The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Labor Series

DAVID BROMBART

Interviewer: Don Kienzle
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is Thursday, February 12, 1998. My name is Don Kienzle and I am in the office of David Brombart at the Institute for International Studies. David, thank you very much for agreeing to an interview for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. Can we begin with your personal background, where you were born, where you were educated, and whether your family was active in the trade union movement?

BROMBART: Indeed. I was born in Brussels in 1933 in what is referred to commonly as a bourgeois Jewish family. My father immigrated to Belgium after the First World War. His first job was in the coal mines in Liege and since then he was always proud of his union card. He had no previous trade union background although he was quite involved with the Jewish Labor Bund. For many years, he was a leather craftsman working 12 hours a day and 7 days a week. In the early 1930s, he became a successful business person in that industry.

Q: Where did he immigrate from?

BROMBART: He immigrated from Poland, as did my mother. Both came to Belgium when they were young, my father as a young adult and my mother as a child.

Q: And your education?

BROMBART: My education is quite a story because I began my elementary schooling in Brussels in September 1940. Five months after, the Nazis invaded Belgium. I didn't return to school until November of 1944, because, of course, we Jews were not able to attend schools as early as mid-1941. My mother and my sister were deported to Germany. My father escaped. He was the only one who escaped from the transit camp in Belgium. I was lucky to have been hidden by various families in Belgium. After my primary education, I went to high school. Much later I went to the Institute of Social Studies, which was the Socialist Party's training center for the entire labor movement, the political party, the trade union movement, the cooperative movement, which was strong at that time, and the health services.

Q: So you were really schooled by the Socialist Party?

BROMBART: Yes, indeed. That is where I became fully involved in the Socialist Party. It was already a time of great convulsion with the Korean War and the Soviet threat. All of us in that school became active in one of the branches of the labor movement. In addition I was a leader in what was called the Young Socialist Guards.

Q: The youth movement of the party. What year was that approximately? Was it in the early 1950s?

BROMBART: Yes, this was in the early 1950s and I was, let us say, an activist. It was only after my compulsory military service in the Air Force as an education officer that I was recruited in 1954 to work full-time for the Belgium Socialist Party Youth Section.

Q: So you became a full-time official of the party in 1954. Was that a boarding school that you attended then?

BROMBART: It was a boarding school, but not for me as I was living at that time in Brussels.

Q: What were your duties in the youth movement?

BROMBART: It was a classic educational youth organization, which tried to include as many children and teenagers as possible from workers' families, members of the Socialist Party, and from union members. We had weekend outings, regional and national youth camps, even international ones. One unique facet of our organization was that we were the only youth movement at that time which was coeducational.

Q: Oh, really.

BROMBART: There were girls and boys. All activities were run together except, of course, in the youth camps, where we had a young boys' and a young girls' sleeping section.

Q: Separate dormitories?

BROMBART: Exactly. The context of political life at that time in Belgium was we had to face opposition and competition from the youth wing of the Catholic Party, which is now called, like in Germany, the Christian Democratic Party.

Q: In effect the conservative party.

BROMBART: At that time, there was an intense struggle between the respective youth movements, leading many times to bloody confrontation.

Q: Which party had a majority at the time?

BROMBART: Before World War II, the Catholic Party. After the liberation, Belgium was governed by a coalition, either with the Socialists or with the Liberals. The Liberals were actually a center-right party.

Q: Well, as a non-expert on Belgium, I always think of the ethnic divisions in Belgium when I think of Belgium politics, the Flemish and the French. Was the Socialist Party integrated between the two ethnic communities?

BROMBART: At that time, yes. But in the 1960s, it evolved into two regions, one for the Flemish section of the country, and one for the Francophone section of the party. One region, Brussels, still doesn't know where it belongs.

Q: So, there are in effect three sections?

BROMBART: There are four. The fourth one is the 250,000 German Belgians, who are recognized as an entity with their own language. It's a part of Belgium that shifted from Belgium to Germany and Germany to Belgium during the First World War and the Second World War.

Q: Did you grow up bilingual, in effect?

BROMBART: No. At that time in Belgium, learning a second language was compulsory. Back then I studied Flemish, but I cannot say that I was fluent in Flemish, because of the way the language was taught at that time. I think today with new methods, audio-visual methods and so on, a young student can acquire another language more easily than at that time.

Q: Were there many students in the Socialist educational system at that time?

BROMBART: Oh, yes. Because of the system, which still exists today, the parties are recognized in Belgium to run their own health services. The unions are also recognized to run the unemployment benefits service. Therefore, a worker in Belgium, even today, must choose whether he wants to be covered under the Socialist system, under the Christian Democratic system, or under the Liberal health system. The two primary ones are, naturally, the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party. When I talk about the Socialist Party, the terminology must be well understood that it has nothing to do with the Communist ideology.

Q: My real question was whether the Socialist Party was running in effect a high school program?

BROMBART: No. If you are talking strictly about education, there is another dimension. There are two educational systems in Belgium, the public and the private. The private system is run by the Catholic Church. Both are open to anyone. Both are under the educational authority of the Ministry of Education.

Q: So, you attended a public high school?

BROMBART: I attended a public high school and then later attended the Institute of Social Studies, which was run by the Socialist Party.

Q: I see. This would have been at the university level?

BROMBART: Yes, but delivering only bachelor's degrees.

Q: The equivalent of the state exam system in some European countries?

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: Do you want to describe the work that you did for the party in the youth department?

BROMBART: As I mentioned, it involved organizing new chapters around the country to make sure that young people were aware of Social Democratic values. The Catholic Church was in a predominant position at that time but the Socialist Party had its own "ten commandments."

Q: Oh, is that right.

BROMBART: The first one was that we are proud to be children of working families. The second one was we will not drink alcohol, and so on and so forth. It was a moral equivalent to the teachings of the Ten Commandments.

Q: I see.

BROMBART: The competition for membership and for support of the citizens toward the Belgian Socialist Party was intense. The Socialist Party is still up around 35 percent, but it was higher in the late 1950s but never a majority. Still Belgium is a Catholic country, although other religions are recognized. There is no separation of state and church in Belgium even today. Most of our members were baptized Catholics but belonged to the Socialist Party. In the Socialist youth, we had to invent events to attract or keep our members. This is why, instead of the Catholic communion, we had the "Red Communion."

Q: The Red Communion! What is the Red Communion?

BROMBART: `It was an acknowledgment when youths became young persons. We gave them the same gifts that the Catholic Church gave to children when they had their first communion including parties and celebrations. It was quite similar. They gave a watch. So we gave a watch to keep them in our mist. It was a period of anti-Catholicism for many reasons. I'm glad to say that the country has evolved.

Q: Were there some who got two watches?

BROMBART: Absolutely. Why not? Sure.

Q: How long were you active with the youth?

BROMBART: I began as a full-time staff employee in 1954, after I left the military

service. Then, I was elected in 1955, one year later, to be the National Secretary of the educational youth movement and also leader of the Young Socialist Guard. That is another story, because that group was under Trotskyite influence until 1958. It was during that period of time that I got more responsibilities from the party and supervised the party's travel office for young people and students.

Q: This was student exchange with foreign countries?

BROMBART: Yes. Youth camps, summer and winter vacations in France and Austria and so on. I was given my first international responsibility from the party in 1954. My first trip abroad was to study the functioning of the ILO.

Q: Oh, really. This was to Geneva?

BROMBART: It was organized by the ILO for the leaders of the international youth movement, who at that time, of course, came mostly from Western Europe.

Q: Was that a full year program?

BROMBART: No, it was a three-week seminar. Two years later, I attended the General Assembly of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) in Berlin as a member of Belgium delegation, and as a member of the National Youth Council in Belgium, which is the supreme body coupling all the organizations in the youth field irrespective of political and cultural tendencies.

Q: Was that in East Berlin or West Berlin?

BROMBART: It was in West Berlin.

Q: Can we go back to the issue of the Trotskyites? What was your relation with them?

BROMBART: In the Socialist Party in Belgium, like in many other countries, there was an active radical left. It expressed itself outside the regular framework of the party, but was very active in labor movement's youth groups. One was very close to the World Peace Council, which we learned later was a Communist front. Another was a pacifist group refusing to serve in the military. Those were all fringe groups around the party. The official youth group at that time was called the Young Socialist Guard, but the leaders I discovered later were in fact Trotskyites.

Q: They rejected revisionism?

BROMBART: Right. To follow up on that, they turned totally against some of the basic democratic and social policies of the party and were dissolved and therefore not recognized anymore as a genuine organization of the Socialist Party.

Q: So the Central Committee of the Belgium Socialist Party in effect dissolved the Young Socialist Guard?

BROMBART: Yes, I was asked to choose at that time between them and the party. With the president and a few others, we left that organization and became more docile.

Q: Were you an officer at that time of the Young Socialist Guard?

BROMBART: Yes, I was an elected Secretary of the Brussels region.

Q: It must have been a very exciting time for you.

BROMBART: It was.

Q: With lots of heated debates going on in the streets?

BROMBART: Yes, because of the fights we were involved in. At that time, the Young Socialist Guard was against the first referendum for the European Common Market and the Defense Treaty. The party was in favor of them. My youth organization from the party was in favor of them, but the other was opposed. There were so many issues. I mentioned already Korea. There was also the Communist Party's activities in the "peace" movements. It is to be noted that after the Second World War, the leadership of the Socialist Party and the unions expelled all the Communist elements, even the ones who fought against the Germans in the resistance.

Q: Is that right?

BROMBART: This is why in Belgium since the liberation in 1944, you do not have a Communist trade union organization. The Communist Party simply did not exist anymore. Therefore, if you compare the Belgium Socialist Party policy with the ones in France or Italy, it is totally different. We had the leadership and we had the vision that the Communists were not democrats, and they were simply expelled.

Q: I had the impression that, at least in France and Italy, those former resistance fighters, even if they had been Communists, were always allowed to continue their activities.

BROMBART: Yes, and they are paying the price for it.

Q: It gave them a certain legitimacy with the public.

BROMBART: It gave them legitimacy and it created a situation where both in France and in Italy, they lived through a succession of governments during the 1950s and 1960s. It is only now that the Italian Communist Party has tried to disguise itself with another name.

In France, the Communist Party proclaimed that it is more French than anybody else. Those are the particularities of politics in Western Europe during that time.

Q: From the youth job, where did you go from there?

BROMBART: I was offered to be a candidate for the post of Labor Secretary of the World Assembly of Youth. I was elected to that position in a meeting in Rome, and I joined the Secretariat in Paris as Labor Secretary in late 1958.

Q: So, this was the first time that you had lived abroad?

BROMBART: Absolutely.

Q: The others had been short term seminars?

BROMBART: Yes, seminars, conferences, and visits. To make this clear, the Socialist Youth Movement was a member of the Belgium National Youth Council, a grouping of all of these organizations. The National Youth Council was a member of the World Assembly of Youth as one of the organizations created to oppose the propaganda and political campaigns of Soviet front organizations. The main objective was to gain and to attract non-Communist youth organizations belonging to the World Federation of Democratic Youth and to establish contact with the liberation movements, youth organizations, nationalistic movements, etc.

Q: The liberation movements being in Africa?

BROMBART: And Latin America and Asia. I was actually the first labor secretary of that organization and the first full-time staff member from the Socialist Movement. I won't go into all the details, but at that time an international youth organization existed which predated the Second World War, the International Union of Socialist Youth. You also had the International Young Christian Workers. You had the Radical Liberals, but in 1958 and 1959, they were all not yet convinced for political reasons that their affiliates should be members of the World Assembly of Youth. In 1967 it became known that the World Assembly of Youth was established by the Government of the United Kingdom in 1949 and in 1952 received most of its funds from the United States. The old saga of the United States helping Europeans and others to establish their own organizations to oppose the Communist fronts was, I think, one of the major successes in the Cold War. The danger was real at that time and the Communists were progressively succeeding in capturing the spirit of the young people and the student organizations in Western Europe.

Q: So, your group was not connected with a single party? It wasn't part of the Socialist International or . . .

BROMBART: No. As I mentioned, the World Assembly of Youth was the international expression of national youth councils, which had in their midst most youth and student

organizations.

Q: It contained all the non-Communist groups?

BROMBART: Yes. The policy vis a vis international youth was patterned exactly after the one in the trade union movement. It had the same history. This is why the ICFTU was established in 1949. It was no accident that the World Assembly of Youth was also established in London in 1949. It was the same reaction to the danger of a Communist takeover.

Q: How long were you Labor Secretary?

BROMBART: From 1958 to 1964.

Q: *If I recall correctly, that would have been during the period of the Vienna Youth Festival in 1959?*

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: I attended it as a heckler.

BROMBART: Prior to the Festival, I remember meeting with Prime Minister Kautsky to dissuade him from holding such a festival for the first time in a non-Communist country. His reaction was from someone who wished to protect the so-called neutrality of Austria. But it meant also that anti-festival activities took place as well, and the World Assembly of Youth was, of course, involved in those kinds of operations.

Q: I had the impression that the Austrians presented the festival at that time as something they had more or less agreed to at the time of the Soviet withdrawal?

BROMBART: I don't know. That was sometime later. It was part of the beginning of an German Ostpolitik (Eastern Policy) involving areas of contact.

Q: It was Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik.

BROMBART: It was part of a policy which can be characterized today as a foolish one, but it had some facets which were interesting in terms of having a lot of politicians and others going to the East and learning more about the conditions existing in the Soviet Union and in the satellites, which were, of course, conditions which lead to their downfall.

Q: I would make a case--not that I should be making a case on this tape--that a lot of Westerners who went East were turned off in a big hurry.

BROMBART: Sure. When I was a youth leader, we were supposed to go to the Soviet

Union and to send delegations also to China. I think I was one of the very few who refused to go. Until today, I have never been to a Communist country. I refused to go to Spain and Portugal until there were some changes. Speaking of Spain and Portugal, this was one of the political differences that the Socialist youth had with our party, because we were saying, "Why don't you boycott Franco or Salazar?" They never did it. It was the hypocrisy of the Europeans at that time.

Q: Did you have any feeling that the United States was manipulating the policy of these organizations? Or was it just that funding was being received and people were doing what they would otherwise do anyway?

BROMBART: As a staff member active in the international youth field, I became aware of the U.S. Government assisting a great number of international organizations financially. Only in 1967, three years after coming to the United States, I learned through the media that entire covert operations had been run for decades by the CIA, an agency of the U.S. Government.

Q: 1967 in that famous article of what was . . .

BROMBART: Ramparts Magazine.

Q: Ramparts.

BROMBART: But as a student of that period of time, I recognize that there was no other alternative. A definite strategy was used to have non-Americans elected to the top positions. The American staff was to make sure that policies [intended] to engage the non-communist left and the nonaligned were adhered to.

Q: And people were committed to that policy and where the funding came from was irrelevant?

