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

IRWIN RUBENSTEIN

Interviewer: Morris Weisz
Initial interview date: February 24, 1994

INTERVIEW

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

Q: We're at the home of Irwin Rubenstein, a long-time Foreign Service officer. Before that he did many aspects of labor work. We're going to interview him about his work in the Foreign Service. Irwin, would you start with your beginning?

RUBENSTEIN: I should mention that, as I was growing up in my teens and somewhat later, I first worked in my father's store. He was sort of a jack of all trades in the hardware field. I knew how to cut and thread pipe. I knew how to put window glass in and cut chicken wire and whatever else you could learn in that field. I tell you all that because I'm pretty helpless around the house now, but I was pretty handy as a teenager. I then began working after school and summers in sporting goods stores. I worked in one in Patterson for about four years on and off and when I was at Rutgers I worked in one for one year at Brunswick. This was fun. I loved all kinds of sports. I played a lot of them, never particularly well, but always with a lot of enthusiasm. Selling and being around sports equipment was fun and I could make some extra money.

As I said, I got drafted into the Army. The story there is that I was living at an aunt's house in New York and working in the steel brokers. When I got my draft notice, actually from New Jersey, where I had registered. I asked three people if I could possibly have a few weeks to delay, so I could go down and see my family in Miami, where my family had moved. They said, you don't have to do it this way. You can do it by transferring your entire records down to Miami and that'll give you a delay. You won't be called into the Army for some time. Instead of going in at Thanksgiving which was when they called me, that would have gone well into the next year as the man told me. So we transferred my records and it did go well into the next year. I had to report for induction at 6:00 a.m. in the morning on January 2nd.

Q: Well into the next year.

RUBENSTEIN: Well into the next year. I went to the Orange Bowl football game the day before and then I went into the Army on January 2nd. I spent two years in the Army. One

year was in the U.S. with the infantry basic training in South Carolina. Then I had some administrative training in personnel management at Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis and came back and worked in Post Headquarters in Camp Gordon, Georgia and then from there I went to Korea for a year, a little bit of an unusual twist. I got very much disgusted with the life I was leading as an enlisted man and decided to apply for officer's training. I applied for officer's training, a day program at that time. My papers went forward. I went before an interview board. I was interviewed for whatever---a half hour---and then some time went by and I didn't hear anything. I finally got orders to report to Fort Benning, Georgia for Infantry OCS (Officer Training School). At the same time our Headquarters in Camp Gordon, Georgia had a request to ship several people expert in the kind of work I was doing to Korea. I told my unit commander that I would rather go to Korea than go to OCS. He thought I was crazy but I did some calculating. If I went to Korea I would get some time off with my family before I'd go. It would take me some time to get over there. I'd have to be released before the end of my full two years to get back in time for the discharge so that I would actually serve over there maybe ten months.

If I went into Officer Candidate School, it meant days of infantry training with a guaranteed minimum eight/night for eighteen months after that. I thought it was one way I could get out of the Army in less than a year or in a year. The other way I'd be in the Army for two and a half years. I opted to stay as an enlisted man. I went over to Korea as a corporal. I was attached to an engineer construction battalion for about nine months. The battalion had been in combat, but had come out of it just as I joined them as it happened. We had been in combat; I think one was killed and a couple injured by bandits. We had a construction battalion and the bandits were after our equipment and machinery.

I did various and sundry things there. One of the experiments I conducted was an Education Training Program. The Army discovered that it had a large number of people who had entered the Army because of the draft but who had low IQ's. In effect, I forget what the initials the Army uses but their IQs were below the normal acceptance levels of the Army. A lot of these people were illiterate and they weren't able to train properly. So I ran an experimental school. It was the first one in the Army, certainly the first one in Korea. I set up and administered it. I had a school teacher from Arkansas who had been used to dealing with rural students. We ran a terrific little program. It was experimental. We had fifteen to twenty people and we got some people who had not completed elementary school. We got them up through high school graduation level. Of course they saw this as a wonderful opportunity and went ahead with it.

Anyhow I came back and got out of the Army, but while I was in Korea I did an awful lot of things. I did not like what I saw in terms of what war does to people. I had been reading some of Michener's books on Southeast Asia. I roamed around, lived in Korea (inaudible) once or twice and I was very upset and disturbed over the effects of war: How families were destroyed, how morals were destroyed, how kids had to beg to stay alive, how women had to turn to prostitution. I decided that I would get into some aspect of international life---of international work---and maybe make a small contribution. I went back to the States with this very deep feeling. I am talking about it very briefly but it

really hit me. I had gone through the university and I had a degree. I still wasn't really sure what I was going to do but at least now had found an area that I wanted to work in. I went back to the States and I got out of the Army. It was about Christmas time and I couldn't do much in terms of school. I wanted to go back to school and get a masters of some kind. So I began applying and I got a job with a construction company. There was a company that made extruded aluminum windows and doors and stuff like that in Florida and sold them to builders. I worked there for seven or eight months. Meanwhile I had applied to the School of (inaudible) in Washington. It was a branch of Johns Hopkins for a masters training program. They accepted me, but I'm trying to remember. I think I had to go to Washington. They accepted me because I was older, two years in the Army, and because I had a lot of economics at Rutgers. They were starting to improvise at the moment; they gave me a lot of credit for experience. Therefore they allowed me to get a masters in one year: if I completed a certain number of courses, if I was able to handle the economics area and if I passed the verbal and oral exams. Normally it's a two-year program with a series of required courses. I did it in a year. I got my masters in '54.

I had at the time a summer school fellowship. I'd answered some newspaper ad or something for a summer school fellowship to go down to Mexico. I did that but just before Washington a friend of mine from school got hired by CARE to go to Columbia. CARE had been a post war assistance activity in Europe after the reconstruction from World War II. Now it was expanding into underdeveloped countries and Latin America. It was new here. This fellow was hired for Columbia. It was one of the first countries that opened. He told me about it so I contacted CARE. I got an application. I never used my friend's name as a reference. I explained to them that I would be in Mexico City, where I would be and what I would be doing. So I went down to Mexico City for the summer training program--summer school. The seminars were very, very interesting.

Q: Conducted in English---?

RUBENSTEIN: Conducted in English but there were Spanish courses also.

Q: Did you know some Spanish?

RUBENSTEIN: I knew some Spanish. I had Spanish in high school. I had Spanish in college. I had a year of intense Spanish in graduate school.

While in Mexico, I was there for maybe six weeks, and I got a telegram: Call or go to the CARE office in Mexico City and call so and so here in New York. So I knew this was in response to my application. I got eager. I called the CARE office. I went over. We had a three-way conversation. The woman in charge, her husband, who I later learned was Dean of Mexico City College and the CARE representative. She and I got on two phones in her office and we talked to the people at CARE in New York. They interviewed me on the phone. They asked her to question me in Spanish to see if my Spanish was good. I got through that. They said, "We think we want to hire you to go down to Bolivia and be an assistant to our mission director down there. We'd like you to come to New York." They'd provide a ticket for me and whatever else.

I thanked them. I said, "Goodbye," to all my friends in Mexico. I flew to New York. I was there for---I don't really remember now---a week or ten days, two weeks maximum. I was on a plane for La Paz, Bolivia. Very exciting. I joined a small CARE operation which developed into a midsized one while I was there---maybe even a large one. There were various and sundry things but its base program was a contract with the government of Bolivia to provide food stuffs under the PL480 Agriculture Surplus Program for needy people in Bolivia through different kinds of agencies. One of the groups we worked with was the Bolivian Labor Movement. I was the guy who dealt with them. Juan Lachine, who had been the Head of the Bolivian Miners Movement for many years was looked upon as a communist, a terrorist and a renegade and about twenty-five other things. He received me in his apartment one morning in his bathrobe, obviously hung over. He had a bunch of attendants around him with sub-machines guns and we sat down and discussed the feeding program for the miners of Bolivia. We also worked through people like the Seventh Day Adventists who ran schools for the Indians out on the (inaudible), the Bolivian school system. That was my first contact with Latin American labor.

Then I was in the School of Advanced International Studies known as SAIS. I did a lot of research and I wrote a paper on President Figueres of Costa Rica, who had conducted probably the only revolution of modern times which overthrew a dictatorship and turned the reins of government over to the man who got elected and did not take power for himself.

Q: This is the famous Pepe?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Pepe Figueres. He had a friend in Washington whom you may have known, a fellow named Stanley Posner.

Q: Oh, yes.

RUBENSTEIN: He's active in a lot of organizations. Stanley got me access to Figueres' speeches and writings and everything else which I used in my paper. I got a very good mark on the paper. The condition was he would send a copy of it down to Figueres.

Later when I---let me back track for a purpose---I was with CARE almost two years in Bolivia. They transferred me basically to run a program in Honduras. There was a regional sort of director based in Central America but I' m not sure where he was living at the time. I was to work under him and run the program in Honduras. As I moved up to Honduras, the man resigned and they made me interim regional director. So, from an assistant in one mission, I became a regional guy for Central America. What he began was the negotiation of a contract with the government of Costa Rica to set up a program and also to set up a program in El Salvador. I continued to run the Honduras program at the same time. I went over and successfully completed the Salvadoran negotiations which had gone about fifty percent of the way and brought in someone to work under for a few months for training and then he went over and ran that program.

Then I went down and concentrated on Costa Rica. My friend Posner was in San Jose the first time I visited. He learned that I was there and he had President Figueres invite me to lunch. It was quite exciting. I was a young guy in my twenties and here the president of the country invited me---the president and his wife and Posner, I think. Posner and I. I think that's all it was. We really just talked about all sorts of things. I found out that Figueres liked my article so much he had it translated into Spanish and printed in La Nacion, the major newspaper in San Jose, Costa Rica. It was a two-part series sometime before I had gone there. I was known, even though I didn't know I was known. At any rate, we had a very nice session. He said that his Vice President, who was a doctor, would be the man I would work with and he would join the program with us. He knew enough about CARE and their processes and procedures. He considered me an old friend although he'd only met me that day. We worked out a program and I was to be the director of the Costa Rica program and my assistant was to take over the coup in Honduras. By this time I had been in Honduras for two years, following two years in Bolivia. I thought it was time to make a change. I wanted to come back to Washington to see what I could do. I liked CARE very much. I think it is a great outfit. Its integrity is unprecedented. I thought I had accomplished an awful lot with them but I just wanted to find a bigger venue.

I think this is a labor discussion. I should get back to my days in Honduras and talk about the programs I set up with the North Coast Banana Works. The UAW (United Auto Workers) and a few unions in the States made specific contributions to CARE because the banana workers had suffered one major blow due to a hurricane, followed by floods. They were hurting badly. So we sent large amounts of CARE foodstuffs to the union and (inaudible). So again (inaudible) Latin American Union, first in Bolivia then in Honduras.

So I left CARE.

Q: Do you want to put a time to that Irwin?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. That was the end of---let me think---probably the end of 1957.

Q: Why would I have met you at that time?

RUBENSTEIN: Well, because I was in Washington and I was getting into the Latin American labor---international labor but Latin American specifically.

Q: I was with the Labor Department.

RUBENSTEIN: I used to see people like you. There was Serafino Rimaldi and Ben Stefanski and some of the others, Bill Lason, and some of the older guys. I mean the more experienced guys at that time wanted to learn a little bit and teach me how and where (inaudible). The way it worked was I eventually got a job with (inaudible) the Education and Research Department in Washington, and my dear old friend George Rook. I worked there for about a year. I learned a lot. I did a certain amount. I was never

particularly happy. It was not a comfortable working environment but it was a good one for me. It also gave me a little more depth. While I was there I was talking to people about how could I break into something related to Latin American labor? One of the invitations I got was from---maybe the CCCI, I'm not sure exactly who---but somebody was having a program in which they were graduating from a Latin American trade union training program and they invited me. I went over to see the layout. I had my invitation in my hand. I didn't know where the building was yet. I went over, I walked in and the elevator was a certain place. I got in the elevator and I turned around and there was Serafino Rimaldi on my right and Ben Stefanski on my left and one said to the other, "Here is the guy we're looking for."

I said, "What is going on?"

They said, "Wait until we get off the elevator at the top floor and we'll talk to you."

They were looking for somebody to go down to Ecuador. It gets kind of complicated but basically the Inter-American conference. That is the conference of Foreign Ministries of countries in the Organization of American States (OAS). The conference used to take place every two years. The last one they held was---

Q: For the purposes of this interview you'll have to identify people. Everybody knows Rimaldi was the AFL-CIO director. Stefanski had already served as labor attaché in Mexico.

RUBENSTEIN: He was the labor advisor to the Bureau of InterAmerican Affairs at that time.

Q: And paid to teach at a training program at American University.

RUBENSTEIN: I should mention teaching. While I was working with the paper mill workers, I did some stuff with Saint John's Labor Training Program at Annapolis. I went over there a few times and talked to them based on stuff I was doing on the history of the movement and some points of origin.

Q: I wish you'd also mention at some point, if not now, the work you did that you mentioned the other day with the (inaudible) workers in Canada, where you began this international training.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. We had a---I don't remember---two- or three-day package training seminar, and a leadership seminar, where we would go in and set up situations. There was an awful lot of role playing. Again, this was the late 50s. Union leaders today may not be accustomed to role playing and they certainly weren't accustomed in the 50s. This is a union that believed a lot in local authority, local autonomy. One of the things we'd teach was don't bring a lawyer into your negotiations unless you really need one. If you can negotiate by yourself in language that you and the workers understand and can use to communicate, that is far better than getting some high-cost lawyer to put his legal and

technical language into a collective bargaining agreement---especially if it is someone that the members don't know. We had been playing roles at the two-day packaged program. I did this in different places---in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Saint Paul, Minnesota. I'm trying to remember all the places, Virginia. When it came to Ottawa, Canada because this was an international brotherhood, we ran our program in English in Ottawa. Half of the class was French Canadian. We taught them in English and they took the knowledge and went back and ran courses for their members in French Canadian. It was exciting because here was something that was unique. I didn't know at that time how many unions were working across the border.

Let me come back to Washington. Stefanski and Rimaldi were looking for somebody to go down there. The InterAmerican Foreign Ministries Conference used to be a regular meeting, I think, every two years. The Conference had not been held in some time. The previous one had been held in Bogota about ten years before and had been blown up because of Fidel Castro and his people's activities (inaudible). There had been a great deal of violence. A lot of people got killed. Organizers were concerned---now that ten years had gone by and they were going to have this next meeting in Quito, Ecuador---that the Ecuadorian labor movement which, by and large, walked our line, would experience the same kind of violence.

Now they called themselves Socialists. The Socialist Party of Ecuador very much appeared to walk our line even though there was an intellectual belief in basic communism they were not speaking about it. So I was sent down in some capacity, openly, publicly. It wasn't going to be a clandestine operation. I would be wearing some kind of a label so that I could talk to these people, get a feel for their orientation, try to find out if there were any danger and see if there was any evidence of more constructive labor paths. Well they thought of (inaudible). Nothing seemed to work out right so I was made a consultant to AID and given a ninety-day contract to go down to Ecuador. In the meantime the InterAmerican Conference of Foreign Ministers had been postponed. The labor people who were sponsoring my trip wanted me to go anyway. They were concerned over the situation in Ecuador and really had minimal knowledge of the country. We had not had serious labor representation there in the past. So I went down to Ecuador with the idea that I would first be in Quito, the capital. Then I would spend a lot of time in Guayaquil, the biggest city in the port and the manufacturing center because that's where a lot of the labor turmoil was.

I reported to the embassy. I worked basically through the political section and the AID director or in those days I think he was called USOM or Point Four. Those were my two contacts. I spent about ten or twelve days in Quito discussing things with them, meeting the labor minister and other key people in the government and a few trade union people, but not many. That was because of the political coloration of the movement at that time.

Then I went to Guayaquil where I set up shop. I spent the next two months plus, largely in Guayaquil, but commuting back and forth. I was in Quito maybe for a day or two every two weeks. I eventually wrote a paper with a series of observations and recommendations. Mainly there was really fertile ground for some sort of labor program

trying to reinforce some new democratic elements. They were looking for some help and I gave them a formula for this which was basically a labor leader training program. In a certain sense I was using concepts I had both acquired and used with the pulp and paper mill workers in the States. They extended me a little longer---extended for a few weeks. I should have mentioned that while I was in Washington I became a member of---I think it was called Local 189 of the American Federation of Teachers---a worker education group. I was dealing with a lot of the technicians and professionals and intellectuals in the labor movement in the Washington area and learned an awful lot from the roundtables, and seminars and discussions they had at those meetings.

Now we'll go back to Ecuador. I submitted a program to AID (Agency for International Development) and to the embassy. I keep saying AID. I should say Point Four. They reviewed it and came to me and said, "This is terrific. We'd like to do it. We think we can get the money and we want to know if you would be interested in coming back and running it?"

I said, "I was," because after all I only had a ninety-day contract. As I said it lasted a little longer and they were saying they would arrange for me to become a permanent employee of AID---or whatever the agency was called at the time. ICA I guess it was---I would become a labor technical officer. I also told them that while I was interested in that, I also had a young lady in whom I was interested and I would have to contact her. I would have to have enough time to arrange a wedding if she were interested in marrying me and coming to Ecuador. So we agreed this would all fall into place if we all co-operated. I then was given I guess the official offer, whatever it's called, from the government. I was told I would get a couple of weeks in Washington. I both wrote and called Estelle Rose in Washington and basically said, "Will you marry me and will you come and live in Guayaquil?"

