washington, which we started on earlier? You explained that you were the deputy in S/IL for two years.

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: From 1987 to...

MATTSON: From the fall of 1987 to the fall of 1989. I got there in September 1987 and I left in November 1989. There were a few things of note that were of particular interest.

First, we were able to take advantage of the summit meeting that took place in Washington of members of the Group of Seven leaders. I think that this meeting took place in 1988. We handled the consequences of the decision of the AFL/CIO to invite trade union leaders from the G7 countries to Washington in advance of the summit meeting. The object was to discuss their common interests and decide on a message to pass on to the host country leader. So, when these labor leaders arrived in Washington, Tony Freeman and I arranged for the foreign labor leaders and leaders of the AFL/CIO to come to the State Department for a luncheon given by then Secretary of State George Schultz. Of course, he had a special background in labor, as I found out in Bonn from my first ambassador, Arthur Burns. In the mid 1950s, when Burns was then the head of the Council of Economic Advisers to the president in the White House, he requested an additional position for someone to join the Council and follow labor developments, when the AFL and the CIO merged. So Arthur Burns got approval for this position.

Q: This was a position on the Council of Economic Advisers.

MATTSON: Yes. He invited George Schultz, a young professor whom he had known at the University of Chicago who had done some work on the side with unions and employers in settling labor disputes. This was during the Eisenhower administration. So George Schultz came to Washington and spent the time during the rest of the Eisenhower administration as a junior official in the White House. However, he had enough authority so that he would lunch and play golf regularly with George Meany, then President of the AFL/CIO. Schultz also saw Walter Reuther [President of the United Automobile Workers] regularly and sort of kept up with other labor leaders, both to find out their views on issues and to pass on to them what the White House was doing. That was the basis for his coming back to Washington some years later to be Secretary of Labor under President Nixon. He got on so well that time that he moved from there to the Bureau of the Budget and then to the Treasury.

Q: Then eventually to the position of Secretary of State.

MATTSON: Yes, George Schultz came back to State without any real background in international affairs. However, he had enough understanding, through his contacts as Secretary of the Treasury, where his “opposite numbers” were Giscard D'Estaing

[Minister of Finance] in France and Helmut Schmidt, German Minister of Finance. Schmidt was Helmut Kohl's predecessor in Germany as Chancellor. In Britain he was in contact with another person who subsequently became Prime Minister.

In any event, that gave him enough international clout because these people had all moved up to top positions in their governments. So George Schultz had some knowledge and background in this area. It served him well.

This luncheon for foreign labor leaders was held at the State Department. Secretary Schultz gave a nice talk, welcoming the group. At the same time as this luncheon was being given, we also had a worldwide U.S. labor attaché conference. So I worked with Tony Freeman in setting up the labor attaché conference, lining up the speakers and so forth.

Q: I think that that was the first time that we had a worldwide labor attaché conference.

MATTSON: Yes. I think that there had been a regional labor attaché conference some years before, but I don't know anything more about that. The worldwide labor attaché conference was a major event. In many respects it helped us because we hadn't sponsored anything like this for a few years.

Q: After the Indian counterpart rupees ran out, there was no way to fund activity of this kind.

MATTSON: The third thing I remember in particular was going to Geneva during my second year in S/IL, instead of Tony Freeman. That was the year his daughters were graduating from high school and he was just tired of the Geneva scene.

This trip was not pleasant in every respect because it was the first time that the new deputy under secretary of labor, Sharon [McCaffrey], had attended. She had not boned up on what was expected at all.

Q: The new deputy under secretary of labor?

MATTSON: Deputy under secretary for international affairs.

Q: What was her name?

MATTSON: Sharon McCaffrey. She was really only interested in serving her boss, then Secretary of Labor Dole, when she came on a visit. In turn, Secretary Dole was only interested in giving a speech and then getting out of Geneva. So that made this assignment quite uneventful.

