

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

**HENRI SOKOLOVE**

*Interviewed by: Morris Weisz*  
*Initial interview date: February 14, 1992*  
*Copyright 1998 ADST*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Background	
Born and raised in Pennsylvania	
Early Career	
War Production Board	1942
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration China	
Entered the Foreign Service	1948
New Delhi, Labor Attaché	1948-1953
Previous Labor Attachés	
Ambassador Loy Henderson	
Making contacts	
Communist trade unions	
Relationship with Embassy	
Ambassador Chester Bowles	
Independent reporting	
Intra Union conflicts	
Relations with Indian labor leaders	
Visiting US labor leaders	
Irving Brown	
George Weaver	
Hind Mazdoor Sabha	
Maniben Kara	
Karnik	
INTUC members	
US/India Trade Unions relationship	
State Department, Acting Labor Advisor, European Affairs	1954-1955

Manila, Philippines: Attaché Bob Kinney, Labor Attaché	1955-1957
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Consulate General to Embassy	1957-1958
State Department: Special Assistant to Public Affairs	1958-1960
Tokyo: USIA, Japan: Public Affairs Officer Labor Attaché Silverberg Labor issues	1960-1961
Retirement	1961
Post-Retirement State Department: Foreign Service Institute – 1961-c1968 USUN Asia Society McCarthyism Sol Oser	1961-
General Comments and personalities Ashok Mehta Ambassador Chester Bowles Social Affairs Attaché Ruby Parnell Assistant Labor Attaché Edith Wall Labor Attachés work division Attaché's guidance from Washington Congressional (lack of) interest Influence of labor unions	

## INTERVIEW

*Q: This is Morris Weisz and I am interviewing an old friend and a former labor officer in the Foreign Service, Henri Sokolove. Henri and I worked together in the War Production Board and we are going to go very briefly through his career until he came into the Foreign Service. Also on this tape is Mrs. Henri Sokolove, Hazel, who will help us identify the different posts and the approximate dates of service at each of them.*

*Henri, why don't you begin by giving us a few minutes on your background, your education, where you were born, etc. until you came to work for the government in the N.R.A. [National Recovery Administration]?*

SOKOLOVE: I was born and raised in Philadelphia. I came to the Government in 1933 in the National Recovery Administration. I got into the labor program in the War Production Board in 1942.

*Q: That was in the Labor Productivity Division of the War Production Board, where we were colleagues working for Joe Keenan. Then at the end of the war we each went our different ways. I went back to the National Labor Relations Board and you went where?*

SOKOLOVE: I went to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which was headed by La Guardia at that time.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: First La Guardia, then Ben Kaiser.

SOKOLOVE: A man who doesn't play any role in our business.

*Q: You weren't in labor work at UNRRA, just relief activities?*

SOKOLOVE: Right. In China. That's when I went to China.

*Q: I have the list of areas where you served. It does have a number of places in China. Would you please give us the succession of the places where you served in China?*

SOKOLOVE: Shanghai, Hangzhou (Hopei Province), and somewhere in north China.

*Q: How long were you there?*

SOKOLOVE: A year.

*Q: You were there in relief activities? No labor?*

SOKOLOVE: Right. No labor.

*Q: And then?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: He came back for a variety of reasons which I am not privileged to know or discuss.

SOKOLOVE: What's that?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Well, you never explained why you wanted to come back since China was your great love.

SOKOLOVE: Where did I go?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: You came back to the United States and applied for a position in the State Department in the Foreign Service, and you were admitted as an FSO, first as an FSR, and then as an FSO. Then in 1948, you went to India as a Labor Attaché.

SOKOLOVE: Okay.

*Q: That's the sequence that we want. So what it amounts to is that your relief activities, as valuable and interesting as they were, were not in the labor field?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: And you reentered the labor field...*

SOKOLOVE: In 1948.

*Q: ...being assigned to New Delhi?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: And in New Delhi, according to the records that we have, you spent the following years, and let me just get those...*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Five years, 1948 to 1953.

*Q: All I can tell you is that our friend Harold Davey in the Labor Department has gotten out a big list of places where labor officers have served and, according to him, Henri Sokolove was assigned to India seven different years from...*

SOKOLOVE: 1948 to 1953 is what I have always said.

*Q: Okay, let's get that down. Well, he [Davey] may be wrong. He has you down from 1948 to Dave Burgess's arrival, which he has as 1955. Are you telling me that there were three years [in which Embassy New Delhi was] without a Labor Attaché?*

SOKOLOVE: That's all right. Either that or maybe Edith Wall performed the function.

*Q: Was Edith Wall there at the time you came?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: She came later. She came after 1948.