She, who is standing over my shoulder right now, either intelligently or stupidly, said, "Yes," to both.

So I went up to Washington and talked to some people about what I had been doing. I went through a very quick several day orientation program for new ICA officers. Estelle attended some of the sessions, if not all of them. We did whatever you do when you come into the government and the agency, and are hired. In that same period we went down to Durham, NC, where we had a very lovely wedding of several hundred people. Her mother had been planning for thirty years and now had about ten days to organize and put a wedding together. Meanwhile my wife had some serious medical problems and had surgery shortly before the wedding. She had not really been on her feet or walked at all for ten days. So walking down the aisle was her first time walking for some time. But she's a good trooper and she made it. For the receiving line she sat on a tall bar stool which she disguised under her wedding gown. People thought she was standing up. We got through that, had about a day or day and a half honeymoon and went back to Washington and went down to Ecuador. It was decided I would live and work in Guayaquil because, as I said before, that's where the bulk of the manufacturing, transportation and other heavy activities were. I then set up in effect a labor training

school. This was fun.

Q: Irwin, I have to interrupt you and ask you whether you'd be willing all along in the interview to comment on the administrative level and salary, etc. There has been a great deal of interest in our project in whether labor types were disadvantaged by the level at which they were hired. Was the normal attitude not friendly to labor? or was it because they had been working for trade unions or other organizations, volunteer organizations, that did not pay well. So would you be willing to give me the level at which you came in?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I came in, I think my salary was $8,800.00 per year. This was 1960.

Q: SR what?

RUBENSTEIN: Probably about a five. I'm sorry I'm not quite sure. I remember the $8,800.00 because I have quoted that to some people as my starting salary.

What I did was I set up a labor training program. I did it through a series of about three steps. Obviously I continued my looking around and my analyzing was deciding what had to be done and with whom. I found three people in Guayaquil. One was an economist, one was a lawyer, and the third one had a college degree but was sort of a jack of all trades. I sent them on leader grants to the States. They came as students for a worker education program. They went to Wisconsin, they went to Penn State, they went to Rutgers, they went to Labor Department, and to the State Department. I think they went to Puerto Rico which had a training school at the university. We set up a really nice program for them. I wanted them to get a feel of how we did things and who we did them for, and who we did them with and so forth. They came back very enthusiastic. I was delighted with our investment in them and they were going to be my basic instructors. The second group of people I sought out was trade union leaders who preferably---

Q: They were not trade union leaders?

RUBENSTEIN: No. They were just---

Q: Academics.

RUBENSTEIN: Whatever they were, one taught at the university; one was a lawyer, so forth. They were people who had sympathy for the working class. I got to know them obviously during the first three months there. Then I looked for trade union leaders or trade union people. Some of them were not yet leaders. They were people who had a feel for their people, for their movement. They were people who had a certain amount of brain power; people who looked like potential leaders of the future. You don't decide this in five minutes of course but I spent time with them, and with people who were willing to dedicate themselves over a longer haul. I sought them out for two things. One, I wanted to make some of them instructors in the training program. I wanted real live union leaders, not only some intellectuals I brought in. Two, I wanted some of them to be the early students of our course who could go back and apply this in their unions. We did this

and I thought we did it very successfully.

Of the areas where we concentrated, one was the port of Guayaquil, which was a major employer. They were just building a new port out of town---a major investment. I don't remember how many millions of dollars. The port union was going to be a major factor. There were two brothers who, I learned from other people, had been real life heroes. One actually jumped up on a crate and stood up in front of the police and said, "You guys are worried about communists here. We are legitimate Ecuadorians fighting for our rights and you want to beat us over the head. Go fight the communists, but don't fight working class people. We're like you."

I wasn't there but I got so many reports on this guy I said, "He's my number one target." The way it worked was we brought him in for a training program and we found out he had a brother. He had become secretary general of a union by having kicked out some real commies (communists). He was really sort of nondescript politically. He was just a democrat as far as I was concerned. His brother did not have the charisma that Miguel did---their name was Tovar by the way. The brother Anebo we decided would be a good teacher. So we brought him in and we trained him in the teacher training approach. Miguel was a student. This was not the only group we worked with but this was a big group.

I have to go back and make a comment. In my dealings I always try to get to meet the government officials who would work in this labor management field and to meet the management people that I would be dealing with or that our students would be dealing with. There was a guy named Tom Sewell who had come to run the construction of the new port and to be the general manager of the port of Guayaquil. He was a career appointed administrator, and had been hired by the port authority in some sort of international competition. Tom was a very pleasant guy to talk with but ultra conservative. Tom wanted me to know that he had come from Saudi Arabia where he had been port manager there for---I don't remember what port city it was. Was it Jeddah or Riyadh? One of them---He had been the port manager there---he had to interject into the conversation, "We didn't have any problems with union people over there. If somebody made any noise about a union, they chopped off their hands." So he wanted me to know that was the background he was coming from. I told him we didn't chop off hands in the United States or in Ecuador and I hoped he understood this. Despite this horrible statement on his part, we actually got along reasonably well and he was what I would call a pragmatic manager. He saw what we were doing. He didn't like a lot of it but he accepted it. Then, when the time came, the union demanded a written contract. Because my training with the pulp and paper workers was, "Don't take anything they want to give you. Put everything in writing. Win it from them. Don't take it as a gift. And if they offer it to you, make sure it's a written contract or written agreement." This was one of the basic lessons we taught. These guys went out and negotiated a contract. (End of Side 1 Tape 1)

So they began their negotiations with the port authority. Neither side had ever negotiated anything before. To the best of my knowledge there was one contract, one written

collective bargaining agreement in all of Ecuador. It was at a Coca-Cola factory outside of Quito, the capital. We had no part in that. What we tried to do was get that contract and get some basic ones from the U.S. Then we drew up, through the faculty from my little training school, we drew up a sample contract. It was a model contract, with a lot of blanks in it, but it was structured to show the key elements necessary. We taught this in our course---and we gave them each a copy to take back and to do what they wanted within their own union.

Q: You had not participated in actual negotiations in any way?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I did not and that's what I'm leading up to. The Tovar brothers in particular or one of their representatives would periodically call us and they would say, "Well, the management wants to do this. As the management, what do you think we should do?"

I said, "I don't work at the port. What do you think we should do?" Or they would call Dr. Valverdi or the lawyer that we had trained. He might have given them some ideas but he learned from me that we weren't going to tell them what they had to do. We said: If you do X, this is the consequence. If you do Y, this is the consequence. Would your workers want more money for this or would they want more time off for that or whatever. So these guys negotiated it and they were scared but they would call us and we would consult or they'd come over at night or whatever. They ended up with a really, really good contract. It was great. They were excited.

Q: Enforceable?

RUBENSTEIN: Enforceable.

Q: In all the ways---

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Enforceable.

Q: Your standard contract provisions, while not imposed on them, were available to them for determination as to what they wanted.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Because they didn't know what a contract was. We took some basic ideas from my training and from the training of these three professors---I call them the three professors---got in the States. They developed the contracts in accord with Ecuadorian labor law of course. Doctor Valverdi was the legal advisor. He was our lawyer. He taught a course in collective bargaining eventually and the legalities of it. From that contract we had other groups doing some negotiating---never large numbers, but we started some. We had about six or seven, I think, by the time we left Ecuador.

Now what was interesting? I met socially a fairly wealthy couple---an Ecuadorian couple ---who owned a soap factory. It was strictly a social relationship. But the husband, the owner of the plant, knew that I was involved in labor activity of some kind. He started

asking me for advice. I told him that my advice was going to be from the point of view of the workers. He said, "That's all right. I try to give them this. I try to give them that. I've developed that with them."

I said the same thing to him that I had told others, "Put it in writing."

He said, "Well we have an association." This was one of the gimmicks they used. They have an association of workers which is like an in-house social club. I said, "Let them convert it into a union. Keep the senior guys there---the people that you've worked with that know you. Don't make it your enemy. Make it a cooperative effort. It also gives you probably better discipline over your work force. But get everything in writing."

They did. They developed a whole series of arrangements. I don't remember if they had a contract or just a series of written agreements on different things, but it was all done through what in effect was collective bargaining. That one I did from the management side which I thought was---

Q: Can you describe the social background and sort of the theological background of this employer who seems to have been a progressor? Was he a normal businessman that you met socially or…?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Yes.

Q: Did he have a background in the union?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I think his father had started the factory. They had money. They may have had other enterprises but this particular soap factory---I don't really remember too much---it may have had a hundred or one hundred-fifty workers in it. They had traveled. He spoke some English. He had a wife who was Mexican. Maybe he had gone to school in Mexico? I don't really remember.

There's one other incident; then I'll leave Ecuador. Shortly before I finished my tour, my wife was pregnant and we were going to have our first child. Shortly thereafter I was scheduled for transfer. I guess I had been told at the time I would go back to Washington. George Weaver who was the assistant secretary of labor for international affairs was trying to strengthen the labor attaché program. He wanted to take me from AID or from ICA and transfer me into the State Department as an attaché. He said---I think he was down on a visit or at some conference where we discussed this---he would put me into the labor department through his international affairs bureau, first for up to a year to get a feel for how things work over there. Then I would go out as an attaché. With these pending, (1) the birth of my first child, and two the end of my tour, several things happened. About that time Serafino Rimaldi of the AFL-CIO made a trip through Latin America, which eventually ended up in the establishment of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) which was a training school sponsored by the AFL-CIO with some U.S. government funds through ICA and eventually, through AID. Rimaldi came to Guayaquil.

Q: This was before Dougherty entered the picture?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Rimaldi set it up.

Q: Yes.

RUBENSTEIN: Rimaldi set this up---this was now 1962 approximately. He saw what we were doing and said, "This is all well and good but we're going to have our own institute up and down the Americas."

I said, "Fine. I have people. I have professors. I have structures. I have a lot.

His attitude was, "Oh no. We can't use any of this because it is tainted by the government."

Q: As if the AFL-CIO was not.

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. I ran it as the point for labor school---very openly, nothing covert about this, very openly---and we got to be fairly well-known. I had an office downtown in the commercial district of Guayaquil apart from the consulate. I would go to consulate staff meetings and so forth but I was really quite autonomous except that I went to Quito periodically. I was supposed to have a boss in Quito but they didn't fill the job until my second year so I was both my boss and myself going back and forth. Anyhow Rimaldi came down and he said, "Well we can't do this because this is tainted by government money. Whatever the government covers is tainted so we are going to have to fire everybody." He said, "We'll see if we can use anybody later."

So what they eventually did. I think they fired everybody, abolished the school and then hired back some of the people but I felt that a certain amount of momentum had been lost.

Now the other thing that happened was the consul general, I guess, or the ambassador, I'm not sure I wanted to know how this happened---I guess the consul general called me in. He had gotten a complaint that I was organizing a strike at the factory of probably the richest man in that part of Ecuador. I think it was an edible oils factory. I don't even remember what. I said, "I'm sorry. I don't know what you're saying"

He said, "Well, this man has accused you and wants you thrown out of the country."

I said, "I have never been to the factory. A couple of his workers have been to talk to us. We've talked to them the same way we talk to everybody else. Whatever they are doing, I have no knowledge of and no contact with and nothing direct whatsoever. Nor as far as I know has anybody on our staff so the charges are totally false.

"Well, this is an influential man."

I said, “I don’t care.”

Well where it ended up was he went back and talked to this man and basically said,” Look, Mr. Rubenstein denies this but we won’t get into that. His wife is about to have their child so they can’t move and his tour is over in another month or six weeks, so why don’t we just sort of cool it and act as if nothing happened and he’ll be gone anyhow.”

I wasn’t present when he had that conversation but that’s what was reported back to me. The only thing that bothered me was I never got any sense that I was being defended. They saw this was an easy way for me to leave, which I was going to do anyhow. I was a little annoyed that my colleagues or my supervisors or whatever you want to call them didn’t really let this guy know that whatever he was saying was a lot of bull.

Q: You had reported your work to the consul general regularly. You didn’t keep secrets from them.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Yes. Sure. So anyhow I left. The only reason that is significant is because I then became known as a controversial figure. Word gets up and down the hemisphere. Two, I’m going to talk about Lima, Peru, which is my next overseas assignment. We’re in Lima for three or three and a half years with a home leave somewhere in the middle. When we were leaving Lima on home leave I wanted to stop in Guayaquil to visit some friends and the new consul general, who never had seen me. He had heard that I was a controversial figure and told me not to come to Guayaquil because there was some pending strike or something. They thought my presence would cause trouble. Well, I didn’t know whether to laugh or to get furious. I was mad because we had hoped to see friends but it was an idiotic move by a guy named Dick Sabatierra who was consul general there and I have never run across him. I think he is retired in Arizona. He was quite a bit older than I was. I hope someday to see him to tell him what a jerk I think he is. He was a USIA officer who was made a consul general one time in his life. They did this periodically. Anyhow, we finished our tour. We left Guayaquil.

Q: Before you leave Guayaquil, two questions.

One, did the circumstances of Rimaldi’s position about the tainted business, did that affect the program later on? Were you replaced by a similar officer or did AIFLD take over with the necessary loss in continuity by (inaudible)? I’d like you to comment on that and then one other thing.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. As I said, there was nobody in the supervisory labor job in Quito at first. I filled it myself for about a year although I was living in Guayaquil. The second year, a fellow named Art Nixon came out of the communications workers in Dallas. He was appointed labor technical officer in Quito and in effect was my boss. There also had been---I don’t remember all the time but part of the time---a labor reporting officer in Quito, but the guy had minimal knowledge of and less sympathy for the labor movement. He was basically a political officer and they said you go do some reporting on labor. He

wasn't the right man for the job. It was very interesting. The political officer, the chief of the political section, was what I would call a WASP elitist. He understood the need for the labor movement and was sympathetic about workers' rights and everything we would like supervisors to be sympathetic to. His underling was the same type, a WASP elitist, but he was basically anti-worker, anti-labor, anti-union, anti-everything else and he was the guy doing the labor reporting.

Ok, so Nixon took over and AIFLD came in and I really don't know the details of what happened after me. I don't think I was ever replaced as such in Guayaquil. Nixon was in Quito and traveled around. Some of the people that I had employed were hired eventually by AIFLD. I can't really tell you too much of what happened after we left.

Q: The other question I wanted to raise was about this quite successful training period that you arranged for two groups of people to go to the States. One was to be the basic intellectual teacher-oriented group of three and the other the trade union leadership group. Was their basic operation in the labor department, the trade unions, the Annapolis program? Who arranged that thing? This is important, not only in respect to Ecuador but because we're trying to review the best possible training.

RUBENSTEIN: I'm sorry I can't give you specifics. I designed the basic elements of the program. I included Puerto Rico because at the time there was a very active labor minister and a woman who had been also working with housing social rights and workers' rights in Puerto Rico. I went there, spent a couple days with them, was very impressed, and they eventually came down to visit us in Guayaquil.

Q: Was this in San Erman or was it in---?

RUBENSTEIN: Outside of San Juan.

Q: No. San Erman.

RUBENSTEIN: No.

Q: Because they had a labor facility in San Erman about sixty to seventy miles---

RUBENSTEIN: No. It was not that.

Q: It was part of the University of Puerto Rico.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. The National University of Puerto Rico. The woman was a fascinating woman named Petra America Pagande Colon; I followed her career over the time. She was very much a leader in women's rights in the hemisphere and other things. Fernando Bardecia I think, something like that.

Q: Fernando Bertatia. He was a labor minister. Fernando Sierra Bertatia.

RUBENSTEIN: Ok. Anyhow. Puerto Rico. I went to Rutgers; I knew some of the people at Rutgers. I didn't realize it but I picked up in Washington; Penn State got active in this. Wisconsin was famous for it. I put all these down. I think I probably had Saint Johns and Annapolis also. They had a wonderful program and appreciated it.

Q: You were more effectively involved in the actual design not only of the program from the Ecuador side but also from your contacts, where you knew you wanted them to go.

RUBENSTEIN: And the people.

Q: Which is not normally the case.

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. I was lucky because I had a great deal of autonomy. When you are in an area where nobody knows anything and you know a little bit---I mean I was not a fifty-year-old labor expert. I was in my early thirties and I had some training here and some work there. I had a smattering here and I had contacts there. I put it all together. I knew a thousand times more than they did and they were smart enough to let me do it, because they knew nothing. I got full support, as I said, from the AID director, the ICA director and from the political officer at the embassy. Art Nixon, who was in Quito, had come out of the Communications Workers in Dallas with a certain amount of experience. He was the president of a big local in Dallas and wanted to get into international activities.

I remember one wonderful little scene. Something had happened. I don't know what it was. Maurice Bernbaum was our ambassador. Old school, striped tie, classic State Department guy, who called us in one day and said, "You guys are school teachers. You don't get out and you don't lead strikes and you don't carry picket signs and you don't do this and you don't do that. You run a school. You don't do any of this. If you do, you can't continue here."

We all said, "Yes sir. Yes sir."

