

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

LANE KIRKLAND

*Interviewed by: Morris Weisz
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INTERVIEW

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

Q: Speaking on behalf of the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project, we have now come to the point where we find it of great value to interview people who have had experiences in connection with our project on labor diplomacy, who have had experiences outside of the federal government or any government agency but who have an interest in international affairs, labor international affairs; I'm happy that one interview has already been conducted by Don Kienzle and Jim Shea. This is a second interview—and I'll try not to duplicate what's already in the first one—with Lane Kirkland, the former head of the American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and a good friend. Lane, will you say something into the microphone?

KIRKLAND: This is Lane Kirkland, President Emeritus, AFL-CIO. Go ahead and fire away, Murray.

Q: Okay, thank you. Now to check on what we've got I've got to press the stop button. We started talking about Jim Mitchell, Secretary of Labor, for whom I worked for some time, and both of us were great admirers of his, and of other secretaries of labor—Did I connect that? Now my foot is in that entanglement. Let me stop it for a moment—I think we can go ahead now. Lane, I want to discuss with you, in the absence of your former assistant, what the function of an assistant to a big shot is. As I told you I was the assistant to a number of people, beginning with Secretary of Labor Tobin. The relationship develops along certain lines, but the thing that I'm researching is the way in which the private opinions of the person, or the private biases of a person, can or do not interfere with the advice he gives the person he's working for. In my experience as a rep, I never even heard of any criticism in which he substituted his own bias or his own opinion. At the same time I think that the relationship between you was such that he was free to say, "Eh, I think we ought to do this," and then have you weigh it, without worrying in the back of your mind, "Does he have an agenda here?" As I said, I have never even heard any suggestion that that was so. I want to contrast that with another

person, who also was highly qualified (and I knew him well), and how he served you. That is Tom Kahn, who was the head of International Affairs. Tom was an old socialist friend of mine, and I used to check in with him frequently when I was in the country. I occasionally corresponded with him, but the thing that I think I mentioned to you when we spoke without recording was the fact that Tom did have an agenda of his own, and that agenda was to, as much as possible, counteract the influence of his former comrade, the Trotskyite pacifist—whatever he was—Mike Harrington. So that in the case in which I mentioned to you, he not only sent a letter or drafted a letter for you to sign to Mike criticizing (as I did, as a matter of fact) Mike's involvement in setting up a socialist international meeting here in Washington, but he also took the steps of putting on the envelope some indication of who it was who sent it. Namely, it said "L. K.-T. K." or something like that, as if to twist it.

Now I don't think it interfered with any of his work with the State Department. He was very generous in seeing the teams that we had as, indeed, Lovestone was. Lovestone loved the opportunity to speak to the people I was training, no matter what he thought of me. He took that as a challenge to convince them that his policies were good. But that didn't stop Lovestone from—you know, as I told you—what the records here at the Meany Center indicate that I should be fired at one point. That's a legitimate view of his. Comment on that, if you would. That's a long introduction to a question.

KIRKLAND: Well, as you say, Ken Young was an ideal right hand man when I was president. He had been director of legislation for some time before that. I moved him upstairs as my chief assistant.

Q: *When he's in on the next interview, or whenever we have it, I will be questioning him like Shea and Kienze questioned you about his trade union background, whether he was an intellectual or a basic trade unionist and things like that.*

KIRKLAND: _____ trade union _____ not
sure _____ work this _____.

Q: *Oh, really?*

KIRKLAND: To the post before he went into the AFL-CIO Legislative Department.

Q: *He then had a CIO background.*

KIRKLAND: He had a very good standing on the Hill.

Q: *Right.*

KIRKLAND: Particularly. And he was widely and highly regarded and respected in the trade union movement. Our relationship was close and—

Q: *Still is, isn't it?*

KIRKLAND: Constructive. I had been in that job myself for some time with George Meany. The job essentially consists of emphasizing whatever responsibilities the president wants to give you, and try to do it faithfully and understanding the principal. Ever since, and instinct of how you would deal with certain issues that you would have to deal with.

Q: Do you want to comment on the distinction between his service to you and Tom Kahn's?

KIRKLAND: Well, Tom Kahn did not have that job.

Q: Yes, he had a—

KIRKLAND: Tom Kahn was on staff essentially as a writer when Meany was president, and after Irving Brown retired as director of international affairs. Tom was interested in undertaking that, and I appointed him director of international affairs. _____, of course, did most of the work. He was never any executive assistant to the president.

Q: Even as I said, he was very cooperative.

KIRKLAND: _____ his background in the socialist movement and his _____, they were really of no great interest to me.

Q: I think I told you that I had difficulties with Irving Brown. He tried to get the State Department not to continue the duty that they had hired me to do, which was to conduct the training program for labor attachés. He even went so far—I think I gave you the correspondence—in telling the head of the State Department's training program that we at State would not get any cooperation from the AFL-CIO if they continued using me as the trainer. They couldn't get anybody else to take the job. It was offered to Dan Hurwitz, who was the only person I thought could do the job. He would have been wonderful, but he found he couldn't for health reasons. We just went ahead and gave the course. The secretary-treasurer was very helpful, ran the usual program and the executive council meeting for our labor trainees with all sorts of goodies and coffee and all that. It was a very productive and good relationship.

KIRKLAND: I have no recollection of that.

Q: Yes, you were not—I don't know where you were at the time, but you probably were—I don't know where you were, but this would have been in '83 or '84.

KIRKLAND: At that time I was president.

Q: Yes, that's right, and he was vice-president, yes.

KIRKLAND: Hm?

Q: He was vice-president, wasn't he? What's his name, who ran against Sweeney?