*Q: Oh, boy. We are going to have a good time correcting the careful records of our friend Harold Davey, who has Edith Wall coming in 1950, which would have been after you came?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: We came in 1948 and I think she probably came in 1950. That is conceivable.

*Q: She was your Assistant Labor Attaché?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: After you had been there a couple of years she came in 1950 and she stayed three or four years with you.*

*Who was the Ambassador at the time?*

SOKOLOVE: We started with Loy Henderson.

*Q: Oh, my God! Really?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Was Henderson before Bowles?

SOKOLOVE: Of course.

*Q: Then Bowles came for his first tour. I was there for his second. What were the outlines of your function? Did he tell you what to do? Or did you just go out and make your own contacts?*

SOKOLOVE: The latter.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I might add always the latter. No matter what post he was in he set the program.

SOKOLOVE: That's a fact.

*Q: If that's a fact, let's have it down. Don't be overly modest.*

SOKOLOVE: It's not a matter of being modest, it's a matter of being accurate.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: That's right and I want to be accurate.

*Q: And I want both of you to be accurate. Okay, you then sort of made your own thing. Just let me tell you why I think that is quiet relevant, because, as distinguished from when I came, there was a very different understanding, namely I came there to prepare a labor program. I got all sorts of materials as to what they wanted me to do. I had to talk to...*

SOKOLOVE: Now, where was this?

*Q: When I came to India. So you came there with sort of an open assignment and you started making your contacts.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: Was there any limitation on who you could approach?*

SOKOLOVE: None.

*Q: Where you either encouraged or discouraged from seeing the left?*

SOKOLOVE: Neither. Just go out and do your thing.

*Q: Including making contact with the Communist trade unions?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes.

*Q: That's very interesting because this is another difference between your service and others, in which we were discouraged or forbidden in some cases from contacting the [Communists].*

SOKOLOVE: Oh, really?

*Q: In my case, I was forbidden in many cases from getting in touch with them because the Cold War was a little older. It was after 1962. So you sort of went off on your own?*

SOKOLOVE: Right. Let me make it clear that the Communists wouldn't have wanted to have any contact with the American Embassy whatsoever, so whatever contacts I had were just casual, accidental [contacts]. They were not structured in any way either by me or them.

*Q: Was Dange the head of the [Communist] union at that time?*

SOKOLOVE: I think so.

*Q: Yes, he lasted a long time. Okay, the next question on our list is how you worked within the framework of the Embassy? I take it you were sort of separate from it? Were you a member of the country team? Was there a country team?*

SOKOLOVE: No, there was no country team.

*Q: You reported to whom?*

SOKOLOVE: I reported to Washington.

*Q: To the Ambassador?*

SOKOLOVE: Well, as far as the Ambassador was concerned, our relationship administratively was that I reported to him.

*Q: To him directly, not through the political or the economic counselor?*

SOKOLOVE: Right, but in fact as far as reporting was concerned, and underscore the word reporting, I reported to Washington. Nobody in the Embassy knew other than by reading my despatches what was going on, and, of course, Washington was just a listening area. They took what I wrote and filed it away. Nobody ever instructed me what to do or not to do.

*Q: Yes, it became much more structured in other cases under different circumstances. What it amounts to is that you were an independent operator. The Ambassador may have signed your cables, but he never told you to do more on this or less on that or something.*

SOKOLOVE: Right. Leave out the commas and the exclamation points.

*Q: And that was the case both with Henderson, who certainly had a different approach, and later on with Bowles?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes

*Q: Bowles took no interest at all?*

SOKOLOVE: None.

*Q: That is so fascinating*

SOKOLOVE: Because he came into a structured situation. I just went on doing what I had done before and currently then.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: There were a number of conflicts between you and Bowles. Let's face it!

SOKOLOVE: About what?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I really don't know what it was, but I'm sure it was your work. I think he wanted to have his finger into it. Look, I remember it very well. There were times even though he came to you when you were on leave in Washington because he was told, "You see Sokolove. He can give you more information about India than anyone." So we started out very nicely. I thought we were great friends and then there was this coolness. Now I don't know what it was.

SOKOLOVE: First of all, I never felt friendly or cool toward him because what I did was to write despatches about things that I was doing, so he wouldn't have any reason to interfere or try to interfere.

*Q: Well, let me then tell you that a guy I served with in India, who later became an ambassador to Bangladesh, Howie Schaffer, was a young officer when I was there in 1965 to 1971. He is writing a biography of Bowles and has interviewed me at length and I am specifically going to suggest that he look into that first term of Bowles in India and Bowles' relationship with the labor program, so if you have anything to say about that, fine. In your days Bowles was the Ambassador there under Truman.*

*In any event your description of what you did in India was far different from that of others and therefore it will be very interesting to us. You were operating sort of as an independent person, with the Ambassador signing off on your cables but with no effort to supplement or use your information and certainly not to control or even comment on what you were talking about.*

SOKOLOVE: Exactly.