I don't remember what caused all this but of course we, myself first, and then Art, were doing the same thing in Quito. I had started some similar activities in Quito, but since I was going back and forth I couldn't run them both. He picked up on them and did it. We were doing some of the---This was some of the only stuff of its kind being done in the world. Guayaquil is not a significant city, but we were using U.S. money and U.S. resources and working openly to aid the labor movement of that country. Ecuadorians didn't complain because they didn't want to disrupt an aid program. If I remember correctly, to balance this off, we had some grants which we gave to government technicians from the labor ministry. Not what I would call a well thought out program but, if you met a bright young guy in the labor statistics office, maybe you'd give him a six- or eight-week training program. Somebody else we'd send up for collective bargaining. So we did some of that too and that kept the labor ministry happy of course.

All right. We finished pretty much Ecuador. I came back to the States. As I said, George

Weaver had decided I should be in the labor department. That ended up being eight or nine months. We weren't sure when I started. I worked in the international labor affairs bureau as a Latin American specialist. They had regional specialists at the time. I saw the kind of work they were doing. I put in my time.

Q: Who was your supervisor?

RUBENSTEIN: Joe Basan was the supervisor---pretty much the supervisor. Joe had been the Latin American guy for years and was moving up to supervise all the regional guys. Never could quite leave what he had done before, so although I was supposed to be doing it, he was doing some. I was doing some and so forth.

Q: For purposes of the interview, you are referring to Joachim Basan?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Now, somewhere in the middle or near the end of this, it was decided that I would take the Foreign Service exam. I did not have to go through a written test because I was already a Foreign Service reservist. I would have to face an oral board to transfer laterally from AID into State. That was set up. I think Ben Stefanski actually arranged that through the personnel people in State. I think he might even have been on my board. I don't remember. I remember one incident which I'll tell you about in a minute. I went to the board. This was merely to become a Foreign Service reservist from AID transferring to be a Foreign Service reservist from State. So there was still that elite FSO position which was off in the distance at some point. So I went before a panel---maybe an hour. They were pleasant. It was not unfriendly. It was not difficult.

Q: Let me ask you about the panel. You think Stefanski might have been one of the panelists. That's my impression from my experience. Somebody from the labor department also?

RUBENSTEIN: I don't think so. I don't really remember.

Q: Deputy Assistant Secretary under Weaver would normally have been that person.

RUBENSTEIN: Ed Sylvester?

Q: Weisz.

RUBENSTEIN: Weisz. No I don't… Harry Weisz?

Q: Harry Weisz.

RUBENSTEIN: He could have been. I'm sorry. I just don't remember.

Q: Now the third point I want to ask you about. The regular Foreign Service officer.

RUBENSTEIN: That's the guy I'm coming to.

Q: Oh, ok.

RUBENSTEIN: Let me say that under the old system there were eight grades in the Foreign Service.

Q: You were then an FSR-five?

RUBENSTEIN: I think I was a five and got a promotion at the end of that tour to a four. Let's say that.

When we finished the whole questioning period, there was a guy I remember. I remember his name, Pierre Grame. He was a personnel type. He was a career Foreign Service officer who was in the personnel bureau at that time.

He said, "Now Mr. Rubenstein, what is your grade?

Q: Don't tell me they were going to offer you a grade lower?

RUBENSTEIN: I said, "I was a five. I have now been promoted to a four. I am a four."

He said, "I see on your application the lowest salary you would accept is that of a four."

"I said, "Yes that's right."

He said, "Well, you know it's easier to get a promotion in AID or ICA, than it is in the State Department. I just wondered, would you accept the five if you came into the State Department?"

I said, "No. I have just earned a promotion and that is what I will accept only."

He just put on the phoniest smile and said, "Thank you very much."

I thought, "You son of a---…"

As it was I was notified a short time later that I got my lateral transfer. I got the State Department and I got the grade I had asked for. The SOB nonetheless felt he had to ask as though it was money coming out of his own pocket that he didn't want to give me.

Q: I don't want you to think that this is an exceptional circumstance. We have a history. You probably remember Barney Taylor. He came in as a grade two and he was offered a three. He was so anxious to accept it he took it, against my advice. They offered me---I headed the Marshall Office in Paris as a two at that time----they offered me the labor attaché post as a grade three which I refused. So in my mind there was a continuing effort to downgrade labor leadership either because they were from another agency that had fewer favors or they had never earned that amount of money that the new job warranted.

So what the hell, you don't have to give it to them.

RUBENSTEIN: I transferred into Department of State, and shortly thereafter I went to their orientation program for overseas.

Q: The A-100 course?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I did not take the A-100. This was area studies on Latin America. I had been in Latin America for four years with CARE. I'd been in Ecuador for a couple of years, but this is what they offered so I went.

Q: Off balance? Did you learn enough to make it worthwhile or did you feel you had enough of Latin America without it?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I always considered myself a student of Latin America. I never used the word. I went to this program which was a couple of weeks, if I remember correctly. I had been assigned as labor attaché in Bogota which was satisfactory to me. In the middle of the orientation program, which was a few weeks long, they pulled a switch of different people and they assigned me to La Paz, Bolivia instead. Well, I had lived in La Paz with CARE and I used to tell stories to my wife about what life was like on the moon when I lived there, because Bolivia was like about a 16th or 17th century country when I had been there in the 1950s. She used to wake up and have nightmares that we would get assigned to La Paz and I said, "No. We're not going to go." Here I was going to Bogota and everything was fine and all of a sudden I get assigned to La Paz.

Q: There's a little comment down the side. Do you mind if it's made now?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Go ahead, Estelle.

MRS RUBENSTEIN: Well to say I woke up with nightmares is a slight exaggeration. I had one dream in which I was flying over La Paz and I remember looking down and saying, "Oh they have electricity!" That was the end of the dream.

RUBENSTEIN: Anyhow, I was going to La Paz and I had some medical problems that really had been going on for a few months---mysterious pains in the lower part of my stomach. They hit me then; they hit me again maybe four or five weeks later. I went to the doctors because there were severe pains but we couldn't figure out what they were.

A doctor in Washington said, "You might have gall bladder problems but there's really not enough for me to tell. While I was still in this course, I had a severe attack around midnight. I called the doctor and I described the symptoms and he said, "Meet me at the emergency room in George Washington Hospital. I'm pretty convinced this is a gall bladder problem and let's see what we do now." So my wife drove me to the George Washington University Hospital. He saw me, put his hand on, felt the heat, whatever in the area and he said, "Now I have no doubts. It's gall bladder. What do you say, let's take it out right now?" Well, I have no love for hospitals or surgery but I'm not concerned

over the surgery itself. I'm concerned over the anticipation period. So when he said, "Let's do it now" that was perfect. I went in; I was operated on, whenever it was---1:00, 2:00 in the morning. When I came to later on in the day, he said, "It was a severely infected gallbladder." He was very glad he got it when he did because it could have burst at some point. Then at no extra charge he said, "Since I was in the neighborhood, I took out your appendix also." He said, "No problem with your appendix, it's just that it doesn't serve any purpose."

So I had that operation and of course I couldn't go to La Paz, a high-altitude post having just had surgery. So they shuffled again and assigned me to Lima, Peru which made me and my wife extremely happy. The only other comment before I take off for Lima is that shortly after I came home from the hospital, which was a few days after surgery, we had a fairly heavy snow storm in Washington. We lived in Falls Church, VA, and I sat by the window as my wife went outside and shoveled the snow because I could not do work having just been operated on. I have that vision in my head for the last thirty or more years, as does she. It was a lovely picture to watch.

MRS. RUBENSTEIN: We didn't even own a snow shovel. I was using the round metal top of a garbage can. You can barely scoop up snow with that.

Q: I told you we had long suffering careers. You didn't object and that's it.

RUBENSTEIN: We then went to Lima, Peru in early 1964. We stayed in Lima through mid '67. It was about three and a half years. This was my first State Department assignment. There was a fairly new embassy there. We loved Lima. We loved Peru. Because of my labor work, I was able to travel a lot, justifying it because there were union functions in different places. Sometimes, in fact, I frequently took Estelle and our newborn baby daughter with us.

MRS. RUBENSTEIN: And Ellen.

RUBENSTEIN: Our newborn baby daughter Ellen.

I was in a fairly conservative embassy in Lima, although I had been preceded by a guy named Tom Roblais. He came out of the Mexico State AFL-CIO and he was, I think, the first full time labor attaché in Lima. Tom made both positive and negative impressions there. I think the people in the embassy certainly liked him. He was a very likeable guy. I think they liked him. He was low key so I don't think he caused any kind of an uproar or problems. I say this because, as we all know, certainly back in the 60s, if not today, embassy people in general are not quite sure what a labor guy is and what he is supposed to do. I think Tom was a good factor there.

One of the things I did before I went down to Peru, in addition to making the rounds of the labor people here, was I went up to New York. I called on, whatever it was called, ASARCO (American Smelting and Refining). I called on Southern Peru Copper Corporation and one other major U.S. employer down there. I saw, in several cases, the

president of the company. I was impressed. We called up and said, "I am going down as the new labor officer." I called from Washington, and they opened the doors. They treated me very nicely. Asol de Pasco was the other mining company---three of them.

For one of them I visited with the head of the company. We talked for about thirty or forty minutes or maybe longer. When I got up to leave he came over and he said, "I'm delighted to have you go down there. Thank God we're getting rid of that no good communist Roblais."

So the mind set---Mining companies are, I think, by nature ultra, ultra conservative. Their history in the labor field has been one of violence, heavily so. Peru was traditionally ruled by conservative elements. There were unions in most of the mines. Some of them had some good relationships. Some of them didn't. I got to travel around. I went to the Mine Workers Federation Convention where we had---

Q: Before you got down there, as part of your training, you understandably went to commercial concerns if only to be able to find out what the problem was. Did you also meet people from the opposition Aya Delatobe or any of those people before you went down?

RUBENSTEIN: Not before I went down, but, once down there, yes. Aya Delatobe used to give interviews after midnight. So I was with him until three one morning and so forth. Yes.

Q: But he was running Peru at the time? Had he returned to Peru?

RUBENSTEIN: He was in Peru. Well, if he wasn't in Peru, he went there shortly thereafter. I saw him in Peru several times. Peru had returned to a democratic government at the time. It was Fernando Delonde's first term. He was sort of a populist president, hard to define. He was an architect and a dreamer who could not administer his way out of a paper bag so there was a lot of difficulty there. But from my time in Peru, I have several friends today from my days in the political section there. I did not have any particular problems. We had J. Wesley Jones as the ambassador, whose only experience had been in Europe mainly. Then he was ambassador to Libya in the old days, when there was a King of Libya.

Ernie Siracusa was the DCM; eventually he became an ambassador in several places. While I think Ernie might have been personally what I might loosely call a liberal democrat, his Foreign Service convictions were very heavily traditional and orthodox.

Q: And you were in the political section?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes, in the political section with about three or four other officers and myself.

Q: Were you a member of the country team or was your representation on the company

team through the head of a political section?

RUBENSTEIN: I'm sorry I can't give you a good answer. I don't know if in the early 60s, they had a country team concept. If they did, I think that probably the political counselor went but I don't know. I have virtually been on a country team everywhere I've been and I can't specifically answer that. I've never been boxed out.

Q: The thing I'm developing.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Never been boxed out. Always had access. Not always winning arguments, not always getting sympathy, but the doors were never shut to me at any time in any country. I got to a lot of labor functions. I made a point when I got down to Peru, for example, that I eventually called. There was a rather famous local character who was the labor relations director for the Sara de Pasco Mining Company which was the biggest mining company. They had, I don't know, twelve thousand workers or maybe more. He said, "Oh yes, I know all about you. My boss fax---" Well, he didn't fax then. I guess he mailed down in those days, "a report on my visits to the New York offices." I was very well received. We went over a sixteen-thousand-foot mountain pass with Estelle and the baby to get to the town where the miners were and the car broke down up there and some Indians came over and helped us change a tire or whatever they did.

MRS RUBENSTEIN: I'm going to interrupt because you said again "the baby". Ellen was two and Lisa was the newborn. We had two children.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Yes. My second child was born in Lima. I went to labor conferences all over the place.

Q: I have a question about your travel because hereto they are different experiences. Was there any limitation on your travel? Did it come out of the embassy budget? Did you ever use other budgets like the information or AID budget to use your travel? Any problems?

RUBENSTEIN: To the best of my knowledge, in my entire career, I never had one trip cancelled or rejected or postponed. I traveled where I wanted, when I wanted with the minor exception, as I mentioned before, when I wanted to go back on my own time to Guayaquil and this jerk said, "Don't come."

Q: But official travel---

RUBENSTEIN: Official travel, I got full cooperation at all times. I got money when I wanted it for representation, starting in Ecuador and continuing on through my career. I either got money for representation myself or I talked the ambassador into throwing labor functions where they had never dreamed of doing such a thing. I remember, while I was living in Guayaquil---I'm going back to Ecuador now---I raised the subject with Ambassador Bernbaum. The concept in those days was you can't do anything on May 1st because that's a communist holiday. It was Labor Day in Latin America, but it was looked upon as a political holiday. I said, "All right. Let's do something on our Labor

Day. A lot of Latin Americans understand we have a different Labor Day. They think we're a little strange because they want to talk about the hay market and everything else, but you know we have our own Labor Day.

I said, "Why don't you hold a reception for labor leaders and government ministry people on Labor Day."

And he said, "Well, let me think about it." Then he said, "Well, give me a potential list."

I gave him a list of people from Quito and I think I threw in a half dozen people from Guayaquil. I don't remember if they showed up. In this game my attitude is I want certain people to get an invitation, to let them know we're thinking about them. If they show, fine; if they don't show, fine." So we did this in his house. Mrs. Bernbaum, also an old school wife, very charming, very lovely, but old school wife, was very concerned over what would happen to her house when these guys came. It was basically a stag reception, if I remember correctly. A few people may have brought their wives or there may have been a few women. Women labor leaders in Ecuador were not that common in the 1960s.

Anyhow, he held the reception. I thought it was great. It was the first time ever. When they left, Mrs. Bernbaum came over to me and she said, "Irwin, I want to tell you a story. I was concerned and I put away some of our little nice things. Concerned that they would either be stolen or broken." She said, "This is the best-behaved group we have ever had at a function. When I had the wealthy big shots here, they put cigarette butts on the floor, they spit in the corridor. These guys were wonderful and I'm willing to do this whenever you want to do it again." It's an educational process also.

Let me go back to Peru. I spent three years plus there. I traveled all over the whole country. I didn't have an active program the way I had in Ecuador. It was basically the attaché, the contact, the reporting, the analyzing and so forth. Some of the fun I had was I met some campesino leaders who were organizing a campesino movement and eventually that became an independent party. It was regional and then what happened was the other parties formed coalitions with them at election time. Some very bright young guys, sad to say, I think got bumped off. I don't remember what happened but they got into Congress, a couple of these leaders, by organizing campesinos. I looked at the campesino movement as a labor movement as far as I was concerned.

Anyway, we had a wonderful time in Peru. I wrote to---I left there because I had heard about some big things that were coming up in Uruguay. Nick McCoslin had been the Peru desk officer when I went down and I met him in Washington. In the Foreign Service, you meet somebody and you're a friend. You don't see them for five years but you're a friend. And he was now the desk officer for the Southern Cone. I wrote him a note and said, "I hear you got some big things going on in your neck of the woods, and I'm finishing my tour here and I'd really like to get into some action-oriented programs." *[End of side 2, tape 1*

One of the things I skipped over in my discussion was that in Lima we had a sort of

working arrangement whereby I was leader or supervisor or whatever it was, of a three-man team. Cliff Naughton was the USIA labor information officer and Marty Forrester came in some time later as the ICA---I guess by that time it had become AID---and the AID labor technical officer. So what was established was that I was effectively in charge of this embassy. The ambassador I guess made the decision. We did have a little team. We worked together. We had a unit set up with offices together. Naughton did a lot of basic publications and other stuff which he got out to a mailing list which we kept building up and so forth.

Q: Was he an information guy with a trade union orientation or what?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I don't know if he had a trade union background specifically but certainly the feelings, the sympathies; he had everything you would want in it. He did that for some time but then they sort of---I'm trying to think if they phased it---No, I think they brought in one more officer after him. But the fellow after him who started as the labor information [officer] I think---by the end of his tour---was doing general USIA information work including some labor rather than doing labor exclusively. The labor technical program was largely with the government. There was no leadership program. I guess AFIELD meanwhile had come in and set up an operation there. Marty Forrester, our AID guy, kept contact with them, as did I of course. But they were getting some AID money so he was closer to it. The point was we had a little unit; we did work together, and I guess we got support from people. I don't remember too many specifics of it. We got along well. Cliff Naughton sort of disappeared, but Marty has been a friend. I don't see him much but I saw him recently in Washington.

Anyhow, I had written to McCoslin saying I hear things are happening in Montevideo. I didn't really know the full details. Well, what happened? About a week after I wrote my letter, the DCM called me in and said, "I don't know what you did, Irwin, but the Department wants to transfer you immediately to Montevideo, Uruguay. They got some big multimillion dollar thing going on down there. I don't know if this is from your activities or they know about you or whatever. I said what I told them was if they need you there, we'll gladly release you but only on the condition that we get somebody here right away to replace you. We wouldn't have you go immediately. We'd have you go in the near future." That worked its way out.