BROMBART: There were some rumors all the time about the European Youth Campaign and all that, but really we were not in the position to argue. We didn't know the facts. Why I didn't question it is because as a leader of the Socialist youth, it took me one or two years to discover that actually my salary was not paid by the Socialist Party. It was paid by the Ministry of Education, which had a budget for helping all youth organizations. I also realized that salaries in the World Assembly of Youth were not covered by genuine foundations but by a foundation in New York serving as a conduit for the CIA.

Q: Any conclusions you want to draw for the record?

BROMBART: The prime consideration was to win the Cold War. Immediately after I joined the World Assembly of Youth in 1958 and because of my function in the labor field, I monitored not only the working of the ILO, but also of the ICFTU, WCL, and

WFTU. In the early 1960s, I began to cooperate with Irving Brown on various labor issues of common interest and including the tensions between the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU. In 1963, Brown mentioned the AFL-CIO's intension to establish a center dealing with Africa based on the experience of the American Institute for Free Labor Development. He asked me to join him in New York in November 1964 and my wife Henriette, my three years old son Eric and three months daughter Sara moved a month later into an apartment made available at one of the ILGWU cooperative buildings in Manhattan. The African American Labor Center (AALC) was established at the end of that year.

Q: I see. So, you weren't working at the ICFTU? You were still working out of Paris?

BROMBART: I was then working for the World Assembly of Youth in Brussels after moving from Paris in 1959, the World Assembly of Youth having been expelled from France by General de Gaulle.

Q: Was this roughly about the same time that the NATO headquarters moved?

BROMBART: No, NATO moved later, I think.

Q: So de Gaulle expelled you?

BROMBART: Yes, he expelled the World Assembly Youth because of our involvement in the Algerian independence movement. This was based on a precedent as France had expelled the World Federation of Democratic Youth in the1950s.

Q: So this in effect was providing parity?

BROMBART: Sure.

Q: So from 1959 to 1964, you worked in Brussels?

BROMBART: And from November 1964 in New York. Irving decided also that I would be responsible for AFL-CIO contacts at the United Nations, which I did for 10 years.

Q: Was that an ICFTU position or an AFL-CIO position?

BROMBART: It was an assignment of the AFL-CIO Committee for the United Nations in addition to my duties as Assistant to Irving at the African-American Labor Center (AALC).

Q: So, you really had two hats at this time, both the UN hat and the AALC hat?

BROMBART: AALC was the main working place. The UN mandate was as an NGO representative to the United Nations for the AFL-CIO. This is why Irving wanted the

African-American Labor Center (AALC) to be located in New York because, as he said, without contact with the people making policies at the UN, our work would be limited.

Q: When was the AALC formed?

BROMBART: In December 1964.

Q: It stayed in New York until?

BROMBART: Until 1979. At that time, I decided not to move from New York to Washington. The move to Washington was to bring the AALC closer to the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO.

Q: The AFL-CIO withdrew from the ICFTU in 1969. Do you want to describe your work from December 1964 until the withdrawal? What were the main activities?

BROMBART: The establishment of the AFL-CIO regional institutes was the first sign of the AFL-CIO's dissatisfaction with the international labor movement and the ICFTU. We began to present the case of non-cooperation with Communist trade union organizations. We wanted more activities of the ICFTU to be in the non-aligned countries, not like they still do today, just issuing resolutions after resolutions. We wanted concrete action establishing infrastructures, building labor centers, training schools, and cooperatives, organizing new categories of workers, and making sure that they were able to be involved in collective bargaining. During that period, we also discovered--when I say "we," I mean the AFL-CIO--that the funds which were transferred to Brussels by the AFL-CIO for the purpose of trade union activities overseas under the ICFTU Solidarity Fund were not being used. As a matter of fact, these funds were used by the leadership of the ICFTU to establish a reserve pension fund.

Q: That must have sent a few people up the wall.

BROMBART: Especially George Meany.

Q: George Meany, yes.

BROMBART: Then came the extraordinary period when the ICFTU leadership attempted to affiliate the United Automobile Workers (UAW) to the ICFTU. For George Meany, this was the last straw.

Q: This would have been Walter and Victor Reuther acting primarily for the UAW?

BROMBART: Yes, it was the Reuthers. There had always been a confrontation between the leaders. In addition to funding issues and political issues, there was an obvious interference of the ICFTU into the internal affairs of the labor movement in the United States and the attempt to offer the UAW a direct membership in the ICFTU, which was

against its own constitution. On top of that, the police in Brussels discovered that some fraudulent activities had taken place in the ICFTU. They discovered through an audit more fraud and it led to the arrest of the chief of finance and personnel, who was sent to jail for a couple of years. He then committed suicide. Those events led the AFL-CIO to leave the ICFTU in 1969.

Q: Who was head of the ICFTU at that time?

BROMBART: Kersten.

Q: The German trade unionist?

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: Did George Meany make any effort to patch things up with Kersten?

BROMBART: Yes, there was a lot of correspondence between the ICFTU and the AFL-CIO and several meetings. Efforts were made to try to arrive at a compromise on these issues. The AFL-CIO got support for its position from Force Ouvriere (in France) and the Histadrut (in Israel). At that time, the AFL-CIO was totally isolated from other affiliates, which in the end were all the Western European unions. Another issue was that Meany was against the establishment of a European trade union structure autonomous from the ICFTU.

Q: Like the ETUC?

BROMBART: Yes, like the ETUC, because it also led progressively to the affiliation of Communist trade unions and WCL organizations.

Q: I see. And to provide an alternative to the ICFTU structure?

BROMBART: Yes. In their view, the ICFTU was too restricted and Meany was opposed to a mini-United Nations.

Q: Was this part of the Ostpolitik of the time to have greater contact with the Eastern Europeans?

BROMBART: Yes, that was an additional issue, namely the dominance of the Germans, Italians, Scandinavians, and the British. There is a long history of antagonism between these unions and the AFL and later the AFL-CIO, where many labeled the ICFTU as an organization controlled by the AFL-CIO. I wish it was, but it was not. Certainly, the Americans were influential in establishing and financing the ICFTU. We were helpful in Italy, France, Germany, and Greece. We established free labor movements.

Q: At what point would you say they were autonomous and no longer influenced very

much by the AFL-CIO?

BROMBART: I think it began in the 1950s. You saw a different approach to economic development, a different approach to relations with the non-aligned movement, a different approach toward the Communist unions and on European defense initiatives as well as on issues related to NATO.

Q: You mentioned that the formation of the AALC was the first step in this process?

BROMBART: Second step. First, was the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD).

Q: Was the AFL-CIO unhappy with ICFTU policy in Latin America through ORIT at that point?

BROMBART: In Latin America, it was different. First of all, the American Institute for Free Labor Development was established by the AFL-CIO as part of a new program of President Kennedy, the Alliance for Progress. The concept was that labor could contribute to it and develop social programs, training centers, and low-cost housing. It became politicized at a later stage, because of the tension we faced in Latin America and Central America. Problems that the AFL-CIO had at that time in Latin America were not so-much with ORIT but with CLAT, the Latin American Confederation of Labor which was the regional organization of the World Confederation of Labor. CLAT still exists today. We can talk later, if you wish, about training in the international labor field, but in Latin America CLAT was really a radical Socialist organization and it was antagonistic to the AFL-CIO.

Q: Well, I guess we covered the period from 1965 to 1969 until the break of the AFL-CIO with the ICFTU. How did policy shift after the AFL-CIO's withdrawal?

BROMBART: After the withdrawal, the AFL-CIO was able to increase our internationalism and obtain more funds from USAID because it's no secret that their labor portfolio was part of a strategy of the U.S. Department of State under guidance and directives, I presume, from the National Security Council. The policy at that time was to develop democratic, non-Communist organizations around the world and in the field of trade unions. This was not a creation of the United States because the German DGB (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund) was already doing it for years.

Q: The Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

BROMBART: Yes, not only them. I talked about the structure of the labor movement being divided into the four branches in Belgium. In Germany all of the political parties and unions are receiving funds from the Ministry of Economic Affairs to develop their own program overseas. Then the system was developed here and it continued with the establishment of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), and the European

Free Institute, which has its own history. When we say AFL-CIO, we are not talking about the traditional activity of the AFL-CIO. We are not even talking about the activity of its international department. We are talking about instruments put in place and run totally under AFL-CIO supervision. The institutes were established in order to develop parallel activities on a bilateral level along with activities at the international level.

Q: Multilateral through the ICFTU?

BROMBART: Yes. The ICFTU structure, like the UN agencies, was established after the Second World War to promote the concept based on a democratic civil society and the rule of law. It represented the hope and desire of possible cooperation after the World War II conflict. But we are now 45 or 50 years later, and those organizations still exist, and I don't think there is any rationale for the continuation of those organizations in their present form.

Q: Do you mean organizations like AIFLD?

BROMBART: No, I mean the ICFTU and the United Nations' specialized agencies.

Q: I'm sorry, I don't want this discussion to go by too quickly here. I want to make sure I understand what you are saying. You think the time has passed for the ICFTU to play a cooperative role in helping other unions develop?

BROMBART: No, I didn't say that.

Q: I'm sorry.

BROMBART: I said that those organizations were established after the Second World War on the intergovernmental level or on the non-governmental level, like the ICFTU. The purpose of their existence has totally changed in the world today. The question is: Should they exist today? Did they not become huge bureaucracies? Did they use the funding available from the respective governments or foundations in a way that produced only minimal results. This is questionable, including the program that the AFL-CIO runs. Therefore, it led to a reevaluation of U.S. interests in both the United Nations and in the ICFTU. I think when we came into the1970s, the U.S. had already left UNESCO and decided to leave the ILO.

Q: In 1977, I believe.

BROMBART: Yes. After being an advisor to the AFL-CIO, I became a member of the U.S. delegation during the previous years. I know the whole history and experienced the reaction of our so-called Western European allies and others. They told us we were a bluffing, but that is another subject. Now we see that the U.S. Government left UNIDO. I think that there are credible signs that most United Nations specialized agencies have become irrelevant. New organizations have emerged like the World Trade Organization.

The whole issue of the value of U.N. international organizations is certainly a continuing issue. UNIDO has no purpose. The ILO may still have some purpose. Today Congress debated whether we should or should we not pay our dues. I believe, however, in the value of the United Nations General Assembly as a forum for various governmental views. There is no question about that. The ILO, if it can ever regain areas of activities which it lost to UNIDO or to the World Trade Organization, may or may not still be relevant.

Q: How about the role of the ILO in labor standards issues and the conventions, and enforcement mechanisms?

BROMBART: On the question of enforcement, we have to have another chapter devoted to the ILO. The mechanism of the Committee on Freedom of Association is one of the big successes of the ILO because it was the first mechanism where governments were called upon to answer questions of a panel about a particular violation. But when you mention the ILO Conventions and Recommendations, this is a technique which is totally irrelevant today because it is just a Salvation Army type of expression. In 1920, the ILO decided there would be no child labor. Where does that stand today?

Q: Well, the ILO is still working on child labor. They are trying to beef up the provisions on child labor right now.

BROMBART: I don't think it will be solved by a bureaucratic exercise by the ILO in Geneva. It's an impossibility but that's another issue. But what I think we need to talk about is the attempt by the U.S. Government and by the AFL-CIO to begin to renovate organizations which were involved more in political matters than concentrating on labor issues as they were supposed to do. One of the criticisms of the ILO was the politicization of the organization and the lack of due process.

Q: So this would have been in the context of our withdrawal from the ICFTU in 1969?

BROMBART: The context of the withdrawal and the ability for a progressive policy is unique to the U.S. The willingness to face those issues, to raise them and to foster change in the organizations. The ICFTU is not the same today after the AFL-CIO rejoined it and the ILO is certainly not the same.

Q: Do you think they are meeting the objective needs at this stage?

BROMBART: No, that's another issue. We were facing international organizations which were inefficient in the fight for democracy and inefficient in combating Communism. They were inefficient in their delivery of services and they were paralyzed by politics instead of focusing on labor issues both at the ILO and in the ICFTU. Now we certainly have other factors that may lead to changes but that is a personal opinion about the ICFTU where I worked for three years.

Q: What years did you work for the ICFTU?

BROMBART: From 1983 until 1986.

Q: We really haven't hit that period yet. We are at the time of the U.S. withdrawal from the ICFTU in 1969 and how that affected you in the AALC until 1979 when you decided not to come down to Washington.

BROMBART: As I think I mentioned, it affected our work considerably, because we had built an extraordinary new relationship with organizations which were antagonistic towards us and which did not vote with us, for instance, in the ICFTU or ILO. We were the only one which preached in Africa and defended and forced the view on those organizations to get rid of the ideologies behind the World Confederation of Labor and of the ICFTU which was only a continuation of the trade union movement under the colonial regimes. We came with a new image, an image that we wanted unity in the labor movement like what we have acquired in the United States. We didn't want to see the continuation of Christian, Communist, or Social Democratic trade unions. That was our big sale card.

Q: This was a sale card to the African trade unions?

BROMBART: Yes, I'm speaking for Africa, but it was the same in other continents. To tell them their trade union movement cannot be responsible to the needs of their people and their members if they are keeping it separate in ex-colonial organizations. This was also the view expressed by the Communist side, because they have always been as you know for "unity" in the labor movement. And with this policy and funds that we acquired we played a most important role in so many different situations: the unification of the labor movement in what was then called the Congo and our active support for trade union rights and independence in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. We began to assist the emerging trade union in South Africa and in fact all over the continent. At that time in 1972, the AFL-CIO supported an African from Dahomey, now Benin, to be Director General of the ILO and the U.S. Government was against it. We can give examples of cases where the AFL-CIO didn't go along with the U.S. Government because we have always been accused of being close to the U.S. Government and following their policies and this was not true.

At that time when we established three or four training centers.

Q: Where were those located? Cairo and. . .

BROMBART: Cairo came much later, but the first one was in Dahomey, now Benin, where we established a Regional Center for Cooperatives Training. We may or may not have contributed to what was declared a few years later in the 1970s, that West Africa had become a "cemetery" for co-ops. All those ideas that we advocated, however, had nothing to do with their own traditions and was pure rhetoric from the outside.

We had a vocational training center in Nigeria, a school for mechanics and school for drivers. If you know something about Africa, driving was quite a challenge. We had a regional center for tailoring in Senegal and we had a school for fashion design in Kenya. All of these were aimed at trying to find an outlet for workers and artisans to plant the seeds of an African industry, which could compete with the outside world.

Earlier on we established field offices. At one time we had 15 offices in Africa.

Q: I have heard some folks raise the question of whether the AALC was more focused on anti-communism or trade union development. How would you respond to that question?

BROMBART: On the political side no doubt our aim [in the AFL-CIO] was the defeat of the Communist imperialistic policies. It is a historic fact that the AFL and the CIO were both involved in preventing a new fascism. The AFL-CIO was always consulted by the U.S. Government on what to do in certain areas, not that we accepted those views all the time. The U.S. Government knew that without the cooperation of the unions productivity would be low. But in terms of the AALC, our dominant goal was trade union cooperation and development. We did nothing other than apply the decisions of the AFL-CIO Executive Council in our African policy. It was clear that we were against neo-colonialism and for training union leaders. Then if you look at resolutions from the Executive Council on international affairs, you will see the other component of our policy. Just two weeks ago the AFL-CIO passed a resolution on the enlargement of NATO. Political outlook has always been there, but in many serious cases, the AFL-CIO was totally convinced that the policy, for instance on the Berlin airlift, was a necessary one. In terms of Africa, clearly the Soviets and the Chinese were penetrating Africa, capturing countries which declared themselves everything you could think of, Communists, Leninists, Marxists, Marxist-Leninists, but in reality they were simply dictatorships.