*Q: What about your relations with the political and economic sections? Did they have any interest in the impact of the labor situation upon the economics or the politics of the country?*

SOKOLOVE: None whatsoever.

*Q: That's strange. What if you felt the Political Section was going off on the wrong track? Or the labor situation would have affected adversely what we were doing or inhibit it in some way or enhance it in some way?*

SOKOLOVE: The labor situation was its own world. It did not impact on the general political situation or the economic conditions of India.

*Q: What about a big strike that would affect their ability to ship food from one part of the country?*

SOKOLOVE: None whatsoever.

*Q: They had no such influence at that time?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: Did the battles among the unions, the Socialists, the INTUC, the Communist unions, etc., create a problem for the economy or polity of the country?*

SOKOLOVE: None, none whatever.



*Q: That's fascinating.*

SOKOLOVE: At least not at that stage.

*Q: Yes, I understand. Do you have any comments on the personalities and policies of the different labor people in India? Their reactions to you or their friendliness or lack of friendliness?*

SOKOLOVE: They were all personally friendly and were only too glad to tell me what they thought about [general] conditions in India without feeling that those conditions impacted on the labor situation.

*Q: What about the relationship between the various Indian unions and the AFL and the CIO separately? Were there AFL and CIO people who came to India and what did they do?*

SOKOLOVE: Both of them came and visited and came to me to find out who was who in the Indian labor movement and I helped them to make contacts without feeling any complication in the situation, either for them or for me.

*Q: Who came for the AFL? Harry Goldberg?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: George Weaver?

*Q: No. He was CIO. Irving Brown?*

SOKOLOVE: Brown

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Definitely. I remember we used to sleep outside. I used to say "sleep outside together", because it was so hot when he was there. I remember he suffered.

*Q: Did he stay long?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Well, he didn't stay briefly. Henri and he went off several times to...

*Q: Traveled together.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: Was he particularly dependent or independent of what you did? He did what he wanted to do and you accompanied him.*

SOKOLOVE: Right. I helped him do what he wanted to do.

*Q: You, of course, knew him from the War Production Board.*

SOKOLOVE: Yes.

*Q: We all worked together. Who, if anyone, was the CIO person who came?*

SOKOLOVE: That's what I am trying to remember.

*Q: Victor Reuther?*

SOKOLOVE: I don't think that Victor came.

*Q: George Weaver?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: George Weaver definitely came.

SOKOLOVE: Yes, but when did he come?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: That's what I cannot recall.

*Q: What was the purpose of his coming? He was representing the CIO, I suppose.*

SOKOLOVE: Well, I'm not sure. That's why I'm hedging, because it may have been that he was already in Government.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: You see, I'm mixing George's visit to India with a much later [visit], because George came out to Malaya when we were there.

SOKOLOVE: Forget Malaya. Let's stick to India.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, no. I'm just saying...

*Q: What she's saying is that he did visit you later. He came to the Government in 1960 as the Assistant Secretary of Labor [for International Affairs]. This would have been before, when he was still with the CIO.*

SOKOLOVE: That would have been the situation.

*Q: Similarly he went around with you or made his separate contacts?*

SOKOLOVE: We wouldn't have had any trouble one way or the other.

*Q: Were the visits by the AFL and the CIO useful in any way or contrary to the interests of the Embassy?*

SOKOLOVE: No, none at all.

*Q: Useful for contacts?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: There was a particular group in the H.M.S. -- You remember the Socialist Trade Union. ...*

SOKOLOVE: Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

*Q: Right. That group was particularly friendly with the Royists in the... and they were close of course to the Lovestone group in the AFL, but that didn't...*

SOKOLOVE: I don't think it impacted on the Indian situation.

*Q: Right. Did you remember Maniben Kara?*

SOKOLOVE: Oh, very well. She was a good personal friend of ours.

*Q: She was a personal friend of every one of our Labor Attachés...*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, gracious yes. She was a remarkable gal. She and I had a very good relationship.

*Q: We did too. She used to stay at the house. She was so wonderful, and I'm sure that carried through. Any other personalities you would want to describe in any way?*

SOKOLOVE: Only if you could mention a name.

*Q: Karnik?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes, well he would have been very close to Maniben.

*Q: Right, I am now going through those people. Karnik was sort of a theoretical leader; Maniben, on the other hand, was the practical trade union leader and later on became very much more famous. Bagaram Tulpule?*

SOKOLOVE: No recollection.