Q: You actually had an overlap? That was---

RUBENSTEIN: Well, yes, in a sense. What they did was they eventually signed John Dougherty to come as my replacement in Lima. I should have mentioned that the AIFLD School, the AIFLD Program, was being run by Jesse Friedman, who was the stepson of Serafino Rimaldi, who had started AIFLD. Anyhow John Dougherty came as my replacement probably within a month. It was a fairly quick---

Q: Was that directly from Annapolis or had he been at another post?

RUBENSTEIN: John had been the assistant labor attaché in Mexico City under Salerd I

think. Whether he came from Mexico or Washington, I'm not sure, but he was very happy to get out of that situation. The story was---we heard---I knew Bill of course through my activities. I'm not sure I'd ever met John. Oh, yes. I guess I met him over in Saint John. But I knew Bill Dougherty over the years, first from TTTI and then eventually from AIFLD and so forth. We heard John was coming with ten kids. They came on a boat. I was assigned of course to meet him and be his control officer until he got settled. There was an apartment building where the embassy had apartments for transients. We got two apartments for him hoping it would be enough bedrooms and so forth. There was no way we could get cars to contact him. I had the embassy contact the American school and we got the Franklin Roosevelt school bus. When their boat came and we got on board and after the big hellos and everything I said, "You know, John, you're such a big family, I got a school bus to pick you up." He thought it was very funny. He thought it was a joke. As they started unloading he walked outside and saw this big yellow bus. He said, "You really did!"

They didn't bring all ten children. I think they brought nine kids with them and the husband and wife. We got them settled in these temporary apartments. We did have a brief overlap of a few days.

Ok. Well, anyhow John Dougherty came and replaced me. We had a short overlap period and then we went on to Montevideo.

I don't know if my wife has told you about our trip from Lima to Montevideo, but it was one that we talk about a great deal. I'll be very brief. Basically we flew down to Buenos Aires where we were to change planes and fly across the river Plat or the bay to get to Montevideo. When we got to Buenos Aires we found out that there is no such plane. We had a reservation made several weeks in advance. That flight didn't exist. So we found out that there was another flight we could get but it was from the airport across town. We put the family into two taxis: Estelle was with two kids in one and me with the kid in the other. By this time we had a third child, plus our trunks and suitcases and whatever. We zoomed across Buenos Aires at breakneck speed and got to the other airport a couple minutes ahead of the other flight in order to make that trip. We then got to Montevideo. We were so late and it was a different numbered flight and so forth that there was nobody meeting us. There was a strike of the newspapers and I think the communication workers, banks, etc. I couldn't get any Uruguayan money in the airport. I had no coins. I had no way of calling. I eventually---I guess we must have taken taxis.

MRS. RUBENSTEIN: Two taxis. I'm sitting in the back nursing one baby. The other two kids are under six.

RUBENSTEIN: Anyhow we get to…Oh I guess eventually one of the airlines loaned me their phone and I called the embassy. The secretary in the labor section or whatever, said, "Well, they went to meet you but they said there was no plane so they've left." I asked, "What hotel do I go to?" They told us. So we went to this hotel and as we're pulling up the doorman comes out and says, "No. No. There are no rooms here. They called us and we told them there are no rooms here. You should go to such and such a place."

So we went to the Central Plaza, where the big hotel, the Victoria or something, Victoria Palace, whatever it was. We went there and we walk in.

MRS. RUBENSTEIN: Excuse me. As we're going up the steps, the baby threw up on my coat.

RUBENSTEIN: I was about to describe that but I've been preempted. We went there and they said, "Yes, Mr. Rubenstein, the embassy called and you do have room for tonight but it's only for tonight. We have a convention or something starting tomorrow and you can only have the room for one night."

I said, "Well come on." At which point the baby had thrown up on Estelle and one of the other children was tugging at her coat saying, "Mommy, do they have bathrooms in Montevideo?" She said, "Irwin, take the room."

So we took the room for one night. Eventually when the embassy people found out we were there, and came over. They talked to the manager. It worked out so we stayed there for a week or whatever it was.

MRS. RUBENSTEIN: One minor detail that you omitted when we were collecting our bags in the airport in Buenos Aires is we noticed that someone had walked off with the suitcase that had all the baby's clothes. We got that about twelve hours later.

RUBENSTEIN: There were two suitcases. He left one of his which looked like---

Q:---one of yours.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. And he took one of ours. Anyhow, it was a wonderful arrival. I went to the embassy shortly thereafter. A fellow named Bernie Femanella had been the previous labor officer. Bernie was a Foreign Service officer who---I guess---had gone through the training program. He did not come out of the labor movement or anything like that, but he was well intentioned and---

Q: Served in Rome later?

RUBENSTEIN: Served in a couple of posts. I don't know if he went to Rome later or before. At any rate, he was to leave a few days after my arrival. The day we left Lima, his wife had been at the dentist and coming down---She was on the second floor and coming out of the dentist's office and down the stairway, she tripped and fell and broke some limb. I don't remember if it was her shoulder or her leg or whatever but she couldn't transfer anywhere for some months. So you asked me before about overlaps. We had a very long overlap. The way we worked it out was we both sat in the same office for a few weeks. Then little by little as I made the contacts and as he filled me full of all his accumulated knowledge, he started getting other things to do from the embassy. I was taking over more and more and then finally, for about a month, he had a totally different

assignment. He was still there.

Q: Sounds like a good arrangement.

RUBENSTEIN: It was done very intelligently. We got along beautifully. He was very helpful, told me, in terms of his thinking, who you could deal with, who you could trust, who not to see, whatever. He accompanied me to a lot of meetings early on and later of course I went alone and I made new contacts.

Q: On this question of overlap or most frequently coming to a post that has been vacant, do you have any comments on what a departing labor officer should leave for his successor by way of information other than the annual reports that have come in. That and all that---contacts, cares, comments, things like that?

RUBENSTEIN: I think I put labor into a general category when I answer this question. I have tried to do this, and have done it in a few cases, but not all. I think the number one thing is to take the ten or twenty or fifty or one hundred depending upon the number of contacts you have, write down the name and title of the person and then your personal comments on him or her. Leave that as a final report. Now we've been doing it as political officers when it's done for our successors and for Washington because a lot of times your personal comments don't fit into those bio forms we use.

Q: Yes. I know.

RUBENSTEIN: So you can say Joe Smith is a no-good son of a bitch and don't ever trust him because he's violated every confidence over the last twenty-five years. Or you can say Joe Smith has that record but he was straight with me and I found him an outstanding guy to deal with, whatever. I think those kinds of personalized things, typed out, peck and hunt if you have to, on a typewriter, left for your successor are invaluable. He may find out that the guy is not the same with him as he was with you but you are giving him the benefit. The other thing is, if there are any programs or projects, tell him how it works, what the snags are, who the key people are that have helped make it go, who the obstacle people are and so forth.

Q: These are obviously classified comments that you are leaving in most cases.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Since they are high---

Q: Why---. Yes.

RUBENSTEIN: Highly personal.

Q: Right. They should be.

RUBENSTEIN: They could cause trouble if they got out.

Q: Why does the place---By the way, this is one of the ending comments I ask so if this is---I bring it up now because I don't know how long you are going to last on this. Why does the place that they---you have what we now call a Foreign Service national---local employees we used to call them. What part of this type of thing is appropriate to assign to a Foreign Service national or do you keep them out of it entirely, etc? You have had, obviously, local employees.

RUBENSTEIN: Whether a Foreign Service national would have to write such a report for a new incoming person or whether he could just do it verbally I don't know. Probably writing it would be better because he would give you, say, the bio data. What kind of education, what kind of training, what positions she held and so forth. I would not put that down on a brief bio thing.

Going back to your statement, I've had very, very few Foreign Service nationals working for me. In Latin America you don't get them. I remember I visited the embassy in Chile and they had either one or two people working in the labor office for years. We just didn't have such things. In Lima there were none. In Ecuador of course I had them on the staff because that was that school program teaching program. Montevideo, to the best of my knowledge, I didn't have any. I had a secretary, an Uruguayan, bilingual secretary, who was pretty much assigned to us. She couldn't do classified.

Q: Your situation is very different from the ones in many other posts but I wanted to get this---

RUBENSTEIN: None in Israel. None in Mexico City. In Israel there was an extremely talented young man who was assigned to the political section as an analyst. He helped me with some labor things but he was not assigned to me. In Mexico City there was a young lady who was studying law. I think she got her law degree while I was there, which was a little bit helpful. Not much more on the legal aspects of labor but again she was assigned to the political section. I did not have problems. I did not feel I had a need in most cases. The question is can you use them and can you keep them gainfully employed? It's going to depend.

Q: And you had the language facility.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes.

Q: Because in many cases, like Japan, the language is necessary to have. Ok.

RUBENSTEIN: Ok. So going back to Uruguay---they had developed a program in the embassy with basically AID money. The ambassador took a very personal interest in all this. This was Henry Hoyt at the time, who again was an old school Foreign Service officer, but very much an activist who believed in breaking down all the myths of the striped tie, cookie pusher type. He was a gung-ho, get out and get your hands dirty type.

All this was done before I got there so I wasn't really too clear as to how and who, but a

major program of several million dollars was developed; I'll talk about it in a minute. A big point was made that the CIA was told to keep out completely, directly by the ambassador---a specific and direct order in no uncertain terms. To the best of my knowledge during my three or three and a half years there, they lived up to it. They asked me questions. I talked to them. We shared information on certain occasions but as far as I could tell---and I'm not that naïve---because I ran into their activities in Peru in the labor field when we tripped over each other a little bit. Then we worked it out and there was no intervention on their part in Uruguay.

Now the strange thing about this is that the mainstream labor movement in Uruguay was socialist and close to the Moscow line. A certain amount of independence, but still the Moscow line. There were some very capable guys, people who would sit down and talk with you. You wouldn't convince them of anything but you could talk to them sensibly. You could deal with them as serious adults. They would not spout a communist line or a party line; they would spout a worker's line. They would spout a line about the problems with the government and the ultra-conservative reactionary business people there and so forth. So it was something.

The idea of this project was that Uruguay was a very small country with a small population. When I was there---I don't remember---it was 2,500,000 or 3,000,000 people in the whole country, of which about 1,500,000 were in Montevideo. The second town had maybe 60,000 people to bring it into perspective. The labor movement was heavily, as I say, left wing socialist. I would call it that and it stuck pretty much to the Moscow line. The idea was to try and develop a democratic alternative. I say alternative because the thinking was---when I got there---by people who had been there before me---"You're not going to win over these guys, so you've got to create an alternative." And there were a lot of independent unions which did not belong to the major confederation. The idea was to try and reinforce those unions, maybe develop a confederation out of them. The one would parallel the other one---it would be smaller but maybe eventually grow big enough. Then you'd win away some of the unions or maybe you'd merge and take over. Whatever. We didn't look that far down the road. There was money unlike any program that existed, certainly in this hemisphere, and maybe in the world. There was money for a leadership training program and AIFLD was going to run the school part of it. There was some money for some social projects, hopefully a housing project, maybe some other things---small loans to unions, things like that. We would call it the social development fund, which AFIELD eventually had all around the hemisphere. There was a lot of money for scholarship training abroad. There was money to subsidize guys who went to school in Uruguay in our training programs. It included some management people to go to the States. It included some government people to go to the States and it included a lot of trade union people.

Q: What was the reason for this, not excessive, but still this relatively high amount of support? Was it in some way crucial to the United States or was it just fortunate?

RUBENSTEIN: It was an activist country team who felt that maybe the time had come to free Uruguay of this problem. Uruguay had been an extremely prosperous country in the

30s, 40s, 50s, up to the 60s. In the 60s they started going downhill. One of the Uruguayans---Uruguay is a country which believes heavily in the concept of non-intervention and almost international pacifism and so forth. One of them said to me, "You know," in a conversation, "we don't have any trouble with your fighting over there in Vietnam. That's your business. That's not ours." because there were a lot of anti-Vietnam War rallies in Uruguay. "We don't really have problems with that. Only why do you have to fight in the jungles? Why can't you do what you did in Korea and fight in a cold place so you could buy wool from us?"

Uruguay lives off of wool and leather and beef. Beef and wool are the two main crops. Leather is maybe the third. The wool market had gone down. Their economy was in shambles. A very high percentage of the people worked for the government there because the government runs all these enterprises that would normally be private enterprise in other countries. With the labor movement being so powerful in these enterprises, the feeling was they might take over the government as such. Some years after I left, they did form what was called the Broad Front, which included all the left-wing elements. It was defeated in election but came close to electing a president. So there was a feeling of danger. As I said you had a very activist leadership in the ambassador and his team.

So this program was set up and the money was there when I got there. The feeling was that Falmonella was not experienced enough and they wanted somebody with a little more experience. I wasn't that old or that experienced but I had worked in Ecuador and in Peru. Nick McCoslin knew me so he brought me in to do this. Sometime later, a year or a year and a half later he came down as political counselor so we worked together on it. I went in and the first thing to do was to take stock and see what we had and where we were going and so forth. I spent a lot of time---you asked before about access---I spent a lot of time with the ambassador, more so than many people in the embassy did. The political counselor when I arrived---I have to stop and think. I'm not sure. I guess McCoslin had gone down maybe by then. Yes. I think he had gone down maybe earlier than I suspected---The DCM was supportive. He was way in the background, a very low-key guy. The ambassador was gung-ho and out in front. USIA was ready to contribute any way they could. It was a very, very interesting effort.

Now I have some political comments on this. We worked. We looked around to see what we could find as what we would call either democratic unions or independent unions. Hopefully the independents were also democratic but at least they were not part of---I think it was called the CTU---the labor confederation. I don't even remember for sure---it would have been the Confederation of Workers of Uruguay. There were some transport workers. There were some port workers. There were some individual factories. There were some other things. Hardly any government employees were not in the CTU. We worked with these groups. We got things going. There were some trucking unions. We had a lot of small groups moving along very nicely.

Now what happened I thought was a major mistake. I didn't mention this before but something similar happened in Ecuador. You also had a socialist labor movement in Ecuador. Socialists followed the Moscow line as I mentioned in Uruguay. The IRED, the

InterAmerican Regional Organization of Workers, did not really have an honest to goodness affiliate in Ecuador. They may or may not have had a little two-bit outfit when I arrived. I think they did, but it didn't amount to anything. They didn't have an affiliate in Uruguay. In Ecuador they took some of the unions we were working with and formed the confederation, slapped a seal on the door and got them letterhead stationery. They took some of the people and made them confederation leaders and so forth, well ahead of when they should have. They never really blossomed. In Uruguay, near the end of my tour, maybe a year before I left, they did the same thing and it never really blossomed.

Q: Any criticism from the (inaudible) or the AFL-CIO people about you working with this socialist/Moscow line group?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I wasn't working with them as such. I would keep in touch with them by getting a feel for what they were doing. Jose Delea, their leader, who I think ran for vice president when this Broad Front organized, was a very bright, very articulate guy. It was almost a pleasure to sit down and talk with him even though you would disagree on a lot of issues. I was looking for common ground. I wanted to find out because his reputation was that he was a man of honor. He was not a communist. He was a nationalist. He was a good labor leader, etc., etc. So I was prodding and probing and looking. I must have met with him a half dozen times in three years. I didn't overdo it because I didn't want to be seen catering to him and so forth.

The program I ran, I ran among the independent unions and then more unions came to us. Particularly from the small towns out in the countryside. They wanted to---They were very conservative. The countryside of Uruguay is very conservative. They wanted to get some training. They wanted to find out what was going on. We had to be cautious that they weren't just looking for scholarship trips and so forth, as tends to happen. But we had elements. We were trying to get a little transportation group together. We were trying to get a little white-collar group together. We were trying to get a little---I think the port and trucking were together in transportation---maybe some manufacturing. I don't remember but a few groups. Very small, very fragile, very inexperienced, but we were working at it. Then came the IRED people, supported by AIFLD and AFL-CIO because, after all, IRED was their regional affiliate and they knew all the answers. Arturo Hadagi, who was the head of IRED at the time, pushed and decided he had a congress and they established a new federation. Whatever else and of course within about a year I left Uruguay. As far as I know, it never got anywhere. I mean it was pretty much the same thing fifteen or twenty years later as we had left it. Whereas I felt if they kept working at the basics, whether we did it as a government or IRED did it or whether AIFLD did it, or whatever, you could have really developed something. It wasn't ready. I think they harmed the movement in Ecuador and I think they harmed the movement in Uruguay. They may have counter answers to this. I don't know all the answers, but I felt very strongly that that was a major goof at the time.

I stayed in Uruguay for three and a half years. About the middle of our tour, the Tupamaros terrorist movement became very active. We lived under a lot of pressure the last year and a half or so. Then about a year before the end of my tour, the AID public

safety guy, Dan Mitrione, was kidnapped by the Tupamaros. He was held for about a week and assassinated. They called him a CIA agent and a man who had taught torture to the police. Dan was a small-town police chief from Indiana, very much a family man, and had nothing to do with the CIA. That was what he said. He was a public safety officer trying to teach modern police methods, not torture, to the Uruguayan police. He had some results favorable and some not so favorable. Anyhow, he was assassinated.