Q: One question is whether the democratic structures really took hold in Africa. After the initial round of independence, there were a number of labor leaders who became prominent political leaders but in terms of autonomy for the labor movement in dealing with the government, unfortunately there aren't many effective labor movements.

BROMBART: That's right. Why was the work of the AFL-CIO so important in those areas? It was because before political parties were established in Africa, the colonial rulers had to accept the legalization of trade union organizations. Therefore, if you take for example Tom Mboya in Kenya and others, their first experience was with the ICFTU and the AFL-CIO. They discovered another world, and like in England in the time of the 1830s, the trade union movement preceded the establishment of the political party and that gave them as the future leaders a bit of an edge. Another case was that the South African white regime had to legalize the union in 1985 before they ever legalized political parties. The social pressure was such. We can say anything about the trade unions in Africa, but they can be mobilized--like in France, which has only nine percent of workers

organized but in a conflict they may have 80 percent of the workers behind them and in the streets.

Q: The unions are strategically located in France.

BROMBART: Therefore, it's very clear. In the trade union movement in Africa, in view of the lack of industrialization and the artificial nature of many of the countries, which have been divided by the colonial powers in Berlin in 1885 without any regard for ethnic divisions or anything, only a few countries have the capability to develop economically, the ones with the mines with phosphate, diamonds, gold, etc. Large areas like in the Sahel with no access to the sea have no possibility to develop. Therefore we can blame France for Balkanizing Africa under de Gaulle by creating artificial states. When they were the ruler before the Second World War, there were only two regional divisions, Central Africa and West Africa. Then the trade unions' strength developed around what? The civil service. The civil service became the core of the trade union movement, telecommunications, transport workers, railroads, and so on. Nevertheless, the fragility of the trade union movement is obvious although it manifests itself in key elements when political and social tension prevails. In addition, as you know, the trade union movement has been at the forefront of many government changes, but the governments, like in many other countries, captured and took out the fruits of social mobilization for their own self-serving interests.

Q: We have discussed your work up to 1979 when you left the AALC because you didn't want to move to Washington. Do you want to describe what you did then?

BROMBART: That was a period when. . . and I think I referred to it indirectly when I said that an organization should not exist until the end of eternity, being the ICFTU, the OECD, or the United Nations agencies. It became apparent in 1979 that we were going to rejoin the ICFTU and that after a two years absence rejoin the ILO. It also coincided with substantial changes in the International Affairs Department. Later we noticed more changes in the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department with the appointment of George Meany's son-in-law, Ernie Lee, as the Director, and the accent he placed, without maybe consulting Meany, on close relations with some U.S. agencies. This was on a different basis than the one that Irving Brown or Jay Lovestone conducted with the Government.

Q: So the point is that when Ernie Lee took over there was a change in the relationship between the AFL-CIO and the government.

BROMBART: I perceived a change in the relationship with the U.S. Government. It became a relationship of being subservient to some policies of the U.S. Government rather than the formulation of a program that was jointly approved. Ernie Lee was a former major in the Army and fought during the Korean War. His experience in the trade union movement was in fact non-existent.

Q: Was it during Ernie Lee's tenure that the issue of the AFL-CIO as a conduit for the CIA came up?

BROMBART: No, this issue of the conduit started earlier. Here it was not the CIA at all. The CIA involvement ended once the USAID labor mechanism was established. First, it was by the nature of the political climate in the U.S. in the McCarthy era. No one thought it possible to have the Congress of the United States appropriate funds for helping labor in the anti-Communist fight because organizations conducting the fight were described by the right as being liberal. That was the case. Therefore, the covert funding through screen organizations and the establishment of several foundations which were fronts for distributing funds to a wide range of U.S. and international organizations.

Q: That came earlier.

BROMBART: That was after the Second World War and during the Cold War. Then came the Agency for International Development, which had in its core program development assistance in cooperation with NGOs. This was not CIA funding. It was an open AID Congressional mandate.

Q: So the initiative was not coming from Ernie Lee the way it did earlier from Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown, but it was coming from the U.S. Government side on what should be done?

BROMBART: Because they found in him someone they could. . . if not manipulate. . .

Q: A sympathetic partner.

BROMBART: Right. That was one of the main characteristics of that period.

Q: We are in 1980 or so.

BROMBART: At that time we were back in the ICFTU, but there is a long history--and I will not go into detail--of disagreement between Ernie Lee, Irving Brown, and me. Irving succeeded in going back to Europe. That was in 1973. That was the time when Ernie Lee was Deputy Director and later Director of the International Affairs Department. There were some tensions on many issues and I didn't like that very much. One illustration of that was when Ernie dictated to the AALC to move to Washington. It was simply so Ernie could have control of the AALC like he controlled all the other institutes.

Q: Were there significant policy differences between Irving Brown and Ernie Lee?

BROMBART: Yes, there were. We had to justify our programs to AID, but our programs could not be measured in administrative terms. We are not building a bridge. However, we were becoming a labor annex of the Agency for International Development. We had to follow their rules and audits and as well as Congressional staff supervision.

Q: This was not Irving Brown's style?

BROMBART: No, it was not Irving's style. Irving's style was, if there was an emergency in, for instance, Nigeria, he would take the phone and say, "I need $50,000," and AID would say yes. Voila. But, of course, such understanding are now over.

I remember a meeting once in Arlington, where AID was located at that time. The meeting was scheduled for 9 o'clock and my plane was late from New York. I arrived at the meeting at 9:20 and sat down. Irving was already there. I looked up, and someone from AID said that the meeting was over. I said, "How come?" He said, "Irving was present. Do you think we will ask him any questions? We will ask them to you later."

Q: So they wanted you to answer their questions?

BROMBART: Yes, as the Deputy Executive Director. They had all of these questions like why did we spend $201,000 instead of $150,000 in building a training center or the headquarters of a union. A logical discussion on our programs is part of the deal, but they couldn't bother Irving on questions that we overpaid or we have no receipt for that or didn't send the report in time or our representative in Ouagadougou is a bizarre fellow.

Q: Did they challenge the substance of your policies?

BROMBART: Never.

Q: Just the administration?

BROMBART: Yes. The substance of the policy is the problem which we have now. AID insists that we follow the Congressional directives and that's it. The present situation is that the U.S. Government since the Carter Administration has decided to implement a global vision for all the agencies of the government. This led, as you know very well, to the elimination in the State Department of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for International Labor Affairs and the attempt to have that office linked to economic development. That was resisted and labor became supervised by the Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights. In the field, and again this is my personal experience with respect to the African-American Labor Center, our proposals to strengthen labor movements, for example by developing a cadre of economists for the unions, were put aside and we were called on by AID to do only two things: to contribute to the achievement of economic growth and to promote vital U.S. international trade interests. Therefore, this is the evolution that we have experienced.

Q: And what about building democratic trade unions and collective bargaining and grievance procedures? (End of tape I, Side B)

BROMBART: What we wanted to do was to strengthen free and independent trade unions, to provide training in the practice of collective bargaining, social and political development. This has been replaced by a policy to promote the interests of U.S. international trade policies.

This is now, but what I wish to illustrate is that when I had the choice to move to Washington or be posted in London awaiting reaffiliation of the AFL-CIO to the ICFTU, I decided to take that latter road.

Q: So, in 1980, you moved to London? Were you employed then by the AFL-CIO?

BROMBART: No, I was then employed by the International Cooperation Division of World ORT Union.

Q: Is that the Jewish trade union, the International Federation of...

BROMBART: This is one of the many Jewish international organizations.

Q: Isn't it a training school system, vocational and technical?

BROMBART: Yes. But the division where I was Deputy Director was called the International Cooperation Division. It was a technical program with AID and the World Bank in developing countries. This really had nothing to do with traditional ORT vocational training. It was like the institutes versus the AFL-CIO.

Q: Was it very active in Africa?

BROMBART: Yes, we were extraordinarily active in Africa and Asia in road maintenance, management of port facilities, and mines, nothing in trade union schools and nothing to do with the traditional aims of the organization.

Q: I think they were big in Lagos, Nigeria?

BROMBART: No, but we had a comprehensive training program in Guinea, where we were managing training in ore production and mines. But during this time I remained in constant contact with Irving Brown. We worked on several issues related to the ICFTU and on Project Democracy which led to President Reagan's speech in London, which established Project Democracy.

Q: Oh, the NED.

BROMBART: Yes, his proposal gave birth to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Then in 1982 the AFL-CIO rejoined the ICFTU. Discussions took place on whether we needed Americans on the staff. Again, there was the same Western European opposition. It was not easy. Finally, with the approval of President Lane Kirkland, I was

sent to Brussels as the first American on the staff after reaffiliation and served as one of the five senior staff members.

Q: Were you an American citizen?

BROMBART: Oh, yes, for many years.

Q: Since five years after you arrived?

BROMBART: It was in fact seven years later. I stayed at the ICFTU till 1987. At that time, I was offered the deputy executive directorship of the AALC.

Q: Speaking of the ILO at that time, the charge has been made--and there was probably something similar with the ICFTU--that our departure meant that Americans who had been long-term employees of those organizations were basically eased out in a hurry and that it was very, very difficult to get the same presence afterwards that we had had before. How would you comment on that?

BROMBART: The withdrawal of the AFL-CIO from the ICFTU meant the departure of the American staff. At that time, Morris Paladino was Assistant Secretary-General. His assistant was Jack Muth, who is now labor attache in Germany and is coming back here in Washington in July to assume another position. Yes, definitely. At the ILO, there was also a purge, but not all the Americans left. When the AFL-CIO rejoined the ICFTU, one condition that the AFL-CIO expressed to the secretary general was that we needed an American as head of a department and he did accept it. In the ILO, on the contrary; it was a different story, a sad story. Blanchard, who was then the director general, said to the AFL-CIO, "Send me a list of eleven names of people that you feel could serve in the ILO," but none of them was ever employed by the ILO.

Americans were recruited by the ILO, but not from the labor side. They were from the U.S. Government, Department of Labor experts, and staff from the Chamber of Commerce, but the unions were totally ignored.

Q: Do you think this was in retribution?

BROMBART: This was part of what I was describing earlier, a situation in an international organization which was very peculiar. Even though they have a governing body, there was no limit on blocking some initiatives by the Americans. It is not surprising that you see discussion in the Congress where Senators and Congressmen request clarification on why the United States has to pay 25 percent of the dues when there are only a few Americans on the staff. Technical assistance--I don't want to go into details, but I think there is one American under contract at the ILO, not even on the staff. This is something which prevails in all the organizations. It may be simply that those bureaucracies don't want people with ideas or motivation.

Q: At one point, we had David Morse, of course, as the director general and John McDonald as deputy director general.

BROMBART: We are talking about earlier times. There was also a guy named Taylor, who was not so extraordinary, and others like him. They put the Americans in personnel and departments like that. Anyway, those are the complexities of the nature of an organization, which is simply a bedroom for ex-diplomats, dictators, ex-literary men and nothing else. If you look at them one by one, what is left? What is left? Several experts on social security, in manpower, and child labor. But the result is that the ILO is an organization that nobody in the streets of Washington knows anything about- and for the right reasons.

Q: Do you want to tell us about your experience with ICFTU and what you did?

BROMBART: ICFTU. It was a dynamic period for me, as the AFL-CIO came back and asserted again its policies. Modestly, it was true that I knew all of the people all along since I was young.

Q: This would have been when?

BROMBART: Since 1959.

Q: You knew all the leaders at that time.

BROMBART: I knew most of the leaders through the years. I knew all the inside and the outside stories of the organization. I knew all the Belgium staff, which is 80 percent of the organization. I knew the secretary general, the assistants, and I fit immediately into a routine. I became the head of the Communications, Press and Publications Department. We were editing the magazine at that time and I innovated with new technology. They didn't have a telex machine or a fax at that time. I organized several seminars with the Russian dissidents at that time, Orlov, Sharansky, and others. Of course, I maintained close contact with the Office of Solidarnosc in Brussels. That was a memorable time, a period when the AFL-CIO regained some respect until 1984 when Lane Kirkland made an extraordinary speech criticizing the ICFTU for having apparently two policies, one for the ICFTU and another for the Europeans.

Q: This was when you first started there?

BROMBART: No, I went to the ICFTU early in 1983. Lane Kirkland made a speech on an issue ever present in the ICFTU: Does the ICFTU serve the Europeans or does it serve the affiliates other than the Europeans? He made his speech saying, "Why are we, the AFL-CIO, here? Are we only potted plants?" Historically, we can document and review all those cases. Anyway, at that time, during the period of Poland's liberation, it was a period of great changes in the ICFTU with the prospect of the elimination of Communism.

Q: Did you help Lane Kirkland write this speech?

BROMBART: No.

Q: You were there cheering him, I take it.

BROMBART: His delivery was extraordinary

Q: But you agreed fully with the content?

BROMBART: Yes. It was the continuation of what we discovered so many years ago. And this is one of the most disturbing factors in such organizations, that it takes so long for your views and ideas to take shape and to transform the course of an institution.

Q: If you've been out of the ICFTU from 1969 until 1982, you can also argue that there is obviously going to be a void.

BROMBART: Yes and no. The affiliates of the AFL-CIO continued and even increased their participation with the ITS's. Therefore, Americans were present in everything they did. But the policy towards the East? When I came back, I drafted a May 1st message.

Q: This was when you went back to Brussels?

BROMBART: Yes, in 1983-1984. I used at the beginning of the May manifest the word "Communism." That was the only time this word had been used since 1955 in an ICFTU document and it was the last time. It was apparent that the Europeans were still trying to find an accommodation with the Communists. We said that Communism was a dead experiment, a murderous one, a distorted one.

Q: I think the final death of Communism came in 1989 with the end of the Berlin Wall.

BROMBART: Yes, even before that period, Irving Brown advocated that the ICFTU remain engaged against the WFTU. I was also involved on the political front in one of the last Russian exercises to attempt to undermine the West, namely the installation of Pershings in Europe by Reagan. This was the start of Star Wars. Irving knew that if we succeeded to influence the governments of Western Europe to accept the installation of the Pershings, this would be the beginning of major changes. We were right to state that the Soviet Union would not be able to match the new space technology called "Star Wars."

Q: Irving saw that?

BROMBART: Yes, he saw that. He also saw that it was time to give the Russians another coup de grace and match their initiative for "peace and disarmament." The Europeans

were influenced by the initiative of the Soviet Union. We said, "Now, we'll engage them." Soon Gorbachev was in power and the whole regime was already in decomposition.