*Q: What about the INTUC people, the INTUC, the conservative, pro-Nehru...*

SOKOLOVE: They really weren't pro-Nehru. They were pro-Congress Party.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, yes. You knew many, many INTUC people and they came to our home. I'm trying to think of names.

*Q: Ramanujam?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

*Q: Abad Ali?*

SOKOLOVE: Abad Ali, I think he was in Bombay, wasn't he?

*Q: Yes.*

SOKOLOVE: I don't think I had much contact with him.

*Q: Ambekan?*

SOKOLOVE: No, it doesn't ring a bell.

*Q: Did you go very often to Ahmedabad and Bombay? What about your travels? Were you free to travel whenever you wanted?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes, but there was no inclination [to travel] because those people would come...

*Q: ...to Delhi, how well I remember, and they preferred to. Did you travel in the south at all, Madras, et cetera?*

SOKOLOVE: What did I do in...

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I know you went to Madras several times and he went to Ceylon.

*Q: Oh, yes, but Ceylon was not within your area [of responsibility] ?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No.

*Q: What you have described is a sort of independent operation in which you were a free-wheeler, to put it bluntly.*

SOKOLOVE: Right. Well, maybe it would be interesting from your viewpoint rather than mine to compare or contrast that with other Labor Attachés there.

*Q: Oh, definitely with others, especially after I get into the next area that I want to get into and that is the AID program. We had an AID program. Was this before the activities of people like Walkinshaw? Does the name sound familiar to you?*

SOKOLOVE: It's a familiar name but nothing else.

*Q: He was the AID labor man. This was before the AID program?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes.

*Q: The AID program came later and therefore you did not influence which trade union programs should be supported and which should not be supported?*

SOKOLOVE: Absolutely none.

*Q: As was the case later on.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: That is a difference we would want to indicate.*

SOKOLOVE: Yes. It would be interesting for me to read that after you have done it, but it had no reality in my time.

*Q: You were then an FSR and you became an FSO during the period that you were in India, or...?*

SOKOLOVE: I can't really answer that. I don't know but if there was a transition it didn't seem to matter to me.

*Q: At some point you became an FSO?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: It was early on.

*Q: Can you remember the grade you had?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

*Q: FSO-2 or FSO-3?*

SOKOLOVE: FSO-3. I think it was three.

*Q: And was that the grade you had when you left or had you been promoted?*

SOKOLOVE: No, I hadn't been promoted.

*Q: At the end of your service in India, did you attempt in any way to get a more general assignment? Did you want a labor assignment? What was your next assignment?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: After India we came home and went back to India?

*Q: You went home on home leave?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes. Back to India and from India...

SOKOLOVE: I thought I was in Washington.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: You went to Washington for a period and were assigned to... Was it Manila? Manila was the second assignment? Manila was 1955 to 1957. Malaya was 1957 to 1958.

SOKOLOVE: Yes, but neither of those had anything to do with labor.

*Q: That's what I want to get into.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Nothing after that.

*Q: According to our records your only labor assignment was in India beginning in 1948.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: Your next assignment then was Washington and then Manila, did you say?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: 1955 to 1957 was Manila, so I think that...

SOKOLOVE: But it was not a labor thing.

*Q: That's what I want to know.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: It was a political assignment. A political officer. Yes.

*Q: At the grade three. Now what we are interested in is the degree to which your labor experience, in India and before that, had any effect, plus or minus, on your service as a general political officer. For instance, was there a Labor Attaché in Manila at that time?*

SOKOLOVE: I think there was. I think there was.

*Q: The Labor Attaché in Manila at that time was Bob Kinney, whom I interviewed a couple of years ago.*

SOKOLOVE: We would have been personally friendly but would have definitely kept out of each other's hair.

*Q: Yes, I can imagine that. You knew Kinney of course?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes

*Q: I interviewed him last year. In any event we have his recollections of it, but let me go a little into the [question] of why we are interested in it, and that is this: We have had cases in which a former labor attaché becomes a political officer and sometimes the head of a political section with a labor attaché reporting to him or operating separately. In some cases, especially where the person is a supervisor of the labor attaché he tries to impose his ideas on the operations of the labor attaché. In other cases, he remains very separate? What I wanted to know is, to what degree did your work in Manila affect in any way Bob Kinney's work?*

SOKOLOVE: I don't know what Kinney would say, but I would say not at all.

*Q: Not at all. But if you were a political officer, you saw his reporting, and he saw your reporting, but neither of you would ever discuss [your work] with the other. "Gee, you know you analyze this one way and I think that maybe it is better to take into account what the trade unions are doing about this."*

SOKOLOVE: No, that would not have arisen. What I am trying to visualize about Manila is that I was not in the Political Section. I was somewhere else.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Really?