After they picked up Mitrione, they made an attempt to get a young economic officer named Gordon Jones from our embassy and a Brazilian military attaché. They looked at Brazil and the U.S. as the major supporters of this "fascist" government. Uruguay by the way has a long history of democratic elections. Gordon Jones was kidnapped, but jumped out of the back of the truck in which they were carrying him away. He had a blanket and chains or a rope around him and sort of scuttled his way off the side of the road. He had been cracked over the head with a pistol so he had blood all coming down over his face. He got away. He was a young economic officer who was a colleague of ours. With his movement, he became one of my heroes. This really took guts. He got away and was able to contact the embassy and we got to him a short while later. They could not get the Brazilian military attaché, so they picked up a counselor officer from the Brazilian embassy and held him for some time.

Q: They did not treat him that good (inaudible)?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I think they eventually let him go maybe six months or a year later. But wait, it was a Friday Gordon and the Brazilian were kidnapped. Gordon got away. Sunday night, two nights later, two carloads of Tupamaros came to my house. They asked for Engineer Rubenstein. There is no such person here. I happened to look out of my bedroom window and saw the two cars. One guy was at the house. The other was sitting there waiting. I found out some months later that in East Berlin they had put out a book called Who's Who in the CIA Around the World and there was an Engineer named such and such Rubenstein. I don't even remember his first name. They decided that was me. Well, I guess I was in my forties at the time or late thirties and this guy was already sixty-six when the book was out, so they hadn't used their intelligence very thoroughly. But they knew a guy named Rubenstein lived there. I think also we found out many months later the house across the street, sort of diagonally across the street from us, was a Tupamaros safe house so all those nice young people I used to see out there sitting on the porch were actually spying on me all this time.

I also had, shortly before the kidnap attempt, a young man, whom I had been told about a lot. He was a radical labor leader in a factory, a metal working factory, but I was told he was reachable. He was very bright and he had a great future. He was reachable. He was not a communist, but was strongly, violently almost, against the government, but he didn't recognize any organized element. I got in touch with him. I finally met with him. I had him over to the house for coffee or whatever. I found out later that he was involved with the Tupamaros. He may have been scouting out my house during this thing. Sometimes we do stuff which you think is smart and is not so smart.

At any rate, an attempt was made to kidnap me. They wanted an American. They got Jones but he escaped so they wanted another American. They knocked at the door. We saw what was going on. I immediately called both the police. We had a special number and our radio system. I called my colleagues and I guess we called the embassy also. The neighbors saw that something was going on. One neighbor had two huge police dogs and released them. They couldn't come over the fence but they snapped at these people through the fence which made a lot of noise. The neighbors on the other side saw something was wrong and turned on all the lights in the area. It caused quite a stir but for five minutes maybe because these people tried the back door and the front door. I saw two guys walk under the eaves of the garage holding what I assume was a blanket they would have thrown over me. They had something crumpled up. So a serious attempt had been made to kidnap me. When they couldn't get in, when the dogs were barking, when the neighbors' lights were going on, when somebody was doing this and somebody was doing that…they finally left. They got in their cars and drove away by which time help had arrived.

Q: The help that arrived was American or local police?

RUBENSTEIN: Both. Our security people were very much working with the police. A couple of the guys came. Sometime later, before I left, we had a dinner party to thank all these people for helping save my life. Each guy that walked in put an automatic weapon in the hall closet. We had an arsenal in there. Anyhow I lived the next nine months, the family lived the next nine months with armed guards at the house at all times, twenty-four hours a day. The kids would go out and fly a kite and the guard would be helping them in the back yard with the kite. If we'd go to work, we'd go in a convoy. They sent guards over to us if we were going downtown. A guard rode in the car with me.

Irv Tragen at the time was director for Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina, for what was called the Southern Cone. He called me and said, "We can get you out of there in twenty-four hours if you want to move." And either intelligently or stupidly I said, "No. I think they made an attempt. It didn't work. They know we are alert now so I don't think they'll do anything." Anyhow I stayed for another eight or nine months.

Q: Irv Tragen was a former labor attaché?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. A former labor attaché and is now working for the OAS on anti-narcotics programs. He had been---He had done various things. He was an AID mission director at one point. A couple of days after that attempt on me, they kidnapped an American agronomist named Claude Fly. We heard an American government official had been kidnapped. We were all embassy officers. We said, "Who the hell is he?"

We found out that through our Agricultural Assistance Program there were certain areas in which we gave them money to hire technicians. The Uruguayan Department of Agriculture bought this. There's a laboratory technician in the field of entomology or something like that. They brought him into work at the Ministry of Agriculture of Uruguay. None of us at the embassy even knew he existed, but they wanted an American.

Q: An American body.

RUBENSTEIN: And when they missed Jones, they missed Rubenstein. They grabbed Fly. He was in his middle to late sixties at the time. They held him for almost a year. The ambassador eventually gave me a farewell party which was his first entertainment since Mitrione had been killed. It was almost nine months and the ambassador gave a party in my honor. As we were leaving his house at 10:30 or 11:00 or whatever, his phone rang and he said, "Wait a minute." He went back and got a report that Dr. Fly had been released that night. Since Fly was suffering a heart attack they kidnapped an ambulance, put him in it, drove it up to the front entrance of one of the major hospitals and left him there. The hospital took him in. They saved his life. Somebody called the ambassador.

Q: You never knew him?

RUBENSTEIN: No. Never saw him in my life. Sometime after I left, they also kidnapped the British ambassador and held him for about a year. There were underground pits; I mean horrible life. You know it was a very close call. All I have to say. I guess I should have mentioned early on when I was about to go to Bolivia as labor attaché, and I ended up going to Lima, Tom Martin and Boggs, Slim Boggs I guess, were there and they got kidnapped by some miners for a couple of days. Whether I would have gone to the same event and whether it would have happened to me, I don't know, but we live in a hazardous business.

Q: By the way, Slim Boggs' son is the one I referred to whose name I had forgotten who knew Portuguese.

RUBENSTEIN: That was Uruguay. I thought we had an incredible program going. It was one that required time. When I left, the program continued but I don't think it was nearly as effective, not because it wasn't me, but because of the concentration on creating this federation; that to me was phony. There just wasn't enough meat there to do it at the time. But it was done. That's the way things go.

Q: Let me ask you---

RUBENSTEIN: Pardon me. I just want to say that today the same socialist organization is just as strong as it ever was.

Q: And still oriented to the left?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Not as bad as it was, but it's there.

Q: Ok. Go ahead.

RUBENSTEIN: I left Uruguay in early '71 and I went up to Cali, Columbia where I was named principal officer in a small consulate. I---

Q: This was your first non-labor experience?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I spent two years there. Cali is a lovely city with a lovely climate and very friendly people. When I went down to Cali there were forty-six wholly owned American factories in the area---in the city and the outlying areas. I met with labor people as well as management people. Even had a labor management reception, or whatever you call it, at my house one time. None of this had ever been done before. We basically had consulate officers in charge of the consulate.

Q: So your labor experience was useful?

RUBENSTEIN: Sure. We left Cali and I went back to Washington in ’73. I eventually became the executive secretary of the Board of the Foreign Service and the labor management whatever that other. It was a dual position where we oversaw the labor management system between AFSA, the employees, and management of the Department. I will go over that fairly quickly.

Q: Whom did you succeed in that?

RUBENSTEIN: I succeeded Lou Silverburg.

Q: Lou Silverburg.

RUBENSTEIN: I was there from ’73 to ’76. The most significant thing we did was we organized and oversaw, monitored and conducted an election, a representative election, in which the USIA employees decided if they wanted the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) to represent them rather than AFSA.

Q: This was in ’72, wasn’t it?

Q: And USIA---

RUBENSTEIN: And USIA only. Yes.

Q: Now the administrative law judge, was it Sommers or---?

RUBENSTEIN: No. His name escapes me. It will come to me. He was living in Bethesda and he did a lot of his work at home. We’d get together periodically. He was very helpful. Actually it has won back the USIA employees this past year in ’93. So AID, USIA and State employees and the Foreign Service are all in AFSA now.

The job was unusual. It gave me an insight into the personnel systems for the international agencies at the top. It did not get into every day decisions but it set up policy. One thing it allowed me to do was understand the personnel system better, given that I had been in the Foreign Service for some years. I felt the personnel system stank. I

thought everything about it was pretty bad. This gave me a close up look and a real opportunity to see if it was bad or maybe worse than I had always thought it was. But it was fun. I got to meet some higher-level people in the Department because the membership was assistant secretary or higher. I was assigned to the office of the Deputy Secretary of State. I did not see him every day but I saw his executive assistant regularly and I dealt with him periodically.

Q: John Irwin?

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. Ken Rush first and then Bob Ingersoll.

Q: Let's get into the time of this. You said the election was held in '72 as well I remember. But you came only… (end of Side 1 Tape 2)

RUBENSTEIN: I was there '71 to 73. to---I'm sorry. I was in California from '71 to '73. I was in that job from '73 to '76. It was not '72 for the election. It was '73 or '74, I think.

Q: No. It was '73. I left in September '72 and everything was all set. (Inaudible) with you I gather?

RUBENSTEIN: No. He was gone. He had nothing to do with that election at all.

Q: Oh. That's interesting.

RUBENSTEIN: I held that for three years. One of the unique sidelines was that I was assigned a male secretary. There were, I think, two of them in the whole Department of State at the time. David was assigned to my office. We became very good friends. The second summer there I coached a Little League baseball team and he was my assistant coach. The next year he took over and ran it.

Q: Who was this?

RUBENSTEIN: David Middall. He's left here. I think he's over in HUD now doing administering---

Q: He had that third-floor office.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Over on the back side of the State Department. While I was there I kept up my contacts in the Latin American Bureau, ARA, because I wanted to get back into something there. One day I got a call from my friends in the Office of Central American Affairs. I had two friends, an office director and deputy director. They said that James Theberge, our ambassador to Nicaragua, was in town. In effect he was in town to look for a DCM. He had been given several candidates whom he didn't like and they said, "Should we tell him about you?"

I said, "By all means."

So they did and I don't remember if they called back or if he called in a very short time and said, "Please come over. He wants to meet you right now."

So based on about a half hour or less timing I went in. I threw some water on my hair and combed it so I looked handsome and straightened out my tie and I went for an interview with the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua. He apologized for the short advance notice. He also apologized because he had to leave in a few minutes for a luncheon appointment he had, but we could start. Well, we started and after about forty-five minutes or an hour, he went and called somebody and said, "I'm sorry. I'm going to be late for lunch," and he stayed with me. We went on for another hour and forty-five minutes. He told me he had not been satisfied with the candidates presented to him. He wanted somebody with some good experience. He liked what he saw in me. We started talking about his two little children, one or two I don't remember. He asked me the ages of my kids because the ambassador and DCM houses in Nicaragua are together in a complex and we thought if the kids get along it would help everything. It was obvious to me that he wanted me. The only question was would the system go along with what he wanted which eventually they did. It took a few weeks, but I had that interview. I found out later I was his third DCM in five months. He was a very difficult man to work for. He was very aloof. He had persnickety concepts of how people should behave. He put out a dress code for the people in the embassy, even the women.

Q: Was he a regular Foreign Service officer?

RUBENSTEIN: No. He was a political appointee.

Q: A political appointee.

RUBENSTEIN: He had done work in Georgetown at the CSIS---used to be part of Georgetown University---now it's separate. He had been a conference director over there ---something or other but with a Latin American background. He had written one book I believe.

Q: By now is it after the election of '76 or this still before?

RUBENSTEIN: This is before Carter.

Q: Before Carter.

RUBENSTEIN: This is Ford.

Q: Under Ford.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes.

Q: So he was a Ford appointee.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. He might have been a Nixon appointee, I'm not sure.

Q: Five months in '76.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I went there in '76. It was still Ford. It was Ford I remember because when Carter was elected he had an old friend come down to one of our functions. This old friend announced, "I've known him for years. In college we were roommates and he's been a lifelong Democrat." Well, it was interesting. He was a lifelong Democrat but got a Republican appointment and he was dropped by Carter. He did not keep him. I became Chargé for about five months.

Anyhow he picked me. When I finally got the official word I came home and my mother-in-law was visiting. I came into the house and the kids were there and my wife and my mother-in-law. I said, "I have a surprise for everybody. I'm being named DCM and we're all going to Nicaragua in a few weeks." The kids cheered. I didn't realize they were so happy to go overseas. They didn't know what Nicaragua was or where it was or anything else. When my mother-in-law saw how enthusiastic they were, I think for the first time she understood that we really all liked overseas life.

So I went to Nicaragua in '76 and I stayed until '78.

Q: Before you get to Nicaragua, you said the last time we spoke about salaries that you were at the grade four in the old system. Especially with your experience as executive secretary of the Board of Foreign Service, where you observed and weren't too keen on the personnel system. How has the personnel system treated you since you were a four? By this time you were what?

RUBENSTEIN: I was a three.

Q: A three under the old system?

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. That's right.

Q: And became DCM? That was unusual, wasn't it?

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. That's right. I thought I would become a two out of that DCM position. Let me talk about the personnel system later. I guess the basic answer is I have had good assignments. I've gotten a few promotions along the way. I had one level where I got stuck for about ten years as a three. I then made two and went from two to one. They changed it to counselor. I made counselor and two years later I made minister counselor, which was very, very fast. The system is very hard to judge in the sense that when I thought I deserved a promotion, I didn't get it. In fact, one year, very early on, I thought I had done very well and I went to look at the system where they rate you. They keep it sort of confidential but you can see it.

Q: You can look at it, yes.

RUBENSTEIN: I went and looked at it. I was so disappointed I never went back. So for the last twenty some years I never went to see my rating. Having said that I think I should tell you, in answer to a serious question, I should have been an ambassador. I put in thirty-three years plus military. I have credit for thirty-six years in the Foreign Service. I was a minister counselor my last seven or eight years. I have done everything asked of me. I was a DCM at the time the Somoza Dictatorship collapsing. I was consul general in Guadalajara. I was sent there specifically right after a DEA agent was killed there. They wanted somebody like me to take over the place. I ran it for four years. I had forty-five Americans on my staff and one hundred and twenty-five Mexicans employees which is bigger than many embassies. I got a superior honor award for my work there. I've done everything someone should have done to be seriously considered for an ambassadorship. That didn't happen. Not because of Labor, not because of Rubenstein. It just didn't happen. I wasn't in the right circles or whatever. I'm a little annoyed, but that's past history.

I received in the mail yesterday the current edition of the Foreign Service Journal. It has an article I have not yet read but I have been told about, written by Ford Cooper. Ford's a colleague of mine a few years younger, approximately the same grade and so forth. Ford was told near the end of the Bush administration that he was going as ambassador to Belize. Belize isn't the greatest place in the world, but it's an ambassadorship and he would have been very happy to take it. Then it was put on hold. It was held and held and held and then the new administration came in and nothing happened. Finally he was told by the director general, "Sorry. Somebody else is getting the job. You're out." So he kept quiet. He took some other job in ARA for about a year. Then he decided that the time had come and he quit. He turned in his resignation, and he wrote this article in the Journal blasting the secret of backroom manipulations of how career people are chosen for ambassadors. He doesn't get into whether politicians should be ambassadors. I guess that's my attitude also. It's annoying. It's frustrating. You see colleagues of yours who get appointed and you say why him and not me? So that's my last comment on the personnel system. Let me now go back to fit into the timing. I have a couple of cute little stories to tell you as we get to them chronologically.

So I'm in Nicaragua for two years. Theberge was recalled at the end of the four, the beginning of the Carter administration. I was Chargé for five months. Then we got a new ambassador who was probably the most incompetent guy I've worked for in my career. They wanted a Cuban American---not a Latin American---but a Cuban American particularly. This guy taught sociology at the University of Illinois and they decided he was a Cuban American. He speaks Spanish, he'll be a great ambassador. So they sent him down there. He was a disaster both while I was there and afterwards. Finally they evacuated the embassy. They actually fired him. I mean you don't hear about this often. He was fired by the State Department. Not released at the end of a tour.

Q: He was a political appointee?

RUBENSTEIN: Mauricio Solaun. Yes. He was really bad. One of the Carter administration people, but a bad one. Anyhow, I left Nicaragua and went back to Washington. I made phone calls to personnel and so forth. Well, they said, "We don't really have..." Oh. They offered me a DCM. They didn't really offer it but they said, "DCM was vacant in Georgetown. Guyana and they would nominate me for that if I was interested."

I said, "No. That doesn't sound like the kind place I want to go to."

I heard there was no decent school. I had three kids. Well, it so happens that there is a school there, but I didn't go there. I didn't want to. I would have been the DCM there at the time of the Jonestown Massacre. I missed that one by just a hair.

Meanwhile, they said, "Well, we have a labor attaché in Tel Aviv."

Q: Had you had the DCM training program at FSI?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes.

Q: Before Nicaragua?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. You went out of country for about a week. They said, "We have a labor attaché in Tel Aviv."

I said, "I don't want that."

They said, "Why not?"

I said, “Well, because it’s a major step backwards.” They had just downgraded the job I gathered. I said, “I’m a three. I was hoping to get a two out of DCM. I haven’t got it yet. I don’t know what’s going to happen or when the (promotion) lists come out.” That job was a two and has been downgraded to a three. “I’ve been a DCM. I’ve been in management. I would like to stay at this level if I can.” “Well, we don’t have very much.” I didn’t get anything very clear. I got back to Washington. The first day I’m back I go over to the personnel assignments people. I said, “I’m in.” I told them my name. They said, “Why are you here?” I said, “Because I’m in from overseas and I don’t have an assignment.” “Of course you have. You’ve been assigned as labor attaché to Tel Aviv.” I said, “That’s nice to know. How did that happen?” “Well, we knew you were coming out of Nicaragua. Sam Lewis, the ambassador in Israel, says he knows you, that you’re an old friend.”