Q: Ready to fall apart.

BROMBART: Ready to fall apart. Irving told me, "David, we must make European trade unions cognizant that there isn't an equivalent in the East of NATO. There is a so-called 'Warsaw Pact.' " Well, we found out that there was a Warsaw Pact, but the headquarters was not in Warsaw. Rather it was in Moscow. There was not one officer from any of the countries in the Warsaw Pact in charge of anything. Only Russians. There was no economic component, nor a parliament, nor an equivalent of the Atlantic Association. I said to the European trade unionists, "Send a delegation," but they never went because there was nothing else than a Soviet structure. We showed them the significance of a defense alliance in a democratic system. All of this was the work that Irving could accomplish and I was part of that exercise when I was in Brussels.

Q: Then in January 1987, you came back to Washington. I think I called on you in your office at AALC shortly after that point.

BROMBART: Yes. It was my first stay in Washington, D.C. My house was in New York state. All my family was brought up in Larchmont, not in Washington. Then we discovered a new city. My wife stayed one more year in Belgium. Our children said, "We've had enough of moving from here to there," because I had moved from Brussels to New York, New York to London, London to Brussels, and Brussels to Washington.

Q: How many children do you have?

BROMBART: Two. When we were in London and Brussels, they went to college in the United States, except for one year at the American School in London as a senior for my son and three years for my daughter before they returned to the United States. Then after college in Amherst and Boston, they came to Brussels as I was working at the ICFTU.

Q: Did they move back here with you?

BROMBART: No, my son worked for six years with the International Textile Federation in Brussels. My daughter was first on the staff of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in the Brussels office and now works in Bonn at the FES main office.

Anyway, Washington was a new city for me and the AALC an entirely new organization, nothing like the 1960s. The pressure of the Agency for International Development (AID) accentuated the bureaucracy. The organization was peripheral to events in the labor field. It was not a political n actor anymore. Then tension developed and issues arose. I was able to take the lead in some situations, such as the election of the trade unionist Chiluba as President of Zambia, now a dictator, but that is another story.

There were a lot of new situations regarding the policy in South Africa. I was not convinced that the policy of the U.S. was the best one. It was an opportunistic one, accepting the role of the Communist Party in South Africa. There was some disagreement on the intensity of the U.S. support in a non-democratic situation both from the right and the Moscow-trained Communists in South Africa. There was continued disagreement over the fact that, although Africa has more than 45 countries, the U.S. was concentrating its activity in South Africa. We all agreed that there was a need to end white majority rule, but we had reservations about the democratic nature of the governmental alliance.

Q: And not in building trade unions?

BROMBART: No, nor human rights or anything. The United States was interested in South Africa for the single and unique reason that South Africa was and still is a nuclear power.
(pause)

Q: We were talking about the atmosphere in Washington when you came here in 1987 and how the process had been bureaucratized. Would you attribute this in part to the shift from George Meany to Lane Kirkland?

BROMBART: No.

Q: By that time, I guess, Tom Kahn was the AFL-CIO Director of International Affairs.

BROMBART: The events especially, of course, in the Communist world meant that the AFL-CIO had to mobilize all this energy for the successful transition of Solidarity in Poland. Then the work that the AFL-CIO institutes did in Africa, Latin America, and Asia--It would take too long to go continent by continent--became peripheral to what was done in Europe at that time.

Secondly, much energy was also placed on the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which appeared to Lane Kirkland, Irving Brown, and Tom Kahn to be a unique instrument established to be more flexible than the AID. NED was to be a private entity although supported by Congress and fully devoted to the promotion of democracy. It included the foremost important institutions of this country: the unions, the business community, and the two political parties. At the beginning, the AFL-CIO was the leading partner.

Q: Certainly at the beginning that is true.

BROMBART: The AFL-CIO was getting 80 percent of the funds because it was the only organization which had counterparts for democratic development all around the world. The other partners became concerned over the level of funding that the AFL-CIO was receiving. At this stage, there is an equalization of funding, which raised another set of issues. It turned out that Congress also had reservations that funding was only reserved

for four grantees. Congress wanted to support its pet projects, its pet foundations, its pet organizations.

Q: Pork barrel?

BROMBART: That is also a part. Congress saw that academia was not included in NED, and that was, of course, the genius of Irving Brown, to leave those people where they should be. We had problems with the Congress. How do we meet the issues that we are facing? What kind of instrument do we need to combat or to support it? X or Y? And now, why should we keep NED in existence for another 20 years because it was a needed program 30 years ago? Is there a justification for that?

Q: For what?

BROMBART: For the continuation of an organization like NED. What we have now is the Republican Party organizing a political party in Yemen and the Democratic Party organizing a political party in Nepal. It doesn't make sense. Parties can develop when there is a stable society, but we will not go through the litany of what all that means.

Then two years ago came the coup effecting the leadership of the AFL-CIO, which totally changed the nature of the intent and the meaning of what the AFL-CIO and the institutes should do in the international arena.

Q: How would you characterize that change?

BROMBART: By what the new leadership said, that AFL-CIO should do two things: One, get rid of the Cold Warriors, and two, get rid of those leftover from the Kirkland administration. This latter may be understandable. In a new administration, you need new people, especially the ones who are in management. As for policy, it is expressed in the resolution or the intent of the new AFL-CIO International Affairs Department that it should develop programs in which American workers have an interest. Although the fact is that it is for the same international solidarity concept, it's not the same solidarity. Now, everything should be focused on worker's rights, control of corporate and multinational organizations, and no politics, though the last executive council meeting passed a resolution supporting the enlargement of NATO.

Q: That's politics.

BROMBART: That's truly politics. At the meeting of the new administration of AFL-CIO President Sweeney with the Secretary of State and with the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs they signed an agreement for the continuation of the mutual cooperation which has always existed between American citizens and American institutions and the U.S. Government. But there are changes. I was faced with the situation of retiring a bit earlier than I should have.

Q: Earlier than planned?

BROMBART: I actually retired in October of 1997. I will be 65 next August.

Q: Well, they've downsized, consolidated.

BROMBART: They've consolidated the organization. President Sweeney made a speech a few days ago in Davos at the World Economic Forum where he said, "Labor, environmental, and democratic citizen movements are already struggling to define this new internationalism in practice and in policy." This concept of "new internationalism," is it new? It seems to say that there was something else before and now we are really talking about a new vision in the AFL-CIO to join with coalitions in the environmental field and civic groups and grassroots organizations in order to build a new internationalism which is not really defined.

Q: That is a vague concept at this point.

BROMBART: They are continually saying at the AFL-CIO, "We are building stronger working relations with unions across the world." Maybe it will be stronger. And what does the AFL-CIO mean by "workers' relationship"? We know that it involves relations industry by industry between affiliates of the AFL-CIO and their overseas counterparts in such fields as the airline industry, aviation, textiles, etc. What took place before more or less were activities of AFL-CIO at the federation level with, for example, the National Federation of Labor of Uganda and not direct involvement in a special field of interest by industry, which was done before by the ITSs.

Q: Are they working through the ITSs in this approach?

BROMBART: Yes, they are.

Q: To put this in more concrete terms, in Africa at one point, you had 15 offices of the AALC with active programs in South Africa and a whole host of other countries. How many programs do they have now?

BROMBART: Now, they have two major programs, one in Cairo, Egypt, and one in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Q: And the other offices have all been closed?

BROMBART: No, but in those two countries there was a vocational training element. In South Africa for three or four years, the U.S. building trades, which was led by the Bricklayers, had a training center near Johannesburg to train masons, electricians, plumbers, ceramic tile workers, and so on. It has been the best vocational training project that was run by an American union with AID and AALC funds, and it was recognized as such. A few years ago, it was the only project that Vice President Gore visited during a

trip in South Africa. He cited it as an example of a U.S. contribution to skill training. Now the building trades have a similar project in Egypt. Those two programs are comprehensive and are now funded by AID/Washington and by local AID funds.

Q: At the post?

BROMBART: At the post, because of the nature of Egypt and the nature of South Africa. The other offices of the Solidarity Center are based in Kenya in Nairobi and West Africa. There is country director and a regional person. There is also a representative for southern Africa in Zimbabwe. That is about all that's left.

Q: So it's very small in comparison with the old setup?

BROMBART: It's smaller. With the exception of Cairo, Egypt, we have limited program funds.

Q: If you had been able to design the post-Cold War assistance program, what would you have envisaged as the ideal model using 1989 as the cutoff?

BROMBART: During the period 1992 to1994, I was acting Executive Director of the AALC appointed by President Kirkland.

Q: While Pat O'Ferrell was sick?

BROMBART: He was sick at that time. As you know, he retired two years before I did. First of all, I had to find a modus vivendi with AID by saying, "We cannot one year be global, the next focus on trade, and the next year develop small scale industries, and then cooperatives, and in between set up a program to 'satisfy' the so-called needs of the poor. We are not in that category." I wanted to reorganize residential regional training centers and to have labor centers where French-speaking Africans could be trained as well as English-speaking Africans and also Portuguese-speaking Africans. Training in what? How to run a union, how to manage a union, how to set up a treasury, the need to recruit economists and statisticians.

Q: And that would be in Africa, not here in the United States?

BROMBART: No, it would be in Africa. Instead of deploying so many people to run so many small, limited projects, my intention was to concentrate once again on a new generation of leadership.

Q: Develop human capital?

BROMBART: Sure. Then I would have developed more intensively the training at the George Meany Labor Studies Center because exposure of trade unionists from those places to America is pivotal. We know that the French invited leaders to go to Paris and

the English invited them to go to London every other week. Our program at the George Meany Center was vastly superior to those kinds of visits in Europe.

Then there were two additional elements. I would also work to develop a more comprehensive multi-language communication between the unions here and the outside world. This concept has been lost today in the AFL-CIO. At the time of Jay Lovestone, there was an international trade union newspaper published in five languages. Now we have a magazine in English, sometimes with some portions reprinted in Spanish, but I would have developed, like in the AALC, a more intensive publications program and system of communications. The AALC was the only institute in my time that had a publication in English, in French, and in Arabic. We should have done it in more of the languages used in Africa, like Swahili, which is spoken by more millions of people in Africa than the three languages I mentioned, except Arabic. Today there is no publication any more. The leadership doesn't believe in the benefits of that. Publications, posters, anything [written] enhances the presence and the knowledge of trade unions, not only with the leadership and members, but also with the students. Africa as a continent where young people read anything that they can find. The young people want to increase their knowledge. Where this all will lead to is uncertain at this moment. I have confidence that there will be new ways, new programs, and new initiatives taken.

Q: Or reexamination after a few years? Do you think the current Sweeney administration is likely to be able to reassess this?

BROMBART: The question that you raise has nothing to do with international affairs or the institutes. It touches on the AFL-CIO structure.

Q: The AFL-CIO leadership and whether the leadership has a vision at this point.

BROMBART: Time will show whether or not the leadership has the possibility of implementing what they aspire to do. But I think they must reevaluate their financing of political activities. This organization has always been viewed as a non-partisan organization or at least an organization not aligned to a political party with a clear mandate that it will support candidates from any party who vote in the Senate and the House for labor positions.

Q: The traditional "Gompers" position?

BROMBART: Right. This is not the case today and it creates big problems. The scandal at the Teamsters is affecting the AFL-CIO leadership, which is mobilizing time and effort to try to distance the AFL-CIO from that event. Some AFL-CIO institutes have been touched by organizations belonging to the so-called "family" of the AFL-CIO.

Q: The senior citizens?

BROMBART: Right, and also the Union Benefit Program, which has used advances from the credit card company to support Carey [in the election for president of the Teamsters]. This is a factor. The third factor, which also has some impact, is the arrest of three spies for East Germany last week and one last October 1997. One of them was the director of the North American office of the United Food and Tobacco Workers.
(End of Side A, Tape II)

Q: What was his name?

BROMBART: Kurt Stand. He was recruited by East German intelligence in the 1950s when he attended a Communist youth camp and became a recruiter. He was arrested by the FBI along with his wife, who worked for the Defense Department, and a certain private contractor named Clark. He was Director of the North African Office of the Food Worker ITS based in Geneva.

Q: This arrest was in Germany?

BROMBART: No, it was in Washington, D.C. But he was recruited in Germany. They were arrested in October. They had the principal task of recruiting agents for East Germany and to spy on the U.S. labor movement. The reason why there is a connection between this case and the AFL-CIO is that he was a left-wing person working alongside radical people who are in the AFL-CIO today who are characterized by the new voice and leftist politics in the organization. He was a central committee member of the Democratic Socialists, which Sweeney joined after his election. The new leadership has been faced with issues they did not expect when they were elected. Congress has reacted to the $35 million devoted to the political campaign and the restrictive nature of it, the Teamsters' scandal, and, I believe, also the very nature of people around citizen action groups, around the Democratic Socialists, progressive academia, and the left-wing, who thought that they would succeed in capturing the AFL-CIO for their own agenda. I find the entire left-wing to have one single characteristic: They are **anti-democrati**c in the way they behave and in the way they are transforming issues for their own benefit. For example, there was an article in *The New Politic* saying that the AFL-CIO pledged to organize and we are seeing that, indeed, the AFL-CIO organized, but they organized themselves.

Q: Who were they organizing?

BROMBART: New members around the country. The aim was to have a grassroots movement, to increase the number of members in the unions, to be closer to the needs of the people, and so on and so forth. This is the group which with the UAW, the Steelworkers, AFSCME, and the Teamsters emerged as a majority and elected Sweeney over Tom Donahue, and which has a program that has been extremely damaged by the events that I am describing here. These people have said as far as international affairs, "Let's get rid of Cold Warriors. Let's get rid of the leftover from Kirkland." Of course, it works only for some, not for the others. They are trying to use the AFL-CIO to capture a majority in Congress and the Senate. But we see at the same time the AFL-CIO joining

Jesse Jackson on Wall Street and developing partnership programs with business. There is no reconsideration by the majority in the AFL-CIO of the kind of society that we have. I think the left are anti-democratic and against a capitalist society, but I think the majority wants simply "capitalism with a social face." Whether or not it's possible is another question.

Q: This sounds like the German formula.

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: If I remember correctly, Tom Kahn was a member of the Social Democratic Party.

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: And if I'm not mistaken, other people in the leadership under Lane Kirkland were either Social Democrats themselves, or their wives in some cases were Social Democrats. You mentioned that Sweeney was a Democratic Socialist. Was that split a factor in the house cleaning at the AFL-CIO at all?

BROMBART: Absolutely.

Q: The Democratic Socialists, as I recall, were part of the Harrington group.

BROMBART: Exactly. Yes, during the Lane Kirkland period, there were a lot of comments about the fact that Tom Kahn, Don Slaiman, Adrian Karatnycky, now president of Freedom House, and others were members of the Social Democrats--USA. The wife of then AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasury Tom Donahue was also a member.

Q: And Mrs. Kirkland, too.