*Q: Information? Economics?*

SOKOLOVE: Maybe economics.

*Q: I see.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I disagree with that because do you remember Botica Boya?

SOKOLOVE: Yes, but that has nothing to do with labor.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Of course not, I am saying that it's political. It was definitely political and you were... In fact, the ambassador... Who was our ambassador? He didn't like the idea of you going to see these far left Filipinos.

SOKOLOVE: Well, I don't have any recollection of that.

*Q: Well, let me ask you this. Who did you report to?*

SOKOLOVE: Where?

*Q: In Manila. The head of the section, or were you again independent like you were in India?*

SOKOLOVE: Well, I have no recollection of anything, either that I did or didn't.

*Q: Do you remember who Henri reported to?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, I'd have to think about it.

*Q: Okay.*

SOKOLOVE: Part of the problem is that Manila was a large, diffuse situation in which people didn't really run into the problem of who you reported to.

*Q: We did have an AID program there by that time, didn't we? Or did we?*

SOKOLOVE: I imagine.

*Q: Was Tony Luchek there at the time?*

SOKOLOVE: No, I would have remembered Tony if he were there.

*Q: How did you know Tony?*

SOKOLOVE: I knew him in the N.R.A. I guess.

*Q: Yes, I forgot. You are a real old timer. Well, you spent a couple of years in Manila?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes, we spent a little over two years.

*Q: And then came back to Washington?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: We went straight to Malaya and Henri was designated to help convert a consular operation into an embassy, because they had been under the influence of the British; so we took a ship and went to Kuala Lumpur.

*Q: And you stayed there how long?*



MRS. SOKOLOVE: Well, we stayed a very short time because we should have gone home directly and the Department said you should have some leave, so they sent us home, and we never did go back to Kuala Lumpur, but the conversion had taken place and we went through Merdeka.

*Q: Merdeka meaning freedom.*

SOKOLOVE: Freedom, yes.

*Q: And the Embassy was set up and you went on to the next assignment?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Well, we went back to Washington and we lived on the Potomac.

*Q: Before we get to that, just let me get to Malaya. In Malaya there was no labor work at all? There was no Labor Attaché or anything like that?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: You are back in Washington without a labor assignment again. Right?*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: And working in the Department [of State] doing something?*

SOKOLOVE: What? I don't know.

*Q: You were in the Department for how long? A couple of years?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I don't know. 1958 or 1959. Gosh, you had lots of labor contact in Washington, so I am trying to think...

SOKOLOVE: Well, that's because I knew people, but I don't think it's...

*Q: Henri didn't do any work in the area.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, I don't think so.

*Q: Okay, then you go on...*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Then we go out to the next assignment, which was Tokyo, Japan [in] 1960

*Q: And by that time Silberberg was the Labor Attaché and what was your function?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Staying out of Silverberg's hair.

SOKOLOVE: No, no. We didn't have any problem at all. We were friendly and if I did anything, it was to fill in Silverberg on what I knew.

*Q: Unfortunately, as you know, Silverberg is gone. I don't know how we are going to get his recollections of that. I hope he left some records. What was your duty there?*

SOKOLOVE: That's what I am trying to remember.

*Q: Was it in the information area?*

SOKOLOVE: No, no.

*Q: Political officer?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: But it seemed to me -- but I could be wrong about this -- that the Embassy as such treated him like they wished he wasn't there.

SOKOLOVE: Why?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: It had something to do with the structure of the Embassy at the time.

SOKOLOVE: If they had a Labor Attaché that was enough of an explanation.

*Q: Yes, but you must have had some assignment?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes, but that is what I can't remember. At most it was a general political assignment.

*Q: I see. [An assignment] which might or might not have encouraged you to supply information in the labor field to the extent you got it to Silverberg.*

SOKOLOVE: Sure.

*Q: Okay. You were there how long?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: About a year and a half, I think.

*Q: And then?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, it was when we were in Japan that Henri was waiting for a large sum money to conduct some project that the State Department had suggested to him before he went out.

SOKOLOVE: What?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes, yes. Now wait a minute. I'm sure you are going to recall it. And at the moment that Congress agreed that the money be given, Henri decided to go home to find out if everything was going to be copacetic for that project. He went home and it was in the corridors of the State Department that he was running into friends, people he knew, and they wondered why he didn't accept what everybody was talking about. What were they talking about? That any officer who had served thirty years or close [to thirty years] who would retire and who elected to retire before April 1st, I think, would be given an eight percent additional bonus. When Henri came back he had already put his foot in the door, because it was already finished. I mean normally he would not have been eligible because he didn't get in on time. When he came back he said, "How would you like to retire?"