Q: You knew him?

RUBENSTEIN: Personally, yes. He said, “He needs a labor attaché, and he said, I want you. If the ambassador wants you, he gets you. So you’re going to Tel Aviv.” Sam Lewis and I had been friends. He was ahead of me in graduate school. But he stayed in the

Washington area so he used to come around the Johns Hopkins Graduate School there. And I knew Sam and Sally from the 50s. We had never worked together. He used to chat with me. We'd have lunch once in a while when I had the Board of the Foreign Service job because he had been involved in the drafting of the---

Q:---report on the labor attachés.

RUBENSTEIN: of the report and on the executive order and so forth. I don't know where he fit in but he was there.

Q: He also did a report on the labor attaché service.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I think he did that once too. Anyway, Sam asked for me and got me. So I said, "Well, I'm not really very enthusiastic but you know I'm going to go if I can't do any better." I had about six weeks of home leave and they let me go over to FSI for six weeks of Hebrew. It was a forty-four week course and I got six weeks. I went to Israel---but not enthusiastically.

It was a great tour. All my tours have been great tours I should say. It wasn't that I was an American Jew eagerly seeking to go to the family homeland or anything. It was a tour of duty in a new area. It opened up new horizons a bit. I went there. I worked very hard. You work until 7:00 or 8:00 at night in that embassy almost every night. You work at least Saturday if not Sunday. The cabinet meets on Sunday morning in Israel and somebody from the political section has to cover the cabinet meeting and their communiqué when it comes out and report on it. So you're tied down a lot. Sam Lewis is a great ambassador. Probably the brightest guy I've known in my life and very hardworking, hard driving guy. Dick Viets was his deputy chief of mission. I was commenting on the staff. Dick Viets was the deputy chief of mission (DCM). Bob Blackwell was the political counselor. All of whom are hardworking, hard driving, very demanding bosses so it was a pressure filled situation. More so than any other place I had been. That lasted for about a year.

Q: But you were in the political section under a political counselor, under a DCM, under an ambassador, and that from a post as DCM.

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. The ambassador talked to me about this and the DCM talked to me about this and appreciated the fact that I behaved like a big boy in that situation. They treated me with a certain amount of deference because of age and previous experience. I still was a three by the way. I had not gotten a promotion.

Q: The head of the political section was already a one?

RUBENSTEIN: No. He was either a three or a two. He was much younger than I was. He was one of the bright young boys who was so bright he never had time to listen. But he was very capable. Anyhow, after about a year, Viets went off to an ambassadorship I believe. Jerry Brown came in as DCM. Blackwell went off to join Brzezinski in the NSC and Charlie Hill came in. Hill had been Deputy Director of Israeli Arab Affairs in the

State Department. Hill was also an extremely hardworking no-nonsense guy. But a much more human and humane person. And Brown, of course, was a very lovable supervisor. Both of whom could get the same amount of work out of you as the two previous guys but without the nastiness involved. Life became much more pleasant.

Now after about a year or a year and a half---I was in Israel for about three years or three years plus, working mainly with the Histadrut (Israeli Labor Federation). I also had a project assigned to me by the front office on Russian immigrants who were a new phenomenon in those days in Israel. I wrote a long paper on Russian immigrants and I wrote a long paper on what are called oriental Jews or Sephardic Jews in Israel. I found it interesting. I mean I went at these two projects the way I had never done anything in the Foreign Service. In the case of the Sephardic Jews, I read three or four books. In the case of the Soviet Jews, I went around and interviewed all sorts of people in all sorts of places. These were long term projects. They weren't due tomorrow. Each of them was a long, detailed document, more academic kind of thing.

Q: Research study.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. The paper on oriental and Sephardic Jews, I called the Second Israel. About a year later, the New York Times had a magazine cover story on the Second Israel, and somebody else had one. They all discovered that this was the big force that elected Menachem Begin to be prime minister and generated the big upset in '71 and then in '77. I should say the following election in '81 taught me a lot about these people. I got to know a lot of them. After about a year and a half, Sam Lewis, the ambassador, came to me and said, "Irwin, you can do the labor union thing blindfolded. You can do Histadrut with one hand tied behind your back." I had gotten into the Histadrut. I had become friendly with the outgoing and then the new incoming leadership of Israel Kresar company, the International Affairs Office and a lot of the other places, including the Kibbutz movement.

Q: Who did you succeed?

RUBENSTEIN: Lichtblau. George Lichtblau.

Q: Oh, George.

RUBENSTEIN: The Ambassador said, "We have an election coming up in '80 or '81 and the Labor party may win the next one. I'm devoting most of my time to the government. I don't know the Labor party and its people. I know Albine because I've played tennis with him once in a while and I know Shimon Peres and Abba Iban I've met but," he said, "I don't know the people. You are now my ambassador to the Labor party. Keep up your labor work but I want you to concentrate more on the Labor party than the trade union side of it."

Q: In effect he combined what in a country like Britain is the separate Labor party Foreign Service Officer and Trade Union.

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. That's right. And I was the only one in the embassy who worked on it, and we had a seven or eight man political section. The best collection of pure brain power I've been associated with in the Foreign Service. Really an outstanding crew. A lot of them were bilingual in Hebrew. A lot of them spoke the school Hebrew. A lot of them spoke Hebrew from childhood. Some of them were trained. Just an outstanding collection of brain power. Really, really bright. They all were working on the government and other aspects of politics, international affairs, but nobody on the Labor Party as such. So I had the Labor Party to myself for a year and a half and it was wonderful. I just went at it from all sides: the party structure, the elements in it, the individual leaders. I went to outlying areas to talk to people. One of the things I discovered, which was fascinating, was there was a movement within the Labor party to overthrow by democratic means the established leadership. This group of people I met, which I'll talk about in a minute, felt that Rabin and Perez and Abba Iban and a couple others had just been around too long. They had lost their way, had forgotten where they came from, and didn't really know where they were going. They had to be replaced. Now who were these people? One was---

Q: Was one of the reasons against them that they were old time politicos rather than trade union or was that not an issue?

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. No. There was some philosophic aspect of the old Socialist labor movement but I'm not sure that was it. They just felt these were people who were more…in a sense maybe what you're saying, more politicians who were trying to get elected rather than to maintain some philosophy, some principals, whatever. Anyhow, the number one guy in this movement was a fellow named Musah Harif, who was the Head of the United Kibbutz movement. The Kibbutz movement in Israel is much smaller than anybody thinks. When you add together all the Kibbutzim you're talking not much over 100,000 people. The point is that they were the elite. They were the best educated. They were in good shape financially---not the people individually, but they had financial backing. They could travel. They were very well organized and very well disciplined. And they could do a lot. Well Musah, which was an Arab nickname for Moshe Harif, had worked his way up in the Kibbutz movement and now was whatever he was called---chairman or president of the movement.

Q: What about this other group that's halfway into normal types of communities? Moshav?

RUBENSTEIN: Moshav. Moshavim.

Q: This is separate.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. That's different. They were not active politically. They have been on occasion, but anyhow you had Harif in the Kibbutz movement. You had Yakov Levinson who was Head of Banco Paralimni who was going to be the future finance minister. You had a couple others---I want to say young, but they weren't all necessarily

young---they were all 40ish. Maybe one was a little older than forty; maybe one was a little younger than forty but they were the leaders of the Labor party in Jerusalem whose name escapes me this moment. He felt he was boxed in by the party's national leadership and that he couldn't do the kinds of things he wanted to do. They had a few others. They were flirting with Kesar from the labor movement in Histadrut. They never fully joined them but you did not fight them in any way.

What they were trying to do was get enough delegates at the Labor party convention so that they could change the leadership dramatically. They were going to do certain things which they talked about to me. Levinson particularly opened up to me and he said that he was thoroughly disgusted with Israel's role in asking for money year after year from the American government, from American Jews, from Europeans, from others. He said, "It's time for us to stop being international smoors," or beggars, I guess is the word. "We can devise a program of investment opportunities in Israel which will get us the same amount of money from foreigners who would invest in the future development of Israel without our having to ask for charity. We can maintain some dignity by doing that." This kind of thing fascinated me. We never spelled it out to the final details, but I spent a lot of time with these people. I was the only one in the American government who knew anything about this. And really not many people in Israel knew about it because it was working very quietly---not covertly in any sense. There was---

Q: There was no publication of the minority group?

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. They were all activists inside the Labor party and some people knew about them, some people paid attention and so forth. I did a lot of reporting on this and it was fun. What happened was late in my tenure. The election took place, the 1981 election. I was in Labor party headquarters until about 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. in the morning when they stopped counting the votes. Then they started again at like 7:00 in the morning. At that time of night, Perez had been declared prime minister. They won the election. The Norwegians, the Danes, the Swedes had all called up congratulating him. Everything was fine. The next morning they started counting again and the vote came in against him and Begin streaked through. So it was a very, very tough election for the Labor party, I must say.

One of my remembrances that night was at about 2:30 in the morning. I was sitting in one of the side rooms in Labor party and saw Abba Iban. This world dignitary, who was always impeccably dressed and spoke impeccable English, was sitting there with a five o'clock shadow and no tie. Everything was disheveled and his hair was sort of hanging down. It was just the extreme opposite of what I'd ever seen. He looked like a tired old beaten politician. I don't say that nastily. It's just so different from the vision I had of him. Anyhow, I left a short while after that. It was a good time to leave because all my friends had been defeated in effect. I mean they got elected to Congress but the farewell party that the embassy threw for me, with the ambassador, DCM---the guest list was the whole future cabinet of Israel except the jerks who lost the election so they didn't get invited. A lot of them are in office now. But I left Israel at that point. I was---

Q: Bill Brown is still the DCM at that time?

RUBENSTEIN: Bill Brown was DCM at that time. Yes. I went to Mexico as a labor attaché. Labor counselor. Shortly after I left Israel, I got promoted based on my Israeli work so I made counselor. They switched the system at that time. You no longer had one and two. You had counselor and minister counselor. I went to Mexico City and a very strange thing happened.

Q: You went there as labor attaché? Labor counselor?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Or labor officer. A month after I got there the promotion list came out and I made counselor. The State Department assigned me there. Andy McClellan, the inter-American representative of the AFL-CIO objected. He said I shouldn't go to Mexico City.

Q: Excuse me. This would have been the seventies?

RUBENSTEIN: This was '81.

Q: '81. Is he still around?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Yes. He died a few years later. Less than a few years later. He objected. He said I should not go. He called. I think he talked to the embassy in Mexico City and whoever. They were raising questions. They said, "If this guy comes in here and he doesn't have the support of the AFL-CIO, how is he going to function?" "We didn't get into how I was going to function. My question is what is wrong with Andy? He and I had been friends for more than twenty-five years. Andy decided Fidel Velasquez, the last man of Mexican labor, who at the time was eighty years old, was very fragile and was about to die. He thought that I couldn't get along with Velasquez because I was too outspoken, strong-willed, whatever. You needed a lower key guy to deal with Fidel Velasquez. All I will say at this point is that that resistance was overcome. My people in Tel Aviv called everybody in Washington and everybody in the embassy in Mexico City and said, "This is the best labor officer we've ever had in Israel. How can you not take him there? You're crazy."

Q: What about Bill Dougherty? He played no part in this?

RUBENSTEIN: No.

Q: Where was he at the time?

RUBENSTEIN: I don't know. I think he knew about Andy's comment. At any rate, I went to Mexico. I served four years there. I was told by the CTM leadership in Mexico that I was known as the foreigner that was the closest friend of Fidel Velasquez in his whole life. The report was that he had never loosened up or been as friendly to anybody including Stefanski many years ago, who made a reputation for being close to him. I was

number one on the list in terms of the foreigners he had dealt with over the whole history. I laughed, thinking of how McClellan talked.

Q: McClellan, yes.

RUBENSTEIN: I want to go back and tell you another story because it involves McClellan.

Q: Before you do, in connection with that transfer didn't you try to get another DCM or ambassadorship or did you just go from one labor job to another?

RUBENSTEIN: I went from one labor job to another but I'm going to fill you in now.

Q: Ok.

RUBENSTEIN: At one point, I'm not sure if it was---I think it was when I went to Israel. As I said I wasn't particularly happy and I was seeing if I could get something else before I left Washington for Israel. I heard there was a DCM opening in the Dominican Republic. I called the ambassador who was in Washington. He had just been nominated and just been approved. He had not gone yet. I said, "I'd like to come meet with you to introduce myself and tell you about myself." So I went over to see this guy, whose name escapes me right now---Robert something or other---to try and convince him that he should take me as his DCM. It was a terrible interview. He was very cold and unfriendly and I wasn't that good. You know sometimes you have a good day. This was just a bad day. I went on for fifteen or twenty minutes but it was a waste of time. Sometime later, I guess when I had come back from Israel a couple years later, whenever it was, a friend of mine said, "It was too bad about the Dominican Republic that it didn't work out." I said, "Yes. It was too bad but it was a lousy interview. I just had a bad day." "He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, I went to be interviewed to be DCM. He said, "DCM? I'm talking about the ambassadorship!" "So I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You don't know?" I said, "Of course I don't know." Andy McClellan, the same Andy McClellan who didn't think I should go as labor attaché, some years later got Lane Kirkland to forward my name to Cyrus Vance---not Cyrus. Let's see. Who was---Was Cyrus Vance Secretary of State under Carter?

Q: Of course. Then he was succeeded by---

RUBENSTEIN: Mondale. No not Mondale.

Q: No Muskie.

RUBENSTEIN: He gave a piece of paper to Cyrus Vance with three names on it that the AFL-CIO was pushing for ambassadorships. The same Jim Theberge had ties even though he was conservative whether he was Republican or Democrat. He developed ties with the labor movement. He was smart. So they pushed him for whatever country. Chile I think. Irwin Rubenstein for the Dominican Republic and I think John Condon from

some job or other.

Q: Fiji. Yes. He got Fiji, but I think it was some other---

RUBENSTEIN: Nobody ever told me that this had happened. I learned indirectly about two and a half years later that I had been considered so I went to see McClellan and I said, "Andy, is this true?" He said, "Yes. Ruby you've worked, you've been a loyal colleague for twenty years or so, you deserve it." I said, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" "He said, "If you got it we would have told you. You didn't get it so what's the difference?" "So this was the incredible situation of being pushed to be ambassador to the Dominican Republic and never knowing anything about it.

Q: And you had an unsuccessful interview.

RUBENSTEIN: And then I tried to get the DCM job---not from the same guy because it was two years later and I didn't get the DCM job. Then sometime later McClellan tries to shoot down my transfer to Mexico saying I'm not the guy to go there. Just a little vignette. Ok. So I went to Mexico. We were in Mexico City for four years. I loved the country. I loved the place. Mexico is a fabulous place. Some things about it can drive you absolutely nuts but we really loved it. It's a vibrant, exciting city, heavily polluted, traffic jams and so forth. But we had a house in close, a very active life---politically, socially, diplomatically, every other conceivable way with the labor movement, politicians, and others. Labor people come out of the labor movement and get to be governors and senators there. So you know them before you get to know them later. One guy from the CTM ran for governor in his home state a few years later and invited me up to campaign with him. I mean you talk about intervention or non-intervention. I was out on the stumps with him for two whole days. He invited me back to his inauguration as an honored guest. I sat with all the governors. I was a very distinguished guy there because I was the only non-Mexican in the whole thing. So I had fun. Near the end of my tour, a vacancy developed as DCM in Nicaragua---excuse me---Guatemala. I had asked Ambassador Gavin in Mexico to call the ambassador in Guatemala whom he knew, to put in a word for me. So he called him and the guy didn't call back. He said, "I'll call him again." At the end of a staff meeting I said, "Did you ever hear anything from Guatemala?" He said, "Come on into my office." So I went into his office. He said, "You don't want to go to Guatemala." 'I said, "I don't?" "He said, "No. I want you to be my consul general in Guadalajara." I said, "What?" He said, "I want you to be my consul general in Guadalajara." I said, "You've got one there." He said, "You didn't hear me." I said, "Oh?" He said, "You give me the word and we'll work things out." He said, "I need somebody there. Kiki Camarena had been killed. I didn't like the way things were handled afterwards by the Mexicans or by our own people. I've known you for four years. You're my kind of guy. I want you there."

Q: This is a Republican? Former movie star.

RUBENSTEIN: That's right. So I said, "Let me talk to my wife. I'll get back to you." There were several things that concerned me. Guadalajara had a certain reputation for

some violent anti-Semitism in past years and I wanted to check this out. I thought if I am a public figure with the name Rubenstein and this is true, I didn't want to go through being a target again. So we contacted a rabbi in Mexico City that we had known. I contacted some university people. They all assured me that whatever happened happened in the 60s. Anti-semitism was not a concern anymore and that if I had this opportunity I should grab it because it's a wonderful, wonderful place. So I went back to the ambassador. Maybe he talked to me on a Friday and I went back on a Monday. I said, "Let's go." He said, "It would take some time because there was a guy there and they would have to play musical chairs." So my home leave was coming up. In effect they said, "Go on home leave. Leave a phone number where you are and we'll work it out." So the embassy, the admin people didn't know. They shipped our stuff back to Washington. In effect I was assigned to Washington, home leave, and then to AIA unassigned. Meanwhile they were working this out. So we took about a month's vacation. Right around Labor Day they said, "Okay. We got it worked out." They were shuffling people. This opened up. I got orders. I turned my stuff around and sent my stuff back to Guadalajara. About two weeks later we drove back and I think we got back at the end of September, October, whatever.