BROMBART: Mrs. Kirkland, too. A lot of them were members of the Social Democrats. It comes back to the questions you asked before. What was their platform? Was this a group of people who wanted new path for the social justice in the United States or who were interested in fighting Communism? Both organizations were members of the Socialist International, but all the opposition between Harrington and Slaiman was always on international issues.

The leftist group that followed Sweeney must be extremely disappointed at this time, because one element of this new policy was to obtain the support of the AFL-CIO for the establishment of a labor party in the U.S. But President Sweeney, once elected, doesn't seem to be in favor of that group. He joined the Democratic Socialists. It is interesting to note what Irving Brown said when we were in New York and I began to attend labor conference meetings. I asked, "What about the Social Democrats?" He said, "David, stay out of that."

Q: I wonder why he said that?

BROMBART: Because I think they were simply a pressure group and not a party. The secretary at that time was Carl Gershman, and fundamentally, Irving was a Republican.

Q: Is that right?

BROMBART: Absolutely.

Q: He was not part of the Social Democratic group?

BROMBART: No, Irving was a Republican. At that time, there were two presidents of the unions in the AFL-CIO who were Republicans.

Q: The Longshoremen. . .

BROMBART: The Longshoremen and one other. After all, Irving Brown got the highest civilian award from the United States, the Civilian Medal of Freedom, from President Reagan. Brown was deceased at that time. It was granted posthumously in a White House ceremony.

Q: Was Jay Lovestone also a Republican?

BROMBART: I don't know.

Q: He had left the Communist Party.

BROMBART: He was certainly not close to the Democratic Party. Again, for international reasons.

Q: The image that people have of the Social Democrats is that they were very firm on anti-Communism in the international sphere, but progressive in the social sphere domestically, while the Democratic Socialists had the image of being progressive in the domestic sphere, but passive - if anything, antagonistic - towards anti-Communists.

BROMBART: I have read all the Michael Harrington books and this famous book about poverty in the United States.

Q: The Other Side of America*, is it called?*

BROMBART: Yes, and he became a trusted advisor of Lyndon Johnson.

Q: I think Kennedy read the book and was inspired by it at one point.

BROMBART: Mike Harrington finally in his last book explained how he left Manhattan to live in the village where I lived in, Larchmont, New York. He said, "I always thought that they were phony liberals living in Larchmont. They were all this and that. I must say, I met wonderful people." He had discovered that there were other Americans he could relate to.

Anyhow, this new intent to organize and mobilize for the creation of a labor party and to organize more workers in trade unions are tests that are left to measure. I don't think the AFL-CIO by the nature of the demography and the manpower forces will ever return to 20 to 25 percent of the workforce. The workforce has been expanded. You can organize and you are still at the same level of 14 percent But the strength is not only increasing the numbers. The strength is the extent of collective bargaining contracts and to be able to recognize the so-called "prosperity" which exists now and to call for immediate passage of an increase in the minimum wage, which will bring up people who now earn a slave wage of only $12,600 a year. I don't think you can live in the United States on that. There is no greater disparity than between the purposes of the labor movement and these conditions. But in recent times, we have unfortunately witnessed too many scandals in the labor movement, not only in the Teamsters, but also in individual locals, which are run in the old Mafia type of way, if I may use that description. There also is too much manipulation of the pension funds in some of the unions. The union cannot be served by such an image because the anti-union movement is increasing as the conservative coalition is more forceful.

Q: Also, in terms of cooperation between the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Government, if the leadership and the International Affairs Department are influenced by Democratic Socialism, it's hard to imagine a cooperative relationship, or am I wrong? I mean that as a question.

BROMBART: It's hard to conceptualize what kind of result this new dialogue will bring. On one side, you have a very strong AFL-CIO in favor of the Kyoto Agreement that the United States opposed. On the other side, you have an acceptance of trade expansion, but the AFL-CIO was against NAFTA not because trade is not important, but because of the lack of protection for worker's rights in that agreement.

Q: Labor wants more than side protocols that could or could not materialize.

BROMBART: Let's return to what we said before on the ILO. You can have more than 20 recommendations and conventions, like you can have 23 labor side agreements of NAFTA, but if there is no way to secure a system by which there will be quick examination of the case, etc., what does it matter? Then there is the issue pertaining to education in a multi cultural society. There is the question relating to immigration, which is obvious.

I have in front of me the resolution of the ICFTU dated February 12th, "A Statement on Iraq." But the AFL-CIO Executive Council didn't have any resolution on Iraq. I would like to see one and to see what it contains.

But still there is cooperation with the Administration. I think that the Secretary of State is willing to reopen discussion on one of the programs affecting the government and labor on an international level, namely the reexamination of the Labor Attache Program. The AFL-CIO has stated, "We want this program to continue."

Q: Where do you think it's going at this stage?

BROMBART: There is an AFL-CIO task force that will make recommendations. I believe the task force may recommend something that I personally don't agree with, that the Labor Attache Program be reorganized under the Department of Labor, but I don't know. I think President Sweeney is in favor of having this program reinstalled because now it is decimated.

Q: It is certainly under attack.

BROMBART: Another example, I understand, was the specific request by the Secretary of State to have the AFL-CIO adopt a resolution on NATO enlargement, and such a resolution was issued. I don't think that the left-wing people we mentioned before are fully endorsing that, like they would not endorse a resolution the way Lane Kirkland did supporting the Gulf War. If tomorrow there is a military intervention, the AFL-CIO has no choice but to support our troops. But the new group of the left-wingers? No! They want the ICFTU, and I'm reading from the ICFTU resolution, "to force the spirit of reconciliation and to facilitate the search for an 'overt' and lasting settlement." Since 1949 the ICFTU has said that every situation "can only be resolved through diplomatic means." It is ironic for the ICFTU to say that.

Q: They have never read Karl von Clausewitz?

BROMBART: No. Anyway, those are examples. I must say, this has been an extraordinary adventure for me, and that of having been involved with such unique cases all those years.

Q: Irving Brown?

BROMBART: Basically Irving Brown, but also others. Many presidents of unions, whom I was able to observe attentively year after year when we were at the ILO for three weeks. Not only was I a member of the U.S. delegation for the years preceding U.S. withdrawal, but I had always been an advisor to the AFL-CIO delegation. I met presidents of unions which made me very proud. I met some others which did not deserve attention.

Q: You may name them if you wish.

BROMBART: Not at this time. At the ILO conferences, we were able to influence the fight for democracy in North Africa and in part of black Africa, and to identify people whom we believed would be uniquely able to serve their country. At that time, until even today, we confirmed that the former head of the ANC in South Africa was Cyril Ramaphosa, head of the miners' union. The one who succeeded Ramaphosa was also head of a union. The party had no skill in mobilizing, organizing, and communicating. That was true with Prime Minister Adoula in the Congo and former union leaders.

Q: The unions were the training ground.

BROMBART: Exactly. Adoula became prime minister and was later assassinated. If you look at the other side, former union leader Sekou Toure became a dictator, and so was Chiluba, who was a trade unionist and now an autocratic president.

Q: What was Tom Mboya?

BROMBART: Tom Mboya was a trade unionist, who became Minister of Labor. He was a trade unionist. The examples are numerous; the list is long. In Senegal, everywhere the union. . . Katima, the head of one union in the Congo, became the head of the party. He turned out to be no more than the puppet of Mobutu, but that is besides the point. To have been able to articulate and develop policies and friendships with the emerging leadership was very important. Our contacts were vastly superior and unique. When we talk about the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), their work is perfectly valuable, but the labor component of their total program is very small.

The French were practically nonexistent. They were active with a few seminars here and there.

Q: A few trips to Paris.

BROMBART: The Canadians were very anti-American for reasons which nobody understands even today. They were only present with two or three field staff. The same with the Scandinavians. They were very selective in operating only a few countries. Our vision was global for Africa. There was no union that did not justify our support, being small, let's say, as in Sierra Leone, or in Cairo with 1.5 million union members. We were the only ones who had a labor office in Cairo and who cultivated their relationship with the Israeli unions for the sake of a peace settlement.

Q: There was also quite a cooperative relationship, wasn't there, between the AALC and the Histadrut in training African labor movements?

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: I remember, when I was in Israel, there were a lot of African trade unionist going to Israel for training.

BROMBART: For a period of time. This was before the existence of the Institute.

Q: No, actually, it was still going on in the period from 1982-1986, where the AALC was paying for transportation to Tel Aviv.

BROMBART: Surely, but before 1964, I am not going to go into details, but the Israelis were all over Africa and were subject to criticism for some of their programs, which were again like many Western European programs, totally divorced from African reality. Anyway, that is another story.

Q: What have we not covered, David, that you would like to discuss?

BROMBART: Well, we have not covered at length issues related to the ICFTU or issues related to the ILO and the meaning of the U.S. efforts to transform the organization plagued by politicization.

Q: Shall we have another session?

BROMBART: Yes, but then you will have to come with some questions which I can dig into and not make me think in terms of dates.

Q: We can always add the dates later.

BROMBART: The ICFTU and the ILO are important, as are issues related to the U.S. Government's Agency for International Development and labor issues around the world.

Q: Very good. Then let's have a second session. Thank you very much today. I appreciate it. (End of Side B, Tape II)

Q: Today is Friday, February 20, 1998. When we left off last time, you mentioned that you would like to discuss at greater length the ICFTU, ILO, and the U.S. Government and AID's views on labor issues around the world. Shall start by going into more detail on your duties at the ICFTU during that period from 1983-1986?

BROMBART: When the AFL-CIO decided to rejoin the ICFTU, talks were conducted between the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU to place at least one AFL-CIO representative on the staff. All Americans, of course, had been withdrawn from staff functions. The idea obviously was to seek to prepare [one U.S.] staff member for one of the highest possible elective functions in the ICFTU. This, however, didn't materialize. The AFL-CIO's aim to have an Assistant Secretary General from the U.S. didn't materialize because of the friction between the ICFTU's European bureaucracy and the AFL-CIO. In other words, they were pleased that the AFL-CIO

returned to the organization, but they were concerned that the AFL-CIO not once again "control" the organization. In order to place a U.S. staff member, the Secretariat had to restructure itself. The only department that was open was the Department of Communication and Publication. They moved the head of the department to an administrative position against, I must say, the advice of the staff committee. Anyway, this post became vacant, and it was decided that I should move from London to Brussels to take that post.

I think I can modestly say that I was very successful in changing the Department. We got rid of the magazine. We published a newspaper. We began to introduce a fax and email system. The coverage in the press was really extraordinary during that period of time. However, the ambition of the AFL-CIO was that we should have been given another department of interest to us, which was the Human Rights Department, and it was only when I left that George Martens succeeded me in the ICFTU and finally became the head of the Human Rights Department.

Q: Who was that?

BROMBART: George is a former Foreign Service Officer and Education Officer of the African-American Labor Center, and he is still in Brussels 1998.

Q: Would you like to describe the interaction between the ITS's and the ICFTU both during your time there and during that period from 1969 to 1982 when the AFL-CIO had withdrawn from the ICFTU?

BROMBART: The international trade secretariats existed and were active in Western Europe well before the establishment of the ICFTU in 1949. They were organized by sectors--metal workers, steel workers, tobacco workers, agricultural workers--and were established after the English [industrial] revolution from 1815 to 1850. They progressed in different political ways, meaning that they tried to search for a place between the Socialist and the Communist movements and became strictly a trade union organization. They played an active role before and during the First World War with the International Confederation of Trade Unions, which was based in Amsterdam and provided concrete assistance to workers who were involved in conflict between their nations. This was the beginning of assistance programs for workers' families who were refugees or displaced, and they were, of course, instrumental in the discussion leading to the establishment of the ILO after the Labor Peace Conference in Versailles. They continued to develop their activities until the establishment of the WFTU in London in 1945.

At that time, the WFTU's aim was to assemble not only the trade union organizations but to integrate the ITS's autonomous activity and make the ITS's simply a department of the WFTU. This was the historical turn where the ITS's refused and decided that they should remain independent from the WFTU. This line of thought continued even after the establishment of the ICFTU where there was an agreement between the ICFTU and the ITS's on the ways and means that they should cooperate and who should do what on the

industry level. It led, however, to a situation today where the working relations established in Milan in 1954 between the ICFTU and the ITS's have changed. As for as the situation today, the ITS's have no constitutional relationship with the ICFTU. They are back at the time where they were autonomous organizations pledged to be in the family of free trade unionists but without a real constitutional relationship with the ICFTU. In other words, the ITS's feel that they are really the players in the field of trade unions because of their strength, knowledge, and specialization, and that the ICFTU is merely a kind of coordinating body which has no real activities with specific categories of workers.

Q: You mentioned earlier that during the period of the AFL-CIO's withdrawal from the ICFTU, the various international unions were very active in the ITS's as sort of an alternative to the ICFTU. Would you like to describe just what types of activities took place?

BROMBART: Yes, indeed. In the decision leading to the withdrawal from the ICFTU, the AFL-CIO made clear that it was not leaving the international labor movement as such and that again, like many ITS's and others, it felt that the ITS's had a privileged place where concrete activities could be developed. The decision of the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO was to encourage the maximum number of affiliates of the AFL-CIO to play an active role as affiliates of the ITS's. As for examples of activities, they were numerous. It was the beginning of studies on how steel workers around the world, in Europe or on a regional basis, could come together to face multinational companies working in their respective countries. It was the beginning of thinking about social clauses guiding the practice of multinational companies in one country. It was when unions began to discuss with the European institutions how European regulations would affect workers in specific industries and so on. It has been an extension of the work of the ITS's really on the world level by the presence of more and more AFL-CIO affiliates.

Q: You mentioned earlier that Lane Kirkland gave a speech in 1982 or 1983 in which he critiqued the ICFTU and asked whether it was serving European or world interests. Did that create any meaningful dialogue with the leadership of the ICFTU? Were there any changes as a result?

BROMBART: No, there were no changes. At that time, the AFL-CIO found itself isolated in its views on trade union development, human rights, and the fight against totalitarianism. When the AFL-CIO rejoined the ICFTU, there was still a great difference between the AFL-CIO and the Europeans in approach on trade unions, social, economic, and political issues. When a vote was taken on one resolution or another, there were only two or three organizations which supported the AFL-CIO's views: Force Ouvriere in France, Histadrut in Israel, and from time to time African affiliates such as the U.G.T.T. in Tunisia. Then after the AFL-CIO's return to the ICFTU, various regional organizations except ORIT drifted again into a situation where the AFL-CIO's voice was not heard in terms of policy issues, even on the Solidarnosc issue.

I must say, returning to the ITS's, there was also in the 1980s a resolution of the AFL-CIO encouraging its affiliates not only to be a members of the ITS's, but to send U.S. staff to those organizations. If you look at the picture even today, only one American is a secretary general of the 17 various ITS's and the U.S. staff members in all 17 ITS's can be counted on one hand. Again, this is an expression of the resistance of the Europeans who control those ITS's to have any input from the AFL-CIO. They elect Americans as officers, but they resist the intrusion of U.S. staff in the organization.

Q: Who was the one? Jim Baker?