*Q: You retired as early as 1961?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: He was 52 years old.

*Q: Boy, and you have been retired ever since?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Well, wait a minute. He wasn't retired ever since.

SOKOLOVE: You ought to learn by now that when people retire that's...

*Q: That's the beginning.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: He became a consultant to the State Department and for seven years that's what he did.

SOKOLOVE: What did I do?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: He was self-employed. I don't know what you did. You'll have to tell me.

SOKOLOVE: No, I have no recollection of having done anything.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, he taught at the Foreign Service Institute.

SOKOLOVE: Well, that wouldn't have had anything to do with labor.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, no. I'm telling you that from India on it was really no specific labor [work], at least I can't remember it and you can't either.

*Q: That was for seven years until you were 59 and then did you come down [to Florida]?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, we went... Oh, I said to him, "I'm not going to live in New York any more. I'm going to be home in Maryland where we had established a home." That seems to be the moment when he said, "Okay, I'm going to retire in March." And then he went with an organization that was just fascinating, the Asia Society.

*Q: Oh, were you in the Asia Society?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, yes.

SOKOLOVE: I was there before there was an Asia.

*Q: The Asia Society but that was in New York, wasn't it?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Right. Yes, so we stayed some more in New York and he always enjoyed that tremendously and then...

SOKOLOVE: The moral is simple. Leave before the police arrive.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I think that was it. When he finally left... and before that so interesting. Before he went to the Asia Society, he was a part of USUN.

*Q: Oh, I see.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: When did you do that? Was that after the Philippines?

SOKOLOVE: I don't know, dear, but anyway Murray doesn't want to know about those things.

*Q: No, the only thing that we would be very interested in is the extent to which your labor experience helped you or hindered you in connection with new assignments you had. That is a very interesting subject.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I can imagine that your interest in that.

SOKOLOVE: But I have no feeling one way or the other.

*Q: Fine, it's a very different experience from other people. There are a few other things that I want to go over with you. The Cold War, McCarthyism, civil rights. What impact did they have [on you]? Were you ever accused of anything like that?*

SOKOLOVE: No, the only thing I was ever accused of was being a reactionary.

*Q: Any particular reason?*

SOKOLOVE: No, just in general. From conversation.

*Q: But the whole McCarthyism...*

SOKOLOVE: Didn't touch me one way or the other.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: And you must remember the McCarthy thing was while we were out of the country. We really got it second hand from our friends, who were terribly upset, you know about the...

*Q: Well, yes, in ...*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: It was an ugly, ugly period

*Q: In some cases it created real problems.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes, I'm sure it did.

*Q: In the case of Val Lorwin... Did you know Val?*

SOKOLOVE: Oh, yes.

*Q: But you didn't have any problems?*

SOKOLOVE: No, to the contrary. I was a well-known reactionary.

*Q: You say that. I certainly would not have said that. But in what respect [were you reactionary]? Economics or politics?*

SOKOLOVE: No, in general. Some people were targeted by McCarthy and they had friends. Naturally their friends tended to be very anti-McCarthy. But I didn't have that situation.

*Q: You were never accused of being a Communist.*

SOKOLOVE: To the contrary.

*Q: We were talking about McCarthyism and things like that and you said that this never affected you because if anything you were already labeled an anti-Communist. To that I merely reply that there were plenty of people who were anti-Communists including me who had problems with McCarthyism.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: You have no other comments on that?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No, except to say at that time it seems to me that people like Sol Oser -- Did you know him?

*Q: Very well, sure. He's another guy we had in the War Production Board.*

SOKOLOVE: What about Sol Oser?

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I was just wondering if he fitted into any part of this picture with either McCarthyism, because I know there were many discussions that you had with... And Bob Asher, does he fit in anywhere?

*Q: No, not that I know of. Where did you know Bob? In Washington?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes.

*Q: And Sol in Washington too?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Yes.

*Q: Bob was with the State Department I think and Sol was with the AID agency.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, yes. That's right. I couldn't recall.

*Q: No, that's fine. I just wanted to make sure that you put in for the record what reactions you had personally or just in general about that. How about mentioning what sort of training, if any, you had before going out to your labor post? You didn't need any training obviously, I know. I didn't have any. Nowadays we have a training program...*

SOKOLOVE: I see. Well, the subject never came up, because I had already been in the NRA and developed a certain pretense of expertise, so they just took me for what I was.

*Q: What about the question of briefing before you went out? How did you prepare yourself for your assignment? You visited people or read stuff or... This is the India assignment. Did you have a general interest in India or was that only after you arrived there?*

SOKOLOVE: Well, I must have had an interest to go, but what it...