I spent four years as Principal Officer in one of the largest posts in the world. We got fully staffed after I was there a short time. We had forty-five Americans and about one hundred and twenty-five Mexicans working for us. We had I think eleven U.S. government agencies attached to that consulate. It was in effect a small embassy. We were doing everything you could think of except negotiating with a national government of course. It was a very broad gauged staff. I had everything from the Department of Agriculture to the Immigration Nationalization Service and I had Air Force people attached to me. I don't know what else.

Q: Did you have a country team or the equivalent thereof?

RUBENSTEIN: I had people come in for a weekly staff meeting, as many as wanted. Then I would have small meetings of key people periodically. Not a team as such.

Q: Subject matter discussions rather than broad---

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. Yes. And I believe in the collegial approach. I may have assigned something to one guy but I'd bring three or four others in to discuss it and be available to help whatever the project was. I've always believed in that kind of approach.

Q: By this time you are a minister counselor?

RUBENSTEIN: By this time I made minister counselor. I made counselor about a month after I arrived in Mexico. Then some months before I left Mexico City, I made minister counselor.

Q: This too is Gavin's work probably?

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. The first promotion came out of Israel.

Q: Yes. I'm talking about the second.

RUBENSTEIN: The second one. No. I'm trying to think who it was. I don't think Gavin wrote anything on the efficiency report. I think the DCM did. I was the highest---I was either the highest or second highest ranking officer in Mexico City my last year. I outranked the political counselor.

I should comment. This (out-ranking my supervisor) was true in Montevideo even when I was in mid-level and in one or two other places. I frequently outranked my supervisor. That was no problem for me and it was no problem for the supervisor. I should go back and say, you wanted to know early on in this discussion how I fit or how the labor officer fit into the whole picture? I think a labor officer fits into the picture if he or she is a decent human being who doesn't come in to teach everybody everything in the first five minutes. If they see you are serious and capable and pleasant enough, they accept you. I found no rejection in my entire career. I found people who were more sympathetic or less sympathetic to the kinds of work I did but I had no opposition, antagonism, bureaucratic nastiness over a thirty-three year period. I was more friendly with some people than others, but even if I wasn't friendly, there was not a problem. (End of Tape 2 Side 2)

Q: Ok. This is tape number three of Irwin Rubenstein's interview. Won't you proceed Irwin. You were finishing up on your career in Guadalajara.

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I wanted to make a point about Guadalajara and then generalize it over my career. I ran a consulate in Guadalajara covering six states of Mexico. There were about sixteen million people in that area. A very heavy business in visas and what we call tourist or non-immigrant visas. We were fifth in the world just to put it into perspective. When you come up through the labor ranks I want it very clearly known that you don't forget where you came from. You use your labor knowledge and your labor experience no matter what your job title is. I spent time with the regional labor movement in Guadalajara. On all my trips I visited with labor leaders around the six states that I covered. I broke a couple of young officers into the labor reporting field as part of their reporting duties in Guadalajara. I had these people to functions. I paid homage to them. I remember July Fourth one of the very big celebrations we had was the American community basically and some Mexican officials. We had three or four hundred people at an outdoor ceremony. The senator from the state of Jalisco, one of the two senators, was an elderly labor leader whom I had known over the years. He'd worked his way up and became a senator for the Prix party. I had him sit in the front row and I paid respects to him. He stood up and took a bow on July Fourth and three or four hundred Americans were applauding him. They probably never knew him but they knew him by reputation. You don't forget where you came from if you're worth your salt.

I mention this because over the years there's been a discussion---I don't know if it is a controversy---so a discussion over whether somebody should get in a labor job and stay in labor, working all of his life in Foreign Service. Or should he seek other kinds of jobs,

perhaps higher up the ladder in a broader field of responsibility. I am a strong believer in the latter approach. I think and have spoken about this rather outspokenly over the course of my career. It is a major plus and a major benefit to the labor movement, to labor interests and to the U.S. government if people with either a labor background or labor experience or labor exposure work their way up the governmental, bureaucratic structure ---the government ladder---and go on to be other things: whether they get to be political counselors, whether they get to be administrative officers, or consul general or deputy chiefs of mission or ambassadors. Those are all big pluses.

In virtually every embassy around the world we have just one labor guy. In many embassies we don't have any. We have one labor guy at best. He's fighting a lonely battle very frequently. He's on his own. He doesn't necessarily have enemies in the State Department, in the Foreign Service, or in the USIA or CIA but he has people who either have no interest in his position or what he's doing. They have no sympathy for labor, people who really don't care and are not very helpful and question why we are spending "taxpayer money" on things like labor. Well, if you have that one guy in an embassy and he happens to have a labor background as a DCM or a labor background guy as an ambassador, or as a political section chief or as something else, that's two people instead of one. It's two people, one of whom is in a very very important position. It really changes the whole equation, changes the attitude. I think as a principal officer in a consulate, or as either a DCM or ambassador in an embassy, you set a tone. The tone you set can include interest in and conceivably sympathy for the working class of the country to which you are assigned. I have seen this happen. I have done it. I have seen other people do it. I think it is very, very important.

People ask why should this happen? Well, labor is a specialty. If you can do your specialty well and maintain those concepts and move on to other things, that means you are pretty good and you're pretty helpful and you can spread the word farther and wider than you could if you stuck to just the labor field. I'm a strong supporter of that. Somebody used to talk about losing our labor guys when they move up. I don't think you are losing anybody. I think you are maintaining or gaining very important friendships at the higher levels of the Foreign Service.

Q: Thanks. I think that's a good comment. Anything on your post retirement. Well, you leave Guadalajara and you retire immediately?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I left Guadalajara and came back to Washington and eventually we ---We talked before about the personnel system and you asked about specific complaints and so forth. I have found---I'm going to answer your other question and this question all at the same time---I have found that each change of post, not everyone but almost every one, was a traumatic experience for me. I left several assignments without having an ongoing assignment, which is utterly ridiculous. The Department of State doesn't have funds for programs. It has funds for people. Its only resource is people, human beings. If it can't manage them properly then there is something basically wrong with the system. My experience over many years was, although I got positions, assignments, jobs I liked, that I was comfortable with, that I was able to perform professionally, and that gave me a

lot of professional and personal satisfaction, that I went through an agonizing period at the end of the old assignment and the beginning of that new one. There were periods when I didn't really do anything. There are many of my colleagues, past and present, who faced that situation. This is not labor I'm talking about. This is the personnel system of the Department of State. I had a visit last week of a senior officer with whom I worked in Washington who's down on vacation for a week or so and he basically is sitting around earning $111,800.00 not doing very much. He had a temporary assignment of three or four months before that. It was not make-work but not much better. He doesn't know what the future holds for him. He has, oh, four or five years before he has to retire. He says, "I'm making a lot of money. I enjoy being a Foreign Service officer. I don't plan to quit, but I wish to hell they'd give me something to do."

Well, I've been in that situation on occasion. Other people have also. That's the part that concerns me very much.

When I got back from Guadalajara, I was a minister counselor for seven years, six years, whatever. No. I'm sorry. Not that many. I was a minister counselor for about four years at that time. I came out of Guadalajara with a superior honor award, with a cash bonus for, I think, my third year there and a superior honor award for my fourth year, with all sorts of praise. I was really feeling great, almost thirty years experience in Foreign Service---a lot of it in Latin America. I had eight years straight in Mexico, which I think nobody had ever had in history. They didn't know what to do with me. They did not have an assignment for me. That happened before with me. It's happened with a lot of my colleagues and I think it's disgusting. I basically sat around and found things to do in the Office of Mexican Affairs. That was sort of my home base. They had talked to me very loosely about some kind of a border coordinator concept. They really didn't know what they were talking about because they really had not thought it out. One day I got called in by the Deputy Assistant Secretary covering Mexico and the Caribbean, and by the executive officer for the InterAmerican Affairs Bureau. They said they wanted to make a proposition to me. They wanted to create a new job and we discussed it. I could write the job description based on discussions and past history in that particular office. The job became the coordinator for U.S. Mexico border affairs. It turned out to be a great job, but I made it so. It didn't exist.

They said, "Let's create that job and let you fill it for a one-year basis. At the end of one year, you tell us it's a waste of time and you want out or we'll tell you it's a waste of time and you'll go out and we'll do something else. If it works out, however, let's fully fund it and make it a permanent position in this bureau."

I said, "Fine," on that basis. After about eight or nine months I came to the conclusion, and they agreed that it should be a permanent position. It was so created and I continued in it for the last three and a half years of my career.

I covered the Mexican border as the U.S. federal government's representative and as the State Department representative. I chaired an interagency committee of eleven agencies handling what we call bridges and border crossings. This is a very complex area. I

coordinated the efforts at an annual border governors' conference. This included the governors of states on the U.S. side of the border. The four U.S. states---New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and California---and the six Mexican states on their side, met as well at the annual meeting of the Border Mayors Conference. I spoke at these. I helped coordinate. I helped put it together. I was the federal representative with both the state representatives or the city representatives. I was the federal government's representative to the Border Trade Alliance which was the border business community in those states. I worked on something that didn't come into fruition but came close and will work out in the near future. This will be a Gulf States Conference. The U.S. Mexico Gulf States would go from Florida to Texas along the Gulf of Mexico and then from Camalitas down to the Yucatan on the Mexican side. That would be patterned after the Border States Governors Conference, but be a little broader in scope. I did a lot of very interesting things. I met an awful lot of people. I was very funny. I was a nobody bureaucrat in Washington and a really big shot. I was Washington's ambassador to the border, whether it would be Laredo, Texas or San Diego or Tijuana or whatever. It was very interesting. I traveled a lot. I made one trip a month anywhere from three days to about seven. I developed a whole crew of friends and colleagues along the border on both sides, and worked with a lot of agencies in Washington I had never worked with before.

As I said, I chaired an interagency meeting. I also chaired meetings twice a year. I chaired the U.S. delegation to the International Conference on Bridges and Border Crossings which sounds like nothing but has developed into a very big deal. There are about two hundred people per conference. I chaired the U.S. delegation which would include these eleven agencies plus a lot of other people. It was a unique job in the Foreign Service. There wasn't much like it; it was domestic politics: budgetary and construction and state politics and things like that, but I had fun. Labor, that is labor-related work where again my knowledge of negotiating and bargaining and bringing two sides together who are far apart came into play all day long and all week long and all month long.

So could I have done it without the labor experience? Sure, but it was so much easier and I was so much more effective with that experience. That experience made a major contribution to my overall career. I was in that job for three and half years. I retired on September 30, 1993. My colleagues in Mexican Affairs, AIA, gave me a very lovely farewell party. I had something like five ambassadors present. I was given the John Jacob Rogers Award in addition to several other departmental awards. I was active my last two years in the Senior Officer Association which is sort of an unofficial offshoot of AFSA, which is, in effect, a lobbying group. The interest group mandate was to look after the interests of senior officers. I was treasurer, but I ran it because it had died. I was the guy who brought it back to life. I went out and found a vice-president---a chairman I should say. I found a chairman and we kept it going and got some things accomplished. One of which is that the Department now runs---hosts---a serious retirement ceremony for those who have put their adult lives in service of our country. They had a beautiful one in mid-December presided over by Secretary Christopher. That was quite an accomplishment. The Association is working on some other issues. They are fighting one particular ridiculous political appointment as ambassador. So far they have been successful in the sense that he has not been voted in by the Senate. They lobbied and got

a 10-10 vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Normally these things slip through.

And they're working on a series of other issues---how to handle the senior officer glut and other issues affecting people who are near the end of their careers but shouldn't be given the bum's rush by the Department. So that's pretty much the end of my presentation if there are some questions.

Q: Oh, there are. Do you have any comments about the position of the labor attaché program within the Department? Should there be a deputy assistant secretary for labor affairs only or should it be when labor officers go out and get so many different assignments, especially when they are out in the field because of the shortage of funds for personnel? Should there be specific additions to their responsibilities so that the labor person may also include, as it does now, human rights, etc. Should there be a specific group of interests so they are not sent to assignments that are irrelevant to the whole human affairs part of the State Department's responsibility? Any comments on that?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I'll break a few more idols with this one, I guess. I've never been comfortable with the expression 'the labor attaché program'. I'm not sure in my thirty some years I ever saw such a program. I was once interviewed by somebody making a study of the labor function. I think 'function' is probably better description than 'program' but that's---

Q: Yes. Right.

RUBENSTEIN: ---that's haggling over words.

Q: Was that the Hank Cohen one?

RUBENSTEIN: No, a different one. I told the guy that I was going to say something I didn't think he would hear anywhere else. Maybe he did. I don't know. But let me give you a very brief version of what I said. Basically I said the labor function in the Foreign Service, unlike anything else in the Foreign Service, starts off depending upon who is in the White House. It depends on who is in the White House and what his relationship is to the American labor movement, and what the American labor movement is interested in, in terms of international affairs. If left to survive on our own, labor attaches and the labor function would barely survive in the Department of State.

It does not have many friends or many supporters. It doesn't have that many enemies. Some people think it has enemies. I didn't run across real enemies over the years. It lacks enthusiastic supporters. There is even a lack of unenthusiastic supporters. But if, as was the case quite some years ago, a determination is made at the highest levels of the government that it is in our interest to work with---

Q: It's in our governmental interest not specifically a labor---

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. The interest of our government, our country, is to work with what I would call the outs in many places or perhaps a labor movement oriented to a party that's in power but perhaps getting the short end of the stick. That has to be done with political support in the United States. The political support can't come from an assistant secretary of state or from a regional labor advisor in some bureau. It has to come from much higher. The word has to be given, politically: We, the United States, want to work actively or most aggressively, if you like, in the field of international labor. We'll define labor in a little bit, but without that kind of word getting out, without that kind of support an awful lot of people are just sort of filling in time doing the job. They write a report and so what? Nothing happens to it when it gets back to Washington.

Now you asked about definition. I don't think we have to be---I think maybe there ought to be some precision in this---but I don't think it's important what you include and what you don't include. If you decide you want to include our old concept of a youth program, a rural workers program, campesinos, women's affairs, human rights, fine. If you want to exclude some and have somebody else be the social attaché as we had a few places, fine. I think all of this should be covered by an embassy. The labor officer is the obvious place to begin. Can he do all that? Maybe. Maybe not. Maybe that ought to be assigned to the political section with the understanding that he'll be the lead officer and maybe there's always a junior officer rotating through. Maybe he'll get him on loan for a while to cover some specific aspect of that work. I mean I think a position can be developed with some guidelines from Washington. It can be developed at the post.

I think we've always done---we never called it that---but I think we've always done human rights reporting. Because we talked about the labor guys who got beat up and got put in jail and what is that if not human rights. We didn't talk about somebody standing up for racial or Indian rights or something like that because we really weren't covering it or, if we did, maybe it was more a political officer kind of thing. Labor officers have done social rights and human rights traditionally. We open people's eyes to things. I commented before when I was the labor officer in Israel. They asked me to do something on the Sephardic Jews who were the---not quite the downtrodden---but the lower levels of society in Israel. That was natural in a sense. It was exciting. I got into a lot of things and learned a lot of things and met a lot of people that I wouldn't have met otherwise.

I don't think the future of the labor function in the Department of State is very bright at this point. One reason is because we don't have the kind of political support I mentioned before. It's funny, I talk about political support. I came in at the tail end of the Eisenhower administration. I'm not sure Eisenhower knew what a labor union was. I would like to say I came in under Kennedy but I didn't. I was there when Kennedy came in. I'm not sure you're going to get that kind of political support. With the budget constantly decreasing and the Department looking for jobs to eliminate and people to ease out---not individuals but slots to ease out---and hoping that by attrition they would reduce their numbers. I think that it is kind of bleak. Kind of bleak.

Q: What do you think of as the legitimate function with respect to the international labor field of the labor department, the state department and any other department? What's

their line of demarcation? Do you feel there's some duplication there between State and Labor? Is there a logical differentiation of function?

RUBENSTEIN: Well, I worked for thirty some years for the Foreign Service of the United States. I was a State Department employee but it's not the Foreign Service of the State Department. It's the Foreign Service of the United States. So in theory at least we work for all those agencies back in Washington. When Ray Marshall was secretary of labor and I was in Israel, I set up a very, very active ministry to ministry program with the Israelis. Marshall came over and spent about a week over there. We did all sorts of things.

Q: By the way he praised that program. I interviewed him and he praised it quite considerably.

RUBENSTEIN: Ok. When I was in other countries and we had other secretaries of labor, either they had no interest or the country had no interest or it just didn't happen. So you have to get some kind of support from the people back home. The Labor Department, it seems to me in recent years, has been looking for places where they could get contracts, where they could get money to cover their expenses. I felt---I'm going to be very unpleasant now to an old Labor Department man---I felt very early on that the guys I worked with in the Labor Department by and large were more concerned with justifying their existence in the international field than anything else. And you are going to ask me for specifics and I can't give them to you.