BROMBART: No, the one is Wilson, who is Secretary General of the Entertainment Union. Jim Baker was never in an ITS. He was the AFL-CIO representative in Europe and later became an Assistant to Lane Kirkland, and served a few months after the election of John Sweeney as Acting Director of the AFL-CIO institutes. Sweeney sent him back to Europe, but this time as a department head at the ICFTU.

Q: I see. He's in the ICFTU at this point.

What about the future of the ICFTU now that the Cold War has ended? What are your views on where it should go, how it should be restructured, or what new goals should be set for it?

BROMBART: Before I answer that, let me say that the issue of the future orientation of the ICFTU is directly linked to the role of the AFL-CIO in world affairs. There was a historic input which has been extraordinarily helpful in the fight against communism and totalitarianism. There is a lot of literature available on that subject.

Q: Would you like to mention a few of the things you would recommend?

BROMBART: Yes, there is a series of books that have been written that deal with those questions. There are books from trade unionists; for example, Joseph Beirne of the Communication Workers of America wrote a book in 1969 entitled *The Challenge to Labor: New Roles for American Trade Unions.* There are books by David Dubinsky. There is a biography of George Meany by Joseph Gould. There are academics who have written on the issues like Professor Roy Godson, who wrote a book on American labor and European politics called *The American Federation of Labor as a Transnational Force*. Jeffrey Allard has written *Trade Union Foreign Policy*. There are many, many others. But what I would like to mention is that there are not only books and articles, but a series of doctoral dissertations on world labor. The point is that since the 1970s, we have seen very few universities encouraging their students to write dissertations on labor affairs. There was, of course, the 1960 thesis written from Senator Moynihan on the United Nations and the ILO. This is a dissertation on the issues facing the ILO and the U.S. from 1889 to 1934. There is a thesis from Marty Bruckner of the University of Chicago on "The Role of Labor in the Conduct of the United States Foreign Affairs." There is the dissertation by Professor Gordon of Columbia University in 1972 on

"Non-governmental Organizations in International Politics, the American Federation of Labor." There is a dissertation by Gerald Golden called "The AFL, the CIO, and the Quest for a Peaceful World Order," and so on and so forth. This leads us to this basic question: Can an international organization such as the ICFTU or the ILO be seen as a transnational force? This dissertation dealt with the quest for a peaceful world and was indeed the very question that trade unionists asked after the First World War and after the Second World War. We have to come to the realization that after the Cold War period, we have new issues like ethnic civil conflicts, terrorism, and organized crime that are changing the character of the search for a peaceful world.

Q: The question is the labor component of this search, I guess.

BROMBART: Yes.

Q: You were mentioning that there is very little being written today on the labor component of this effort.

BROMBART: Yes. We can take the example of the ICFTU and also of the ILO. When we talk about the ILO, we have to relate it to the new dimension in international governmental organizations today. I don't think that the preeminent organizations are the specialized United Nations agencies like the ILO. They are the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the IMF. The former Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, who is now an ambassador at the UN, has described with vigor that in his post as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, the UN system was a hodgepodge organization saddled with outdated mandates and conflicts with overlapping and duplicative functions.

I will just mention a joke in this respect, which is a true one. A young British civil servant was asked by his boss to go to a conference in Geneva. This was in the late 1950s, and he was delighted as he was only one year in the service and was going to Geneva. He asked his boss, "How long will I stay there?" "Oh," he said, "three months." But after 45 years he was still in Geneva. He had a big family and he was still dealing with disarmament issues. This gives you a certain idea of the bureaucracy and the inertia of organizations which are unable sometimes to come to some kind of resolution of an issue.

Q: Has it reached its conclusion in your view?

BROMBART: We are all reaching a conclusion. As far as the U.S. is concerned, in all seriousness, the fact that the U.S. left the ILO on the basis of politicization and lack of due process has given new vigor to the ILO, which was dying and was spending all its efforts, time, and energy in facing the so-called "non-aligned countries," the Communist countries, and the PLO, whose interests involved only politics and who had no concern for social progress or social legislation. The ILO has, however, suffered from the fact that the U.S. joined only in 1943, and the Soviet Union joined in 1954. The unique tripartite system declared by Samuel Gompers when he came back from the Treaty of Versailles

has been a big failure. There is a myth even today at ILO that they are talking about equal representation of labor, government, and employers.

Q: Aren't there two government representatives for each labor and employer representative?

BROMBART: Yes, you are correct. This means that when it comes to a vote, there is no equal representation. The government has two votes, labor has one, and the employer has one. When Gompers came back, he said, "We have already lost. And why did we lose? We lost because of all the European Socialists." People, of course, asked Gompers, "What do you mean by that?" The socialists' argument in Belgium, Switzerland, and France was, "Don't worry, Gompers. The socialists will soon be in control of all governments and we will defend the interests of the workers. Therefore, you should accept and be confident that those two votes from the government are only a way to guarantee that in the future we will have three votes against the employer." This was, of course, the beginning of a situation in the ILO which developed in the 1960s and 1970s into a dilemma when U.S. labor found itself very uncomfortable when the Director General appointed a Soviet official as a Deputy General Secretary and when the annual conference elected a representative from Poland to be Chairman of the Conference, which led to the boycott of that conference by the AFL-CIO, and subsequently the AFL-CIO left the ILO conference when the organization accepted the PLO as an observer.

Q: You were a member of the delegation in 1976?

BROMBART: No, before that. I was in the U.S. delegation from 1975 to 1977. That was as a formal member of the delegation, but from the time I joined the AALC in late 1964 I served as an Advisor to the AFL-CIO Delegation. But 1975 to 1977 was the period when discussions were held on the possible withdrawal of the U.S. from the ILO. Ray Marshall, Secretary of Labor in 1977, in a letter to the members of the delegation said, "We are now faced with a very difficult period of assessment to determine whether or not the United States will remain a member of the organization." One year later, the U.S. left that organization. But it left not only the ILO at that time, but also UNESCO, and later UNIDO. The U.S. returned to the ILO with AFL-CIO's support, but we didn’t return to UNESCO or UNIDO. Therefore, it was the entire overhaul of the United Nations system that is in question.

Q: What do you see as the legitimate role of the ILO in the immediate future now that the Cold War is over and presumably the ILO is no longer a battleground for anti-Communism?

BROMBART: It is simple. The bureaucracy of the ILO has resisted all efforts to bring the ILO closer to the governmental departments where the ILO should be influential, the departments of labor, safety, and health, to deal with issues connected with vocational training, job creation, and child labor. The bureaucracy is not responding to the needs of its members. When we talk about George Moose's reform, he was quoting the human

rights agency of the United Nations. In his remarks, he singled out the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who now has 200 monitors in 12 countries. We would like the ILO also to have 200 staff members in these countries. The inability to decentralize, the inability to separate its functions as a United Nations specialized agency; the time devoted to publications; the unwillingness to respond to the AFL-CIO suggestions to limit the number of annual conferences to one every two years and not every year, saving millions of dollars; and the number of members of the Governing Body. Instead the ILO should, like the UN, institute some kind of a security council system with only a few nations advising the Director General.

Q: So if I may summarize, what you are saying is that you think there is too top-heavy a bureaucracy in Geneva and not enough on decentralized or technical assistance and monitoring of worker rights issues?

BROMBART: And helping the departments of labor in developing countries to create statistical offices and a cost of living offices, organize the archives, assist in introducing social security legislation. All this is done by manuals and papers, but the human aspect and involvement is not there.

Q: Does the ILO have any regional training centers other than the one in Italy?

BROMBART: Yes, they have tried a few training centers in Africa and in other continents and in many, many places. But there is no continuity, no follow-through, no visible improvement or anything. I am pretty sure that the people in the ILO and the people in the delegations to the ILO have seldom visited a ministry of labor in Africa as I did and seen the impossibility of a labor inspector playing any significant role. At the same time, you will find cases of audiovisual equipment and books that have been sent to those ministries of labor, but that is not what is needed. They need means of transportation so the labor inspector can go inland. The old ILO system of assistance is like any other U.N. agency except for the High Commissioner of Refugees and in monitoring elections. It's easy to assemble a team of 50 people to monitor an election. In two months, they are gone. We should have those people stay in those countries for a longer time.

I will give you one example. After the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, I was able to have the AFL-CIO adopt a resolution on Rwanda and Burundi which included a call to the ICFTU to send a team of trade unionists to go to those countries to rebuild the trade union movement. The ICFTU answer was, "It's too dangerous to go there." It was not only that they were unable to assemble 10 people. This is the sign of a new type of bureaucratic trade union functionary versus the ones who were idealists. . .

Q: Out in the field?

BROMBART: Yes. This is so important. When I was in Brussels and there were some assistance programs going to Solidarnosc in Poland, the ones who were ready to drive to

Poland from Sweden or Finland in trucks with equipment were all anarchists and Trotskyites. You could not mobilize one single trade unionist staffer to do that. It was too dangerous. This is alarming. Why? A great majority of labor staffers, who are living comfortably in Washington, New York, Geneva, or Paris are refusing to act. Some with the ILO, World Bank, and other U.N. agencies. This is a tragedy.

Q: So you are really advocating hands-on technical assistance in the field?.

BROMBART: In the field and a presence of the UN expertise and staff where it counts. I think, living in Washington, D.C., you can only be horrified by the constant construction and cosmetic innovation of the World Bank and the IMF. It's something extraordinary! They are building with American workers in a minimum number of months. But at the same time, the World Bank and the IMF refuse to allow the Service Employees Union to organize a union of janitors in those organizations. These efforts have totally failed. The World Bank is contracting outside. This, again, is a new dimension of the cacophony which exists in those places.

We talked before about equal representation in the ILO between government, employers, and labor. There is no equal representation in anything. The World Bank and IMF staff in Washington or New York are not paying national taxes. The U.S. Civil Service or the Swedish Civil Service has to pay taxes. There is no equalization system. The business and labor personnel, who are living outside Europe, are not paying taxes. The U.S. diplomats or workers in overseas agencies are paying taxes. This creates all kinds of situations which are not suitable for the respect of the position of each other.

Q: I would like to ask one specific question about the AFL-CIO's withdrawal from the ILO. In several interviews, people have suggested that the driving force behind the withdrawal was George Meany and that others, including Irving Brown, had a lot of reservations about actually withdrawing. Does that square with your understanding?

BROMBART: As far as the ILO is concerned, there is a provision whereby no country can leave before it has expressed an intent to leave two years before it actually withdraws. The process took quite a long time. Meany was concerned about politicization and appointed Irving Brown as the workers' representative to succeed Bert Seidman.

I referred to issues which enraged George Meany. The politicization came later, but before, as I mentioned, in the 1960s, these issues included the appointment of a Soviet director general occurred, the election of a Polish conference chairman, and the acceptance of a PLO observer. All that showed that the organization was shifting towards inefficiency, irrelevance, and politicization. But what I am not sure of at this time is whether this desire to return to the ILO to its original purpose came solely from George Meany or was also a decision of the U.S. Administration. I am more of the opinion that there was a convergence, that the Administration used the fact that the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce were terribly upset by the change of direction and politicization and decided to face the issue, which is still an issue today: **United Nations reform**. And

the ILO with its tripartite system made it an easier place for the Administration to put the burden on the employer and labor rather than on the government. We have to research this in the archives of the U.S. Government and look at this period of time. There may be some directives linked to the reform of the United Nations that will show that this was an issue not only related to labor.
(End of Tape 3, Side A)

Senator Daniel Moynihan was at that time the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in New York and the one who drafted the letter to the ILO outlining the five grievances pertaining to our intent to withdraw. Then came the work that Irving Brown and I did. I spent practically 50 percent of my time in Europe and Africa explaining that the U.S. was serious about withdrawal, that there was no real support in this country for the United Nations anyway, that it took so long, first of all, for the U.S. to join the ILO, that we were not bluffing, that we could not accept the idea that a country which had no trade union could be elected a chairman of the ILO conference and emasculate the freedom of association and so on and so on. We said this was not only valid for the Soviet Union, but for all the totalitarian governments like Chile at that time and others.

Q: Did Irving Brown feel comfortable with the decision to withdraw?

BROMBART: No, I don't think he wanted that. Nobody wanted that. We just wanted to put the ILO back on the right track. In publications I wrote many articles on the principle of international solidarity and on the ILO. The withdrawal was an extraordinary measure. We didn't anticipate that it would happen. But when the letter of intent was sent by the U.S. Government, we were sure that there was some kind of consensus with the employers, labor, and the U.S. Government. Irving Brown was not comfortable about withdrawal because he was a true internationalist, like we all were. But a true internationalist doesn't mean a romantic idiot.

Q: Did he express those reservations to George Meany?

BROMBART: To George Meany, I don't know. As I mentioned, what we did before and after our expression of intent was to hope that the International Labor Organization by itself would change, but no, every ILO Conference we went to, we spent two of the three weeks on political issues. We said, "Please, the ILO is a specialized agency. Let's adopt all the resolutions of the General Assembly in New York and let's do something for the workers. We do not have to reinvent a new resolution on this and that issue." But ILO Conferences were hour after hour, day after day, week after week a palette for non-aligned, extremist, Communist representatives preaching politics.

Q: Did you see much change from 1975 to 1977 during that waiting period?

BROMBART: No. There was obviously no change. Then there was no alternative but to let the two years pass, which meant withdrawal. We could have at any time stopped it. But Blanchard, who was the Director General and a classic civil service officer from

France, didn't believe that the U.S. would ever withdraw until the end. It was something that diplomatic and government circles could not comprehend. I said, "Look, I was the secretary-treasurer of an NGO in the 1960s in UNESCO." I already said, "It is a situation which is insupportable. There are Communists everywhere in the organization. Soviet agents were in charge of non-governmental activities. The whole thing was criminal." But it took many years before we left the organization.

Q: As far as you know, Irving Brown concurred with the decision in 1977 to leave?

BROMBART: He had no choice. It was a process that the AFL-CIO was involved in with the U.S. Government, and we knew that if there was no change in Blanchard's policy in the ILO, that would happen. Irving Brown and Jay Lovestone were certainly not pleased with our withdrawal just as he was not pleased with our withdrawal from the ICFTU. Irving said that we can still fight for changes from inside the organization. Although the AFL-CIO was in a minority, the ICFTU was instrumental in successive new initiatives like involving the ICFTU in the peace and disarmament process. He was really convinced that Gorbachev would be obliged to make economic and political concessions.

Q: Irving Brown was convinced that Gorbachev was making significant changes?

BROMBART: Yes, he told me by phone from Paris, "David, this Glasnost policy is the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union."

Q: Did he see an opportunity for movement towards Eastern Europe on the part of the AFL-CIO at that time or was it a "wait and see" situation?

BROMBART: He saw some possibilities because of the turmoil and agitation in the trade union movement. Strikes were happening. We were able to gather information from refugees coming out of the East. Yes, he was convinced that after President Reagan pushed to install the Pershings weapons in Star Wars that the Soviet Union couldn't respond. He said, "It's changing."

Q: In other words, the Soviet Union could not afford the arms race?