However, I happened to have been in the room where the plenary session was held when, unexpectedly, the question of representatives of the Baha'i religious group from Iran came up. They had been allowed to attend as observers, along with all kinds of

representatives of other groups. The official Iranian representatives opposed their being allowed to attend and finally got the issue to the floor. The official Iranian representatives won a vote on a resolution disapproving the presence of the Baha'i representatives. So the question then was how would the American and other delegations react. So I went up and made an impromptu presentation, saying that we will never forget how this incident happened in Geneva, where there's such a longstanding history of religious tolerance.

Apart from the Geneva trip, my job in S/IL in Washington otherwise involved mainly meeting people and organizing meetings and conferences with people back from overseas posts. In this way we could have all of the people interested in any given country meet with these returning diplomats at the same time. Then, anyone who wanted to follow up on this could do so on a separate occasion. Typically, these people back from overseas were going on to other jobs. In most cases they weren't even related to labor.

Q: This is Side A of Tape 5 of the interview with Jim Mattson. By the way, did you get involved in the assignments process at all?

MATTSON: Yes, that was one of my main responsibilities. My job was to get people interested in moving on to other labor assignments. In some cases this involved looking for people interested in labor assignments on their first tour of duty. We were able to fulfill everything that was required. We got plenty of candidates and a number of people who signed up for second tours doing labor reporting. The personnel people were trying to get these people into other jobs, not involving labor assignments, for their own futures.

Q: Was the labor attaché program under any serious fire during that period, with cutbacks and inspection reports and things of that sort?

MATTSON: Yes, but I'm not sure if you should call it "serious," because nothing really happened. I think that the fact that we had George Schultz as secretary of state helped enormously. He recognized the AFL/CIO and its leadership as being significant. Therefore, he thought that the State Department should not do less than the White House had done before in paying attention to labor at home as well as abroad.

Q: If I remember correctly, in the summer of 1987 there was a proposal to cut about twenty-five labor reporting and attaché slots.

MATTSON: There had been such a proposal, but nothing really happened.

Q: As a matter of fact, I think that Secretary Schultz presented the overall personnel plan to the Foreign Service. It included significant cutbacks in the labor program. But very little happened.

MATTSON: Yes. I'm not sure if there were any cutbacks in the labor program in that year. Anyway, not in the two years that I served in S/IL.

Then I left S/IL to go on to a job in the Career Transition Office. I found a successor for

Tony and myself—

Q: A successor to you?

MATTSON: Yes. He then had the labor advisor's job in the ARA Bureau [Bureau of American Republics Affairs].

Q: So he then became the deputy in S/IL when you left.

MATTSON: Bill had actually succeeded me in Bonn. However, his adopted son, who is of Korean origin, didn't feel at home in Germany and wanted to go back to the U.S. So he arranged to have his assignment to Bonn curtailed by one year. Bill came back to the U.S. and was replaced in Bonn by John Warnock, I guess. John Warnock was then succeeded by Trenquist, who was succeeded by Jack Luke, who had succeeded me in Brussels.

Q: Then after your assignment to S/IL you went to...

MATTSON: The Office of Career Transition. Eventually, this office was merged with the Retirement Division to create the Office of Career Transition and Retirement.

During my final year in the Foreign Service I was detailed to the FCMS [Federal Conciliation and Mediation Service], working on labor history. As a result of that, in 1993 I was asked to substitute for you on short notice in connection with the Labor Attaché program. Then I retired from the Foreign Service at the beginning of 1994. I handled the summer program at the FSI [Foreign Service Institute] in 1994.

Q: Any comments you'd like to make on your FCMS experience or the training program?

MATTSON: I would basically say that I felt that the training is very necessary for new labor attachés. I don't know how long this program is going to last or even if there will be such a program after 1995. However, as long as there are labor attachés going out into the field, they need to be trained. That's the only reason that I stepped in to do it.

Q: OK. What was the focus of your study at the FCMS? Did you develop a study program there?

MATTSON: Yes. Basically, it concerned what turned out to involve all aspects of the information used for training, including the work of labor attachés, although that was not the reason why I undertook this study. I did it with the idea of writing a book on this subject and I still intend to write such a book. However, in the meantime the information I have assembled has been used in the training courses for the past two years.