Q: I'm not going to ask you for specifics.

RUBENSTEIN: This was a feeling I had that they were out of the mainstream. Now if you ask me what the mainstream is, there certainly wasn't any labor mainstream in the Department of State. Maybe out of the Foreign Service mainstream. I know they constantly used to argue about, "We want to get on the promotion panel. We want to be involved in assignments. We want to be involved in this and that." Sometimes they were and sometimes they weren't. But it was very difficult for them to become accepted in State and USIA. I don't know about the other places. The U.S. Treasury sort of barged its way in. It blasted its way in and Treasury attaches are very important people around the world these days.

Q: One of the deciding factors was the decision made by the Labor Department not to go the way of Treasury. Now commercial sections and science attachés have actual members of the staffs in those departments, like agriculture. There are advantages and disadvantages. These guys are on a separate budget. You don't have to worry about the budget. On the other hand, within the embassy, they don't have the status of a Foreign Service officer. In the labor field, after many investigations of the labor function, it was decided not to go that way. It was decided not to have the labor attachés on the staff of the Labor Department. Do you have any comments on that?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I think that would have been suicidal. As I commented before---

Q: But it's not in the case of Treasury, as you point out.

RUBENSTEIN: No. I commented before that you have to fit in. You can fit in at an embassy unless you are a jerk. I'm being short and blunt. I don't think I'm a jerk. I don't think most of my colleagues in the labor field are jerks. Most of them fit in and got along very, very well, whether they came from the labor movement, whether they came from the Department of Labor, whether they came from a university, or whether they were Foreign Service officers who got trained. The function fits in if you are the kind of guy or woman who fits in. Now if you had a series of people from another agency, one person per embassy, who had never served overseas, who didn't have any idea of how things functioned, whether they functioned well or poorly, whether they functioned right or wrong is unimportant. There is a structure; there is a pattern. I've seen other people come in and they'd say, "Christ, he's here for a year and he doesn't even know what this office does or what that office does." Maybe I'm talking about a political appointee or something. It doesn't matter; it's an outsider. I think if you had people out of the Labor Department as such, they would be looked upon as outsiders and would not have prospered.

Q: Roughly, we've gotten labor officers from four sources that you've just mentioned and this is on my list of questions---directly from the trade union movement, or indirectly from the trade union movement, directly or indirectly from the Labor Department, from academia and from the regular Foreign Service. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of those sources or does it depend entirely on the individual person rather than his background?

RUBENSTEIN: It depends very, very heavily on the person, extremely heavily. I wouldn't say one hundred percent but very, very high. Secondly, my thinking has been if a guy is any good in the labor movement---a young guy---I'm not talking about the fifty-five-year-old ex-regional vice president who lost in the election. Him they want to get rid of.

Q: We call him the broken-down business type.

RUBENSTEIN: Ok. I'm talking about the young guy. Maybe he's Hispanic and he knows Spanish. Maybe he's just American---a native born American who doesn't know any language but can be trained---but if he's young and he's capable and he's bright, the labor movement isn't going to let him go. They want him for their own purposes. The guys they would let go---I'm talking about a career basis. I'm not talking about a two-year loan. I think the two-year loans are virtually a waste. I think you need a longer term kind of arrangement. So if the auto workers or communications workers or the textile workers have these bright young people they are not going to let them go. They don't want to lose them. Now if somebody could convince them that that's an investment for them, and they would accept that, that's a different story. It's like before when I was talking about a good labor attaché who becomes a good political counselor and a good DCM and maybe even a good ambassador. That's an investment. Labor has got its friend working his way or her way up the ladder. I think that's constructive. It would be

constructive for the ILG or for the UAW to have friends in there too, but I'm sure they can't see it. They don't have that much good talent to let a half a dozen guys go.

Q: The other thing is the trade unions are now in a position where they have to, or they feel it is desirable and necessary to, pay their people well. I hope you weren't referring to me as broken down in this business of aging. When I came into government service, it was on the basis that the trade unions couldn't afford to pay me a competitive salary.

RUBENSTEIN: First I didn't know that so I wasn't referring to you. Second of all I wasn't referring to you. Third, I have seen when they did open it up in the '60s to some guys in the labor movement coming in. They were usually guys who had lost an election or something like that. Their international union wanted to ease them out very nicely and they found a cushy job. Let's send them off here for $45,000.00 or $50,000.00. It wasn't that they were incompetent. It was that they came in. It wasn't a career kind of thing for them. Many of them didn't know languages. This was true in some of the trade secretaries that pushed guys off into some of those jobs too. Some of them were very good and some of them weren't.

Q: That is the conclusion I have come to. Some of the people I've interviewed turned out well---not like the political appointees in the ambassador group. Some of them just are not well equipped. Now in the training program we had in the 60s, we required them to pass the Foreign Service exam. Unfortunately no one did and entered the Foreign Service. The ones that did were grabbed up by AIFLD and the other organizations. Roughly, I think this is a general response. It's wonderful to have a broad type of experience coming into this function, like the general Foreign Service. On the other hand, you have to meet certain standards.

RUBENSTEIN: By the way, I think I should mention something that's sort of a secret. I met guys in the Foreign Service, not many, but a few here and there, career Foreign Service officers, consular, economic, or whatever they are, who came to me and said, "You know, I carried the teamsters' card for twenty years. Or I've been this for fifteen years."

I say, "Why the hell don't you speak up." So there are guys like this, who combine the two, and we've never used them. I'm not so sure they should be made labor officers as such, but somehow their background ought to be able to be used.

Q: The person we were talking about before, who is an example of that is Brown. Bill, who had a wonderful background in the trade union family and the trade union interests and things like that and I wouldn't want to make him as a labor attaché. I knew him first as a junior officer but he was going up in Chinese and Japanese and all these things and it was great to have him around. He was a very good person, not in the labor cone, but performing in an important position. I'd like your comments on the fairness or unfairness with which you feel the labor officer has been treated. Is there any general feeling? I gather from what you've said, and please confirm if it's true, that it depends on the individual---that he makes his own way and if he does not---

RUBENSTEIN: Treated by, say the embassy or by the State Department?

Q: Treated by the Department and individual senior officers whom he may have to work for.

RUBENSTEIN: Ok. I don't think I was treated unfairly at any point by the Department of State, by the Foreign Service, or by any embassy in which I worked because I was a labor officer. As I said before, I thought the system was so incompetent that there were periods where I did not have an ongoing assignment and I was really wasted for months on end on a few occasions. The interesting thing is I talk to people. Nick Veliotes once told me he hit one of those periods where he didn't have anything to do for a few months. Charlie Hill who used to write speeches for Kissinger, and then when Kissinger went out he was without a job, so he hung around. They didn't know what to do with him. They eventually put him in personnel but he did nothing for months. He ended up as George Shultz's executive assistant, his right-hand man. He went out to Stanford. When Shultz retired, he helped him write his book and so forth. It's not only turkeys. It's good people who run into these periods.

I once went to see Ambassador Bob Sayre, talking about---you know---my grade. I've been whatever I was, a four or a three for so many years. I can't seem to get a promotion. What's going on?" He said two things. He said, "One, I got hit for like eight years in a row at one grade or another so that sort of happens to everybody. Hang in there and it'll work. Two, I'm new here." He had been in town for about two months. He said, "I know from the DCM how you performed this year. You'll perform the same way next year and I'll be sure. I'll write the review statement. I'll be sure you get a promotion," which I did. Not only because of his---but I'm saying we all hit doldrums. It's not prejudice. It's not aimed at somebody and so forth.

I'm going to tell you some negative things. I was hurt on a few occasions by our own labor bureaucracy in my career. I was coming out of Mexico City. Well, I'll tell you two stories. One was many years ago. Labor attaché in Spain opened up. I was dying to get to Europe. I had been in Latin America for fifteen years or so.

Q: Excuse me. Go ahead, but speak a little louder because the red light started going off.

RUBENSTEIN: I had been in Latin America working for quite a while. I was bilingual. I had experience. I was a mid-level officer. Labor attaché in Madrid opened up. I was dying to get to Europe. I had paid my dues I felt in the Bolivias' and Hondurases' of this world. I applied for the job in Madrid. I learned there were eighteen applicants. It eventually narrowed to two. Another guy and me. The other guy got the job. He was an old school cold warrior. Whether he got it for that reason or not I don't know. He went to Spain at a time when Franco was falling. The whole thing was really a historic period where I felt I really could have made a contribution. I got juiced out of it by my own colleagues. This wasn't the State Department assignment system. This was either the Department of Labor who supports people or the SIO position who supports people. It

was in one of the---

Q: Was that the trade union movement?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I don't think so.

Q: Because I'm coming to the trade union movement.

RUBENSTEIN: No. I don't think they were players at that time in this assignment. Another one was when I was coming out of Mexico City. I went to Mexico for three years. And I eventually extended for a fourth year because at the end of three I was hoping to go to London. I was one of the two or three top ranking labor officers in the world. Again, I had paid my dues. I not only had small countries in Latin America but I also had Israel and I had Mexico City now. The guy was leaving London---Roger Schraeder was leaving there. I applied. I was in touch with Tony Freeman and some of the other guys involved and the Labor Department. I think I wrote to the ambassador. I did the things you do. They started talking to me about other people. "Well you know Jim Shea. He's been around a long time too. And so and so." I said, "Let's talk sense here. Who's the most qualified guy to get that job?" "Well, you were out of the labor cone once." I said, "I've had five labor assignments." The conversation got rather unpleasant. I did not like it. What happened in the end was that Ernie Nodge, who had been at Heidelberg as political advisor to the military or something, flew over to Europe. There was a guy named, I think, Price who was a candy manufacturer that Reagan had sent and he went over and told him all about his---Ernie told him all about his experience with the military and at that time they were concerned that the Labor Party was going to vote for nuclear unilateral disarmament and so forth. So he said, "Yes. You are the man I want for labor officer because you understand the military." So he took the job out from under my nose and under somebody else's nose and under whoever's nose they were looked at. (Inaudible) retired about a year later.

Q: This was however Great Britain, not Spain.

RUBENSTEIN: No. I'm talking about London now. I wanted to go to London in '84 when the job became available. I felt I was highly, highly qualified for it. I got no support out of SIL, out of the Labor Department or out of anybody else.

Q: Well, let's talk about the trade union movement. Were you ever involved in any assignment or substantive issue in which the internal differences among trade union international experts had an impact? The Ruther group versus---

RUBENSTEIN: My assignments kind of thing?

Q: Assignments or in connection with your work or anything like that.

RUBENSTEIN: No. The only thing I told you before was about McClellan. In one case he pushed me for an ambassadorship. In one case he fought me for a labor assignment.

Q: But in connection with your work at a post?

RUBENSTEIN: No.

Q: You were never involved in any of that. You didn't have a background in either of the groups---the Ruther or the (inaudible)?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I dealt with all groups basically equally. I don't mean to be cute when I say that. I mean if we had a visiting labor dignitary and he was from an old CIO group, fine. If he was from an AFL group, fine. I didn't distinguish. No reason to.

Q: What about the impact of issues? Like the Cold War? You were never in Europe so it didn't hit you that hard. Any comments on that?

RUBENSTEIN: Yes. I didn't feel we had to preach anti-communism as much as we had to preach democratic trade unionism. That's what I tried to do. In some Latin American countries that helped me a great deal. I think the Latin American labor movements, many of whom were left wing, left wing within acceptable frameworks, got tired of anti-communism and they didn't get much of it out of me. My attitude was: if you build a strong democratic trade movement, you've eliminated the threat of communism. That's what I pushed.

Q: Then you were not affected by the concentration on the part of the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO in terms of we not only have to sell democracy but we have to educate them about the evils of communism.

RUBENSTEIN: I don't think anyone every told me the---

Q: You know in Europe, that was a free---

RUBENSTEIN: I met Irving Brown only in the mid 80s when ORET had a conference in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Lane Kirkland came down. Bill Dougherty and Brown came along. I went out. We all stayed at the same hotel. We had a big winner one night---you know eight or ten friends---Paul Simoge, Afield, a couple others. We had a dinner, the kind of dinner you have with old friends where you talk after dinner and you have a cigar and you go on for three or four hours. That's the only time I've ever seen Irving Brown in my life.

Q: That's interesting. What about McCarthyism as an issue? Did it ever affect you personally?

RUBENSTEIN: No. I got in at the tail end of the Eisenhower administration. It was pretty much a dead issue at the time.

Q: Boy, were you lucky.

A couple of other things. What sort of training do you think that a labor attaché has? Some have better backgrounds in economics, trade unionism, general political labor affairs. Others have none of that training. What's the ideal type of training? Should it be fitted to the individual after a conversation in which you get an idea of his background or is there a standard thing---standard list---of subjects like we have in the labor training program? Frankly having been in charge of it for a long time, I don't think it's suited, adapted, or been adapted as well to the individual's blanks and the guy's experience.

RUBENSTEIN: I don't have an easy answer for you.

Q: You never had any labor training?

RUBENSTEIN: Well, yes I did. But not---

Q: But not in a course.

RUBENSTEIN: That's what I'm leading up to. We taught some labor history when I worked for the Pulp Sulfide Paper Mill Workers. I went over and gave a couple lectures, and I'm talking about maybe four times or three times in Saint Johns. I had to beef that course up so I started reading some more books. I outlined it. I don't write text. I write outlines and I speak from outlines. I think the knowledge of labor history is very important. How much detail you can decide, but a basic knowledge is important. I think the role of labor in politics is very important---nationally, regionally, locally, and internationally. I think most important is, I've used the word before, sympathy or empathy or a feeling. If you really don't care for the working man, you are wasting your time and anybody who is training you is wasting their time. Because sure you can go in with an icy cold mind and look at the situation and analyze it. You might do a brilliant analysis but there's more to life than that. So I think you have to find that kind of person who either has or who can develop a concern for---I don't like to use the expression---the downtrodden. They may be working men and women if they have steady jobs, are what you call lower middle class and, if they are lucky, they are middle class. You have to appreciate the concerns of those people. I think without that it's awfully hard. And how do you teach that? I don't know.

I would like to make a couple comments which are not in direct response to your questions but I have been looking for a way to fill them in. I have been in international work---well, international work for the government let's say. I said before some thirty plus years. A lot of the people in the Labor Department were interested in all sorts of very fine detailed work about legislation and labor law in the country whereas I tend to give it the broad brush approach. Good or bad, I do. They would want to know about who signed what agreement for how much of a wage increase and what the fringe benefits were and so forth. I'm the renegade I think in a sense. Almost from the beginning I looked at myself as a political officer with a labor specialty. So I was interested in the politics of labor in country X. Now I didn't close my mind to the economics of it or the social aspects of it but I looked at labor as a political institution more than I looked at

anything else. My reporting, if you ever went back and traced it, was the role of labor in the body politic of this country. What influence does it have? How are its people affected by the politics?

I was talking about the politics of labor which I think is very important. I think that particularly in underdeveloped countries---and that's where I've worked much of my life ---labor movements were by and large ignored. Maybe attention was paid to them on election day. Peron, SOB that he was, showed that you could parlay a labor movement, in effect taking over a country. I think there was a lesson to be learned there, but I'm not sure who learned it or how or why. Of course some of the African leaders did that too, right after independence. It's funny that a place like Costa Rica is a leading democracy if you want to say in Latin America, and maybe in the world in the sense that it's been a democracy for so long. It's never had a real important labor movement in its country. It had little bits and pieces. There are some other instances like that. Some of this doesn't come to mind right away but there are situations like that.

I have been interested in the politics of the labor movement. In Israel I was concerned because you have a national movement in a national party. You need to understand the effect of the Histadrut's annual wage demands on the economy. Negotiations were held on a national basis for a million and a half people so that's important. But putting that aside, because I covered that thoroughly, the rest of the importance of the Histadrut is its role in the body politics, I felt. When I got there, I saw that my predecessor had written something like a forty-six or fifty-six page annual labor report. My reaction was, "With all due respect, nobody is going to read it."

I think I wrote eighteen pages the next year and cut it down to twelve. I remember one year I did about seven and somebody said, "Is that all you are going to do?" I said, "If you need any more tell me what you want. I think I've given you everything you need." They said, "No." The idea of filling it with all sorts of things just to fill in space, I never went for.

Q: Were you ever criticized for leaving things out?

RUBENSTEIN: No. No. As I said, the guy asked me one time, "Why did you do such a short one?" I said, "Because I think I covered what had to be covered in an annual report. If you want more let me know," and they dropped it. They dropped it.

Q: Anything else you would like to say for posterity Irwin? I appreciate very much the hours you've spent on this. Any suggestions for our project further, such as where we can get some money to transcribe all these?

RUBENSTEIN: Maybe Rick Ames has some extra money floating around. I would just say don't ever tell Murray Wise you are going to finish in two hours because I think it's about five now. My throat is getting sore, but I do thank you for the opportunity.

Q: Yes. But you don't think---I hope you don't think any of it was wasted? I think in terms

of what we're trying to do---

RUBENSTEIN: That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying I thank you very much for the opportunity.

Q: Thank you. Thanks a whole lot.

End of interview