*Q: Oh, you volunteered for the job. You weren't assigned to it?*

SOKOLOVE: Right. It was a vacancy, so...

*Q: Right. Bang. Ashok Mehta. Did you get to know him?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, sure.

*Q: That's another name I wanted to talk to you about?*

SOKOLOVE: Yes, what about him?

*Q: Oh, just what your relations were with him. He was sort of a HMS'er, wasn't he?*

SOKOLOVE: Well, I am trying to remember who he was. There were two people whom I knew that could have been Ashok Mehta. Which one was he?

*Q: He's a dour looking guy with a beard or he was.*

SOKOLOVE: Beard? He must have grown that after I left...

*Q: A wonderful, friendly guy.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Oh, yes. Wasn't he the one who wrote that wonderful note to me when we invited him to a big dinner, who said -- because my invitations always read, "Please state vegetarian or non-vegetarian." He wrote back thanking me for the invitation and saying, "My wife is a vegetarian. I on the other hand being carnivorous..." That was Ashok Mehta.

SOKOLOVE: Well, anyway, there is nothing to say about Ashok Mehta unless you have some specific questions.

*Q: No, I just wanted to know whether you had any specific recollections of him other than the one about his wife.*

SOKOLOVE: ...about her being a vegetarian.

*Q: Well, that was a serious problem. How do you entertain in India in view of that since that made for fewer sit down dinners and more buffets.*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: I remember once after having had such wonderful servants and the tables were set for all the various kinds of food and where the vegetarians should go for their food in the dining room and this was a very large party and there was the sweetest Indian, a young man -- he was a strict vegetarian -- and for some reason the head servant sent him off in the wrong direction and he had to hold himself until he got to the bathroom. That was really terrible.

*Q: You already told me that you had really no comment from fellow officers about the labor work you were doing in India. They were sort of separate and I would say two things on the ability to separate your activities from others -- and I want you to challenge*

*that if I am wrong -- was related to the early stage of the labor program when it was not involved so directly with overall AID policy and things like that...*

SOKOLOVE: That's right. That's right.

*Q: ...and also your general -- I've known you for so many years and I know your reputation and I love you dearly -- but you have the reputation one, of operating separately in areas of your own interest and [two] of managing to get away with it without any contrary effect, without any opposition. That always amazed me the ability to do that.*

SOKOLOVE: I didn't know it was an ability. It was just the situation.

*Q: Right. No problems with your ambassadors, I gather?*

SOKOLOVE: To the contrary, I got on well with all of them.

MRS. SOKOLOVE: Except with Bowles. There was a conflict there but as you said and it's true, you managed it. It didn't get out of hand.

SOKOLOVE: What was that?

*Q: Well, I will just tell you that my experience with Bowles, whom I liked very much and all that, was that he had strong opinions on what he wanted to do in the labor field, but those were determined by things that he wanted to do in AID and in information. I was appointed there as the first Labor Counselor -- I don't know whether you knew that -- and therefore I had some functional authority over all labor work and that did create problems and Bowles pushed rather hard. On the other hand I came with an assignment that permitted me to argue with him and we got along fine but he did try to impose his wishes and very successfully sometimes but not others.*

*What about your relations with business people? American companies? The American Chamber of Commerce? None at all?*

SOKOLOVE: No, the subject never came up.

*Q: There again, different from later on...*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: ...when we had a big AID program and one of my problems was dealing with American companies and their labor attitudes.*



*Human rights. Did you do reporting on human rights? Now it is a big thing of course. On human rights violations? On the effect in India of the differences among the various religious groups, the untouchables and all that? You didn't touch that field?*

SOKOLOVE: The subject didn't come up. The untouchables were happy not to be murdered, but outside that...

*Q: But the problems between the different castes, so far as you reported on the labor situation, were not raised.*

SOKOLOVE: You want to remember that in my time there was a Social Welfare Attaché, who was... What was her name, dear?

*Q: It wasn't Ruby Pernell?*

MRS. SOKOLOVE: No. Oh, Gosh! You just pushed it right out of my head. Just an absolutely wonderful person.

*Q: What about your relation with the Assistant Labor Attaché, Edith Wall? Did you supervise her? Did you tell her what to do? I know you got along fine with her. You always get along fine with people.*

SOKOLOVE: There wasn't any problem. I think that we tended to divide up the business. Initially her contacts were more with the Governmental people, who were interested... She got comfortable, then we worked together.