Q: The book would cover the training of labor attachés?

MATTSON: In effect it would cover that as a separate kind of subject. It would consider the changes that have taken place in the labor field over the years, with particular

emphasis on the more recent past. I think that much of what has been written about organized labor of late has been overdone. It has tended to accuse organized labor of being out of date and likely to disappear because it isn't keeping up with economic change, particularly in the U.S. and the other industrialized countries. I don't think that organized labor is on the point of disappearing. In any event, membership in the AFL/CIO rose in the U.S. in 1994.

However, I think that important changes are taking place, and that's what I wanted to write about. That is, where organized labor has been and where it is going. I still intend to write such a book.

Q: Very good. And in terms of the labor attaché program, how do you see its future at this stage?

MATTSON: Over the near term we're going to have less and less experienced labor attachés. I mean "experience" in the sense of moving on to a second labor reporting job after having completed one such assignment. Therefore, we're going to have less well qualified labor attachés. However, there are also changes taking place in organized labor and in national economies around the world. We have to take into account the fact that conditions are changing there as well. Labor attachés, whether experienced or not, need to adapt their own way of operating to take these changes into account.

Q: Okay. Do you have any comments about the qualifications of the labor attaché candidates you have had over the past two years in the labor program? Have they had much labor background when they came into this training program?

MATTSON: Relatively little labor background. A few of them had less than a desirable interest in the labor program. Most of them had some interest, but we really need to see how they're going to develop. For example, in 1995 two of the top five candidates, including the number two person in the final ranking for the Annual Labor Award, were in the course two years ago.

Q: Who were they?

MATTSON: One was an officer who was assigned to Sweden and a woman officer who went to Uruguay. The fellow who went to Sweden was very interested in labor affairs, but we weren't sure how well he would work out, in practice. In fact, he worked out very well. The woman officer was, by far, among the least impressive in this group in her year. However, as it turned out, this didn't mean anything. She had an interest in labor reporting which really grew after she got to the field. This accounted for what she was able to accomplish.

Q: Sounds like a success story to me.

MATTSON: Yes. So the people who were in the course in 1994 had had, let's say, about half a year and maybe not even that, before the polls closed for the competition for this

annual award. So they were not even considered. I expect that we may see some of them in the 1996 group. The significant thing would be if some of these people sign up for a second tour in labor reporting. Preferably, they could take another labor reporting course, too, or they could go up to Harvard University for a semester. There are still openings there, although few people take advantage of them.

Q: Any final observations you'd like to make about your career or the labor function before we conclude this interview?

MATTSON: Well, the labor function has changed during the period of my career. However, I'm not sure that it has changed that much in terms of the individual countries. We have many of the same people still on the scene and still active. Even in Morocco, where I first served as labor attaché, enormous changes have taken place. The same is true of the Middle East. However, that was to be expected, because a regional job like that of a labor attaché involves a lot of changes of focus. You go to the countries where things are going on, and you spend less time on places where not much is happening.

In Europe, I happen to have been in Brussels during a particularly interesting time, both because of the situation in Poland and the AFL/CIO interest in rejoining the ICFTU. Things are definitely different there now, but much of what was going on then is still going on and should continue to be tracked. In Germany a major change has been the reunification of the country...

Q: Which will have a major impact...

MATTSON: And the resulting changes which involve bringing the East German workers up to the standards and levels of the West German workers. This will be a long term process, but it's under way now. We're no longer talking about questions like: “When will Eastern and Western Germany get together?”

There are changes in individual countries that affect them but, overall, I think, the labor movement is here to stay as a constituent part of modern economies. Workers are going to be doing different things and, in that respect, labor is going to be changing, somewhat. However, it will never become out of date in modern economies. In fact, I can anticipate a situation in which, in some countries, the labor function is going to expand considerably, over time.

Q: OK. Well, Jim, thank you very much for giving your interview to the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. We really appreciate it.

MATTSON: You're welcome.

End of interview