BROMBART: They could not afford the arms race, and also they could not afford to continue a police-state and such a closed society because information was getting out on the collapse of the state. Of course, when the satellites crumbled, it precipitated the end of communism.

Q: This would have been in the late 1980s.

BROMBART: The late 1980s and the emergence of the Polish crisis.

Q: Are there any general observations about Irving Brown that you would like to make for the record? He is a person of great interest to labor historians.

BROMBART: There was a book published a year ago in England, which is not available in the U.S. because of this ever-present copyright fight between England and the United States. It was written by labor journalist Ben Rathbun and is called The Point Man.

Q: I have the book.

BROMBART: It is a series of chapters commenting on Irving Brown's involvement in so many different aspects of political and trade union life after the Second World War. Irving was recognized about one or two years after he went to Europe by the U.S. Administration. There is a memo from Kennan in 1948 to Levitt, who was organizing the CIA, giving Levitt five names of persons who should head the new Operations Department. Irving was among them. The only comment Kennan made was on Irving. He said, "This is an able person doing extraordinary work and is serving the interests of the United States." Of course, I don't know whether Irving was consulted. This memo can be found in The Annual Review of Foreign Policy. It's no secret. You can buy the Review in any government print shop. Frank Wisner became the head of that department. Also during the 1950s Irving was offered the ambassadorship to Germany as well as the post of Assistant Secretary of State for International Affairs. The word was that George Meany objected to those assignments and wanted Irving to continue what he was doing in the labor field.

We talked earlier about the AFL-CIO and its input in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy through Irving Brown. He had demonstrated operational labor successes in Western Europe, in Greece, the anti-Communist posture, and the anti-colonialism struggle. I don't know if it's still true today or not, but the former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa serving in the first Bush Administration, H. Cohen, stated, "The Cold War has been won in Africa by Irving Brown." Africa was the continent where there was a need to challenge the Soviets and the Chinese. His role was impressive from North Africa to Southern Africa.

Q: What about his relationship with Jay Lovestone? What was the division of labor there? Did Irving pretty much free wheel in Europe and Africa? How did that work?

BROMBART: That is another interesting story.

Q: I'm sure it is.

BROMBART: We will soon know a bit more, I hope, about Jay Lovestone. A book will be published in January 1999 by a Pulitzer Prize winner Ted Morgan. It is a biography of Jay Lovestone. If you are talking about Irving as an extraordinary person, certainly Jay Lovestone was such a person, too. The relations between the two were not always easy, but Irving was a very disciplined man and sent all his reports to Jay Lovestone, who stayed in New York and Washington when Irving was in Europe.

Q: Jay Lovestone was head of the International Department of the AFL-CIO.

BROMBART: Yes, there was a lot of tension and there was also some tension between Meany and Irving on several issues. When George Meany ordered Irving to come back from Paris to New York to take over the ICFTU office, there was tension. Then there may have been an easy kind of relationship between Jay and Irving. They respected [each other's] intellect, ability, and their firm commitment to democracy. There will be no more Jay Lovestones in the sense that if you go through the political resolutions adopted by the AFL-CIO under Jay Lovestone, the resolutions were expressed in terms of ideas, substance, and vision. There was also reasoning. Now, the resolutions of the AFL-CIO are three or four lines. It's a world of difference in concept and how you reach a decision which should convince the membership that the thesis was right.

I don't want to disregard another intellect in the AFL-CIO, Tom Kahn, who was also able to develop ideas and to bring the AFL-CIO position into a realistic assessment of what should be done.

Q: Were the differences between Irving Brown and Jay Lovestone primarily ideological differences on issues or power issues?

BROMBART: It was power issues and Irving was more optimistic on the future of democratization.

Q: In what sense?

BROMBART: On the evolution in the Soviet Union and on the whole world situation. Irving Brown had an interest in the developing world. Jay Lovestone had no interest at all in that. Everything was viewed through the Communist angle. Jay Lovestone was a cynic and didn't trust many people. Irving was more close to reality because he was living in Europe and traveling in Africa and Asia. Lovestone only traveled to Europe once for the establishment of the ICFTU and trips to NATO to meet with General Gunther and to Germany. They, however, complemented each other. It was the strongest team that you could ever dream of. It was described in many publications--Time Magazine, Esquire, anything you want, calling Irving "the one-man State Department." When Esquire and other magazines such as Reader's Digest had that series "The 100 Most Important Men in the World," Irving was included. It was not only labor circles that portrayed his influence, it was universally recognized.

Q: Well, Lovestone had this conversation from Communism to anti-Communism. Was Irving Brown ever active politically with any of the New York-based groups? There were a lot of different groups on the left.

BROMBART: No. Irving Brown was in the UAW, as far as I understand. Some argue that he had been a member of the Communist Party for a short time. Lovestone had a

legendary association with the Communist Party. Irving was close to many of the Socialists at that time, but he kept his distance even from them.

Q: He never became active politically in any of the American parties?

BROMBART: Oh, no. As I mentioned before, he was very close to some of the Republicans, although he formulated policy for both the Democrats and the Republicans. He always said that Vice President Nixon's trip in 1957 in Africa was the beginning of a review of African policies as far as the United States was concerned. He traveled to Africa with then Vice President Humphrey. I have documentation from that trip where Humphrey said, "Look, it's my trip, not your trip." In the receiving lines when they passed, the presidents of those states were going to shake hands first with Irving and then with Vice President Humphrey. When they arrived in Somalia, it was all over the newspaper. There was a big banner: Welcome, Irving Brown and the Vice President. It speaks for itself. When I was with Irving in Senegal or any other African state, presidents would come to him. They would say, "Irving, we need to talk to you about that." They knew they could not succeed through diplomatic channels. The confidence of George Meany in Irving Brown extended also to the fact that he was sent to Vietnam to organize trade unions. It was not the head of the Asian-American Free Labor Institute but when something significant had to be done, it was Irving's task.

Q: How did he meet all of these African leaders? Did he meet them as trade unionists in many cases in Geneva? Did he travel to all of the African countries?

BROMBART: Yes. The first meetings were at the ICFTU in 1945, 1949, and so on when he took opportunities to meet with leaders at international conferences.

Q: And the ICFTU invited African leaders up to Brussels to attend the conferences?

BROMBART: Yes, to the conventions, conferences, and seminars. While he was in Europe, he began to invite African nationalists who were traveling on invitations from the Socialist International or attending some UN conference to meet with him. But it began with the North African trade unionists.

Q: And these meetings were primarily in Paris?

BROMBART: They were in Paris, Brussels, and Scandinavia. All kinds of anti-colonialist, French and English speaking trade unionists came to Paris from Africa. I could mention meetings with Jean Rous and many other people who were advocating the independence of African nations. Don't forget, at that time, Irving was also a founder of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Not too many people know that. That organization focused on the mobilization of democratic forces, not necessarily on Jay Lovestone's strict anti-Communist agenda. Irving said, "If you were a democrat, you are also an anti-Communist."

Q: So he had no problems in dealing with Social Democrats as well as. . .

BROMBART: Not with Social Democratic parties and trade unionists.

Q: Some of the AFL-CIO folks had trouble with Socialists.

BROMBART: Maybe.

Q: But Irving had no problem with Socialists?

BROMBART: No. To succeed in Europe at that time, you had to work with the Social Democrats and there were many different kinds. Irving's first office in Europe was not in Paris but in Brussels. Then he found in the Social Democrats in Belgium the best illustration of what he wanted, the expulsion of all the Communists from the labor movement. This was a demonstration that a Communist trade union was not welcome in every Western country.

Q: Did Jay Lovestone share that position? Was he also willing to deal with Socialists who were non-Communist?

BROMBART: He would deal with anybody who was anti-Communist, even if they were conservative. At that time, you had an organization in the ICFTU of trade unionists in exile, but some of them were conservative. But there was a realization that the Soviet empire was not only expanding, but was ready to subvert every institution in the non-Soviet sphere.

Q: You mentioned that Irving Brown had many contacts in North Africa, including, obviously, Algeria. Was there some point at which the French government wanted to expel Irving?

BROMBART: They did!

Q: Did they expel him?

BROMBART: They did.

Q: Were you there at the time?

BROMBART: No, that was before my time. He was expelled by the Governor General of Algeria Lacoste. In the annals of U.S. foreign affairs, there are a lot of messages from the ambassador and from the French Government on Irving. At one point, Lacoste said, "Who is this damn Irving Brown? Is he representing your policies?" Then the State Department said, "We wish he did." All this is in the archives.

Q: He never equivocated, did he, in his support of the North African independence movement?

BROMBART: No, again there was a trade union and human rights dimension. There was also a U.S. political interest that these independent movements accede to independence. If not for the United States, they would have turned to the Communist countries for help. That was true in North Africa, in Africa, in Asia, everywhere. There was a need for a group of nations to become truly non-aligned and at the same time oppose Marxist-Leninism.

Q: I wonder if you could explain the background of the AFL-CIO's decision to support Buthelezi. I remember he got a prize a few years back. With 20/20 hindsight, one wonders why.

BROMBART: This is a situation in which I was directly involved. He got the George Meany Human Rights Award with somebody else at that time, the father of a white journalist who was killed by the South African regime. That is number one.

Secondly, we have to look precisely at the dates. In the 1970s, the AALC organized its first meeting in Botswana with the emerging South African trade union organizations that were only legalized 15 years later. We had Buthelezi people present. Irving met several times with Buthelezi and the Rathbun book quotes Irving as saying that he met Buthelezi and saw in him the first black South African nationalist. It's perfectly true. At that time, there was no one else. Who did you want to recognize? The ANC was underground or did not even exist. The Communist Party was in exile. There was no representative of the black South Africans other than Buthelezi, though he didn't represent anyone else but the seven to eight million Zulus. We continued to support Buthelezi because of the need to respect his place in the nation of South Africa. In the ICFTU we were opposed by our so-called "friends" from Scandinavia, who were saying, "Why don't you give 100 percent support to the ANC?" I remember saying to my Norwegian colleague, "Do you have a final solution for seven million people again? What do you want? To eliminate the Zulus?" Of course, you have to place those discussions in that time's context. You will see that nobody will say that in ex-Yugoslavia, you have to eliminate the Serbs or the Croats or the Macedonians. A new situation exists today, but at that time Irving saw it in the same context, that Algeria could not continue on as a Department of France and that Morocco and Tunisia were Protectorates that had achieved the right to govern themselves. The South Africans had a right to establish a nation like anybody else and get rid of Apartheid.

Buthelezi and history proved him right. Buthelezi became the Vice President of South Africa.

Q: Is he part of a coalition?

BROMBART: No, he is not part of the coalition. The coalition consists of the ANC, the Communist Party, and COSATU, the left Communist-controlled union. But Mandela respected Buthelezi and made him vice president. When Mandela left the country on two occasions, Buthelezi became acting president. All those radical romantic idiots don't understand that. It's just a sign that they apply their own view or methods on a situation that is far more complex than it appears to be.

Q: We have covered most of the questions I had. One question I had was on day-to-day operations in the AALC. What was the relationship with the AFL-CIO International Department? Was the executive director of the AALC pretty much free to run autonomous activities within certain guidelines. How did that work? Was there operational involvement by the head of the International Department?

BROMBART: I think I said that Jay Lovestone was not particularly interested in developmental aid policies. Therefore, he left the control to the executive directors of the four institutes.

Q: So Irving Brown had wide leeway then?

BROMBART: In the AALC, very much so. With Irving, it involved the fact that he was also director of the ICFTU office in New York until Meany under pressure from the ICFTU asked him to choose between the two. Of course, he chose. . .

Q: His official position in the ICFTU was what?

BROMBART: At a certain moment, S. G. Becu asked for the closure of the AFL-CIO office in Paris, and Meany decided to bring back Irving, but continued to leave the office open. The deal with Becu was that Irving Brown would become the director of the ICFTU office in New York. That was in 1962 or so. In 1964, he became also the Executive Director of the African-American Labor Center. One year later, he had to drop the directorship of the ICFTU office. In 1973 he returned as Director of the AFL-CIO office in Paris. Yes, under Jay Lovestone, Irving Brown was more autonomous.

Then came the troubling period with the directorship of Ernie Lee, which complicated our relations with AID and the U.S. Department of State. Ernie Lee was more involved in the running of the institutes, and he certainly prompted Meany to ask for the move of the African-American Labor Center from New York to Washington.

There was all along a good relationship with the International Affairs Department. It was the International Affairs Department that was always asking the institutes, "Do you have a draft resolution on a certain issue that you would like the AFL-CIO Executive Council and the Convention to adopt?" We would say, "Yes, there is something in Nigeria or in Poland or in Chile." When there was a need to send an observer somewhere on a mission, for example to meet Noriega or Mobutu, then you had to inform to the International Affairs Department. There had been an attempt by the International Affairs Department to

have more control. They asked for a weekly and monthly report. It never materialized, certainly not in the AALC. It may have happened in the other institutes. The institutes were questioned by the International Department, "Do you have any problem with the budget? What can we do?" There were constant consultations. For instance, if a key trade unionist was in the United States and wanted to meet George Meany. President Meany was always ready to receive them. There were no political disagreements, because we thought it was more or less understood that the institutes would not do anything which was not in the framework of the foreign policy decisions of the Federation.

Q: So while it became more bureaucratic over time, there weren't differences in philosophy.

BROMBART: For us it was administrative issues, not bureaucracy..

Q: You talked earlier about the problems of meeting AID's bureaucratic requirements.

BROMBART: There were several attempts from the International Department to return to what existed prior to the establishment of the institutes, namely that you had at that time staff members in the International Department responsible for a particular area of the world, among them Maida Springer for Africa and Andrew McClellan for Latin America. But when the institutes were established, there was no such need.

Q: They were put inside the institutes, weren't they?

BROMBART: We were the specialized people for a continent. Now we are back to a system where the staff of the International Affairs Department is monitoring the institutes. You have also an office in Paris that deals with Europe, the ICFTU, etc. But because of the changing nature of international labor issues, they complement each other. The institutes have no authority, let us say, in relations with the ICFTU as such, with the World Bank, the IMF, or the ITS's. This is all done through the International Department.

Q: Under the new arrangement, how are things structured?

BROMBART: Under the present arrangement?

Q: With the consolidation of the institutes, how does that work?

BROMBART: The consolidation of the institutes was actually requested as early as 1970 by a GAO report. You know about GAO reports. The GAO is like the ILO, extremely good in writing, in suggesting, in recommending but has no sense of the actors. Obviously, when you have a report from the Inspector General reviewing the institutes and you see that there are four institutes, but all part of the same organization, you ask why can't they streamline the operation? Why do you need four travel departments, four accounting offices, this and that? The logic is there.

Q: If the logic is there, why don't they talk to Bill Doherty and ask the same question again?

BROMBART: This idea has been floating around for some time. The move in 1979 of the AALC from New York to Washington was also a part of that process. Of course, Ernie Lee wanted total control and a continuation of contacts with the United Nations.