*Q: Okay, the relevance of that to our inquiry is that each labor attaché who had an assistant seems to have treated the assistant or divided the function differently. In some cases the Labor Attaché would carefully supervise the Assistant Labor Attaché and give little pieces of the work to be done on an almost a day-to-day assignment basis. In other cases there was what you referred to as the carving up of the [work]. "You take care of the governmental things. I'll take care of the trade union relations and we'll talk to each other very frequently with much less oversight and supervision."*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: That answers that question. You didn't have an AID program. What about your relations with the CIA if any to the extent you want to discuss them? Any relationship?*

SOKOLOVE: Well, we knew each other and ordinarily the officer whose name was never to be mentioned was a personal friend who went about his own business and it did not really overlap or conflict with anything I was doing.

*Q: So far as you knew.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: He had access to your information. You didn't have access to his.*

SOKOLOVE: Right.

*Q: That's a normal thing. What about the USIA? The Information Agency? Did you in any way right for them, travel for them, lecture for them?*

SOKOLOVE: No.

*Q: They didn't do any information work in the labor field?*

SOKOLOVE: None.

*Q: Later on in India as you know we did a considerable amount. Other international and foreign aid agencies? They weren't into foreign aid at that time?*

SOKOLOVE: The ILO was there.

*Q: That's the thing that I am coming to, the ILO. The ILO had an office there. Was it run by an Indian or not?*

SOKOLOVE: Frankly I don't know.

*Q: Later on [there was a] big conflict between the people who felt they wanted an Indian there and the people in Geneva who didn't quite trust an Indian to be in charge of that.*

SOKOLOVE: I see, but I wouldn't know anything about that.

*Q: What about instructions or guidance or criticism from Washington desks? Labor Department? None at all?*

SOKOLOVE: No one ever bothered.

*Q: You didn't have the experience I had when they once tried to tell me to do something, and wrote back that my instructions came from my ambassador, not from Washington.*

SOKOLOVE: What could they have wanted you to do?

*Q: I forgot what it was, but it was something that Bowles was very interested in and they wrote to me and sort of cautioned me. The backstopper, Bergman, wrote to me and cautioned about not doing this and I said, "Gee..."*

SOKOLOVE: You don't want to do what the Ambassador...

*Q: Yes, that was the general feeling. I said, "The Ambassador gets instructions from Washington, which are signed by the Secretary of State, and I take my instructions from him."*

SOKOLOVE: As a matter of fact I never had any trouble with any of my ambassadors.

*Q: Yes, but what about your backstop? Who were your backstoppers? Do you remember?*

SOKOLOVE: I don't know. I didn't bother to know them.

*Q: Well, usually you had one in the Labor Department who sort of looked over the reports you sent in and as you said did nothing with them except file them and one in the State Department from that old office that used to have Cleon Swayzee and Tom Holland and that group. There was somebody there covering Asia. I don't know who it was.*

SOKOLOVE: Well, it may have been that the departments got more interested as the AID program progressed but in my time I was the Gospel and all they did was bow their head and nod.

*Q: What about Congress and Congressional visits? Did you have anything to do with those?*

SOKOLOVE: I may have had some contact with them as they went by, but nothing of... You have to remember that in my time the Indian labor movement or the conditions of the workers were not a matter of interest to American Congressmen.

*Q: Yes, I get it. Do you have any comments on the role of the AFL-CIO and the role of the AFL and the CIO in the selection and assignment of Labor Attachés?*

SOKOLOVE: None whatsoever. I was already there before they got involved.

*Q: Right, and any effort made by either labor organization to control you or anything like that?*

SOKOLOVE: No, none whatsoever.

*Q: You see the relevance of that later on?*

SOKOLOVE: Right. Oh, I can see the relevance, but they were in the embarrassing position that they were supplicants for information and guidance whoever it was, even Irving Brown. There wasn't any effort to... In the first place whoever it was tended to develop his own notion of what kind of a guy I was and not to want to tamper with it.

*Q: Yes, I can understand that, but you can understand why we are interested in it.*

SOKOLOVE: It's as clear as crystal.

*Q: Well, I have nothing else. Do you have observations about the Labor Attaché Program generally, good, bad, indifferent, effective, ineffective?*

SOKOLOVE: No. It was part of the natural scene when I got into it and when I got out of it I didn't have any strong feelings one way or another

*Q: Okay. Fine. I have nothing else to add and I want to thank you very much and I'll be thanking Hazel when we get together again and I'll be interviewing her about her work as a spouse for the Spousal Project. Thanks very much, Henri, and it's wonderful to see you.*

SOKOLOVE: Well, thank you, and I'm glad to have added my prejudices to what other people have said.

*Q: That is the objective of this, not to try to avoid prejudices, but to include all of them, so that all perspectives are represented and that's what we don't have yet. I've been hoping that we will contribute to future research in this field. Thanks very much, Henri.*

*End of interview*