Then came restrictions in funding from AID. With less funds available, this idea of consolidation was put back on the table. The Free Trade Union Institute was also receiving funds from NED and this made some believe that it was time to have one organization with regional components. But more than that, even the regional components may not be so necessary today, because there are other issues called "global" that are more important and need to be dealt with on a worldwide basis and no longer on just a regional basis. This means multinational activities with organizations by industry, solidarity with striking workers in another industry, and a rationalization of all publications. There is nothing per se wrong with the new structure. What we face in so many situations in the ILO, the ICFTU, and the institutes is a limitation in human capability. You cannot compare the leaders of 20 years ago with the leaders of today, much less those leaders of 40 or 50 years ago. This is a new ball game. The only viable administration you can have in the ICFTU--and I've lived through that when I was still in Belgium--is when you have extraordinary people willing to devote their lives to international issues. At that time, they were paid more than what they were getting in their home countries. That was certainly the case also in the ILO. They are paid more in Geneva than in their own country, but in the trade unions the issues shifted to the national level. The trade union organizations became a social partner, and local salaries became much higher than in the international labor organizations--and nobody wanted to serve there any more. It was as simple as that. You do not have to search very long. The quality people who had a contribution to make decided to work in their own country and not work internationally anymore.

Q: Who is heading up the combined AFL-CIO institute?

BROMBART: Harry Kamberis, a former Foreign Service Officer. He had been a field staff in Asia. Several forced retirements occurred including Bill Doherty, Ken Hutchinson, and Pat O'Farrel. Now a new group of staff are directing the consolidated institute. Chuck Gray was also asked to leave and was replaced by the International Affairs Director of the Machinists Union, Barbara Shailor. (End of Side B, Tape III)

Q: So, is there a loss of continuity and expertise and maybe even dedication?

BROMBART: Oh, yes, but this is a classic situation when you have a new administration. You have to accept that the new administration is bringing in its own people.

Q: Especially where there is a "hostile takeover," so to speak.

BROMBART: Absolutely.

Q: With Kirkland, there pretty much was continuity from the Meany days.

BROMBART: Sure. The consolidation of the institutes has been made official by the new AFL-CIO leadership, but it was not a new idea. But to those in the new AFL-CIO administration the concept of consolidation was theirs.

Q: I think we've pretty much covered most of the subjects. I did want to ask whether you have written any books or publications that you would recommend?

BROMBART: No, only articles in the AFL-CIO INTERCO Press Service. For instance, I read today the resolution of the ICFTU on the situation in Iraq. What I wrote on Iraq in 1991 is also an example of a changing situation. In 1991, as Acting Executive Director of the AALC, I was able to organize with the Egyptian Trade Union the world conference in defense of solidarity of the workers in Kuwait. Articles were written all around the world attacking Saddam, etc. Now we have a resolution of the ICFTU. It's pitiable; it's absurd. It perpetuates this idiocy of always expressing the ICFTU view that "In the present crisis on Iraq, we have to find a solution to the crisis and to foster a spirit of conciliation to facilitate the search for an overall and lasting settlement." This is ILO's style. It means nothing.

Q: It doesn't say much.

BROMBART: It's pure garbage.

Before we finish, I want to return to. . .

Q: I have a couple of questions. Is the Ben Rathbun book something you would recommend as a good source of information on Irving Brown?

BROMBART: I would recommend it as a basic source of information on Irving Brown. Because there are no others, we cannot say that it is good or bad. I think some other writers will want to write a book on Irving. Editors who have seen the draft of Ted Morgan's book on Lovestone are very interested.

Q: I heard via the grapevine that the editors had taken out most of the portions on Irving Brown from the current version of Ted Morgan's book.

BROMBART: They removed most of a chapter from the book on the ICFTU but left the chapters on Irving Brown.

Q: Oh, they did. That's good.

BROMBART: As you know, there were several attempts to have Irving write a book. He always refused to do it. What is left, returning to what I mentioned before, is an opportunity, not only for writers, but for students writing doctoral dissertations to explore the archives, to talk to the few people remaining from that period, and to dig into the multifaceted activities of that man in terms of policies vis a vis the U.S. Government, the trust that he had with Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, and President Reagan's recognition of Irving when he awarded him the Medal of Freedom. There are no other staff people who ever reached such recognition. Meany and Kirkland got the Metal of Freedom by the fact of who they were, but very few people were recognized as being so decisive in so many situations or to have this incredible political sense of what happened in the world. Above all, Irving had the ability to be respected and he refused to implement policies that he didn't think workable.

Q: I take it that Ted Morgan has dealt in depth with a lot of the issues which are involved here?

BROMBART: Yes. As I mentioned, Ted Morgan's book on Jay Lovestone will be published in 1999 by Random House. But if you want to write about Irving Brown, you have to do what Ted Morgan did and go to the French, U.K., and Soviet archives. You must scrutinize the KGB archives and see how the directorate of propaganda from the Communist Party dealt with the success of Irving Brown.

Q: Have you ever thought of doing a monograph on Irving? You are extremely well-placed and could provide insight.

BROMBART: No, but I am working with friends on a history of the World Assembly of Youth, which was a successful organization confronting Soviet front organizations. Irving will be mentioned as well as Michael Ross and Jay Lovestone, because they were part of the international affairs "apparat" that fought Communist penetration the cultural Cold War.

Q: I have two quick questions about your early history. When you were active with the Belgian Socialist Youth, how much contact did you have with Africans from the Congo at that time? It's one of those intriguing questions, because the Congo seemed to be particularly unprepared for independence when it came.

BROMBART: My exact title was National Secretary of Educational Youth Organization of the Socialist Party. I referred earlier also to my activity as an elected leader of the Young Socialist Guard.

Q: That is a separate organization?

BROMBART: Yes. Education was the official youth wing of the Socialist Party. The other was a fringe organization from the party, which was finally expelled from that party.

The activities with the Congo were absolutely zero at that time. I was an activist before my military service in 1952 and when I joined the organization from 1954 to 1958, there were practically no relations with the colony. It was a continuation of Leopold II's private domain. The Socialist Party was excluded from any influence in the Congo and traveling to the Congo was subject to visas. It was a business empire. Any French citizen could travel to the French Empire, but that was totally different in Belgium. As far as the Socialist Youth is concerned, contact began in 1955 when there was an international fair and some Congolese came. This was also when Congolese students began coming to study in Belgium. Those students were not to be trained in diplomacy or in engineering. They were mostly in the social services, health, and education. The Belgium colonial theory was that you must have a base to have a nation; they must be fed; they must have primary education; they have to have social services, but they are not ready to lead. Of course, then came the African dimension, the Algerian situation, and then there was an opening. I think it wasn't until the 1960s that the Belgian Government changed the title of the ministry dealing with the Congo. It was called the Ministry of Colonialization (Ministère des Colonies). Then it became the Ministry of Overseas Development. It was in 1959 or 1960, when I was in WAY, that the Belgian Government called a "table ronde," a roundtable, in Brussels of all those political parties, and we came into contact with all of them. Suddenly the Congo had 60 parties. It was just another attempt to divide. Then came Lumumba, and the dramatic changes in the relations between Belgium and the Congo.

In 1962, the World Assembly of Youth a General Assembly in Accra, Ghana, and I met Nkrumah and Lumumba. There was a large delegation of the Congolese at that time. A few weeks later, Lumumba was assassinated. That is the history.

Q: So there really was very little contact.

BROMBART: Very little.

Q: People to people?

BROMBART: No, there was practically no contact. They were regarded as non-human.

Q: And there weren't many of these students in Brussels until 1959?

BROMBART: Yes, there were a lot of priests, who came. This was because there existed in the Congo a public school system and a Catholic school system, which did a lot of good work. There was no problem with that. Even today, the best musicians and artists are products of Catholic art schools. But this was another totally different approach to colonization. It was a **commercial** colonization.

Q: A personal fiefdom of the King?

BROMBART: Absolutely, and it continued like that until the 1950s. But I always give this example. In 1959, I went to Freetown. It was my first trip to Africa. It was a discovery. I will pass on the fact that the airport was so far away from the city that you had to proceed in a rowboat to Freetown. Now there is a ferry. I was staying in a hotel in the city, and suddenly, in the morning, I woke up. I said, "What is that?" It was a train passing in the street. When I traveled in other countries in French-speaking Africa or in the Congo at that time, I realized the difference in colonization. A French urbanist will never allow a train to pass in the main street. But the British put importance on using the most direct road. They would not go around the city. I began to discover a difference in colonization between the Belgians, French, Portuguese, and the English.

Q: Did you have much contact with Zaire when you were with the AALC?

BROMBART: Oh, yes.

Q: Was there a very active programs there?

BROMBART: Congo, now Zaire, was one of our main programs, and along with Irving, I was at the forefront of the unification of the Zaire labor movement. It was divided into four factions at that time. One was the creation of the FGTB in Belgium, and it was called "FGTK" for "Congo." One was the Christian Trade Union, which had the same name in Belgium. There was also a small Communist Party Union and a Free Trade Union movement. They used "free" like in the ICFTU. I succeeded after many, many months and patience to help them in the establishment of a unity trade union organization. That was the policy, which I tried to explain before, that we didn't want the African trade union organizations to remain dependent on the ex-colonial powers. They had to try to establish their own movements. Unity was not achieved until 1965. It was one of my first important assignments for the AALC after trips in North Africa and West Africa, where we faced some governmental interference in Senegal. Of course, in between was always North Africa.

Q: I have one other question about your background. When you were the labor secretary in Paris, which African countries' youth movements and trade unions were receptive to participation and how ideological were the Africans? We hear a lot that they were really more pragmatic than ideological in the sense of understanding theoretical Marxism-Leninism, or some other ideology.

BROMBART: In 1956 when I attended my first international meeting of the World Assembly of Youth, it was in Berlin. The candidates for the post of president of the World Assembly of Youth were two Africans. At that time I was absolutely unaware of Africa's situation. I only knew a bit about the Congo. I couldn't figure out why two Africans were candidates for the post of President. One was an outstanding statesman, who is still alive today and playing a role, Karefa-Smart from Sierra Leone. He is a doctor and later was an assistant deputy director of the World Health Organization. The other one was Antoine Lauwrence, one of the brightest people I have ever met. He made the

mistake of refusing to remain in Guinea after the no vote on the de Gaulle referendum promoted by Sekou Toure. He left and became a United Nations representative in several countries.

So to answer your question, at that time there was already a divorce between the leadership of the trade unions and the Socialist and Communist parties. For the democrats, the only open organization was the World Assembly of Youth. Therefore, you had people at that time who were beginning to put into question the theory of communist single party rule.

Q: "Guided democracy," I think, was the term they used.

BROMBART: That came afterwards. Unity of the party in its diversity, all those gimmicks to hide an authoritarian system. The system was oppressive. We talked about Buthelezi before. In other African countries, regimes attempted to void the distinction between tribes. "We are only one." We didn't realize at that time that it was folly. The repercussions came much later.

I will give you an example of a new direction for youth leaders who became involved in politics and civic organizations. Our aim was not for them to become what we were, democrats, capitalists, liberals, or whatever. No. We had to offer a platform where they would be comfortable, where we could detach the non-communists from the Communists.

The second objective was to persuade the non-aligned movement that we were also against colonialism and that the other side was only ideologically motivated. We also saw the need for trade unions in those developing countries to be more accessible to young workers. That was the period of the establishment of the youth wing of the trade union movement. It didn't last long. All of them were expelled, because they were taking over the trade union movement all over the place, in India, Malaysia, Lebanon, Trinidad, Senegal, and Somalia. Very few countries still have young workers movements. There isn't one in Belgium or in France. There is still one in Germany. They were absorbed by the political youth movements as in Austria. This is why we still have a problem with the trade union movements in terms of the needs of young workers. The Anglo-Saxons have always refused to consider youth a specific issue. They say, "You are workers. That is all that counts."

Q: I've covered most of my questions. Are there any observations you'd like to make?

BROMBART: No observations, but I think we have to insert something to the effect that the search for a new trade union internationalism is crucial. It is now being advocated by organizations that were not members of the WFTU, the ICFTU, or the WCL.

Q: We are talking about what time frame?

BROMBART: We are talking about the late 1980s. The fall of Communism made the ICFTU advocate a unity in the labor movement. It was a bureaucratic exercise to get as many members as possible. It disregarded the constitution of the ICFTU, which says that the ICFTU has to admit organizations that are genuinely voluntary organizations of workers. This is why they got into conflict with Bulgarian and Hungarian unions, which in no sense have free trade union organizations.

Then parallel to that search for the unity of the ICFTU came at that time such organizations like the Communist-led COSATU in South Africa, the Communist-led KMU in the Philippines, and the CUT in Brazil, which formed a coalition.

Then you have emerging "non-aligned" organizations that did not feel comfortable in the World Confederation of Labor. This was the case in 1987 and 1988 with the CFDT in France. This was very important historically. The CFDT changed its name. It was "CFTC" before - Catholic and then Christian. They didn't want to join the ICFTU or the WFTU. They decided to affiliate to the ETUC. What I want to say here is that there are organizations that decided that there was no place for a democratic organization to exist without being affiliated to an international organization. For them, the WCL was not representative anymore. I don't think it was a question of religion. It became the "Confédération Française de Travailleurs Democratique." Later they concluded that they should join the ICFTU as "That is the only trade union organization where we can fight for the Social Democracy principle."

Q: Is that right? Well, the WFTU, by that time, was falling apart.

BROMBART: It was falling apart. But they were never inclined to dissolve.

Q: Right. And the WCL, in effect, has always been big in Belgium, but in other countries, it was sort of a minuscule third party.

BROMBART: Yes, but they also are represented in Holland and because of the Vatican's influence and finance, the WCL is still a social force in Latin America and Asia.

Q: I met remnants of them out in Thailand among other places.

BROMBART: Yes. At one point, they even had as an affiliate an orthodox union in Israel.

Q: Okay, this is not just moderate Social Democracy.

BROMBART: No, in the search for a new internationalism, you see organizations joining the ICFTU because they want to have a political dimension. That is the danger of an organization which wants to group everything together and will accept everybody. It can plunge again into being an organization which is politically inclined rather than being

more trade union inclined. Their platform is now not only Socialist but anti-capitalist and anti-United States.

Q: So you see a big danger for the ICFTU in being subverted by these radical political elements?

BROMBART: Yes. Then the question is, what is the new internationalism? In Davos, at the last meeting in Switzerland, President Sweeney spoke about the new internationalism, but I don't know what it is. He didn't explain.

Q: It's sort of this vague concept.

BROMBART: He says the new internationalism means an organization which will redefine the links between workers' organizations in the world in fighting corporations, promoting human rights and denouncing trade union violations. But I don't know what this new role means.

Q: Are there any other observations you would like to make, David?

BROMBART: No. I am really thankful for that exercise. We will go through the transcript. We need to respect the chronology.

Q: Okay. Well, I certainly appreciate your participation in our interview program for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. It's been a great pleasure. I've learned a great deal myself.

BROMBART: That's a dangerous statement!

Q: Thank you.

BROMBART: Thank you for this opportunity.

End of interview