KIRKLAND: Donohue?

Q: Yes, he was the one who—

KIRKLAND: Tom Donohue was secretary-treasurer.

Q: Secretary-treasurer, right. He was our contact man for this thing. Anyhow, I would like, because I have some notes on this, to review the function of organizations through the archives here, their archives at Wayne State, which have my collections, and a very good relationship among all these—Georgetown University for Diplomatic Studies and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at the State Department Foreign Service Institute (FSI), where I used to work.

There is an interesting difference of opinion between the people who believe that archives such as these, and many others (the Truman Library and all these others), have a function in society of giving an account of what happened, whether you agree with it or not, of what was the point of view of those people. So when I start asking you about labor attachés and who was a good guy and who was a bad guy, and who was good and bad and ineffective et cetera—Bill Wirtz and I and a guy named Nagy—“Neggy” is the way that most people pronounce it—who was our very top labor officer, who was in the first training program that Phil Kaiser and I ran many years ago, we were sitting opposite one another in the Labor Department at luncheon the other day, and Bill Wirtz said—and it's no secret—that he felt as though George Marshall had the right idea when he, Marshall, said that nobody who had worked for the government should ever write a book giving his opinion because it was a public service that he was undertaking. Therefore it was sort of bad for him to expose that.

Nagy and I, with our experiences, felt very differently and argued with him about it. We will be writing to him about it. We felt as though these archives, these records, are so valuable. The example that I gave him was the 38-page document filed with the Harry Truman Library—not with us. I subsequently interviewed him on my own with Paul Porter. Paul Porter's experience in London and then in the Office of the Military Government for Germany (US) (OMGUS) was such that it was invaluable, and the Truman Library felt it was very good to have that. Nagy agreed and gave some other instances. How do you feel about the function of different views? One of them is a guy who is a very good friend of Wirtz's, and was a very good friend of mine. In fact, he said that one of the things he disagreed with was my opinion about Ben Rathbone and his book.

Well, my opinion was my opinion, and I wrote to Ben—not secretly—and told him I didn't think it did justice to Irving Brown because it made ridiculous claims about his being dropped behind the lines at the end of the war. He was working with Joe Keenan and us at the War Production Board at the time! I pointed to a few of those things to him. That didn't convert words, but it enables me to raise the question with you as to the function of different—good, bad, and others—in fact, one of the things I did was take—and I will be including it in my letter to Bill—was a xerox of the index in the Truman biography by McCulloch. This is very good to show how a careful researcher quotes absolutely on each instant of his reference to somebody. What's your reaction to that?

KIRKLAND: I believe it's a public service to maintain an accurate historical account of what happened, if it's done dispassionately. I don't trust memoirs. I don't even trust diaries, except as expressions of one person's view or biases. I think they have to all be taken with a certain grain of salt and placed against other accounts.

Q: Right, and it's—

KIRKLAND: I've said before that I think memoirs, as a class, tend to be either lies or treasonable. But most adult human beings are capable of, I think, weighing the particular slant or representations that are set forth in these things. They have to be weighed against other accounts.

Q: *Did—*

KIRKLAND: And by and large, it's a debt to history—

Q: *It's part of the history.*

KIRKLAND: —that people in significant posts ought to pay in one way or another.

Q: *One of the examples I've dug out of my collection up where I live, is a biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), written by Ted Morgan. Did Ted Morgan interview you? He's the guy who's writing the biography of Lovestone. He's a very—I went to that FDR biography—He's a Pulitzer Prize winner et cetera. He got some terrific advance from his publisher, which will enable him to spend three years on this. He's spent a whole lot of time here, at my suggestion, at the Meany Center, and he's coming in a month or so to spend some time at the University of Maryland Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) records and Morgan did this biography of FDR. He's gotten the Pulitzer Prize for other things. He's a very good guy. Did you know he was originally French?*

KIRKLAND: No, I didn't know that.

Q: *Well, his first book was The Secret War about the French. He's originally born a Frenchman, and he came to the United States. You cannot detect an accent because he was educated here.*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: His father was a member of the Foreign Service, who was a Gaulliste during the war, et cetera. Now Ted Morgan writes this stuff, and he is so careful, as he will be I'm sure, in the Lovestone book. He's now cutting it down. He is very careful to mention where he gets these things. To give you a little insight, like the thing I may have mentioned to you, that Lovestone sold his memoirs, or whatever these—correspondence—to the Hoover Institution for \$30,000, and thereby betrayed a whole lot of the people in the foreign service who had been considering Lovestone as a friend and a mentor. It's now embarrassing them because of what they find in the records. So I think that I certainly am happy that you feel that memoirs and history should be taken at face value.

Now I'd like to get into the question of the Marshall Plan and its relation to the trade unions or the trade union movement and its relation to the Marshall Plan work. You will be receiving —Janet is now reproducing sections of my Marshall Plan work, in which I refer to my mentor, Dave Sapos, and the wonderful work done not only by Dave but by people like Porter, Irving Brown, Joe Keenan. They originally had the wrong opinion about the Morgenthau Plan. I was happy that Irving showed him that those people who were really, many of them, underground Communists within the OMGUS, within the military government, were expounding the theory of the Morgenthau plan: Let's bury the Germans so that no Hitler will come later.

This was in the interest of the Soviet Union, and in the two cases, where Sapos and Porter encouraged me to testify against individuals, of the dozens, maybe a hundred in which I supported people for good reasons, they convinced me that those people I had known in the socialist movement and in the anti-Franco efforts here in Washington, those people were enemies of the US. I feel justified in my judgment in that as soon as both of them, especially George Wheeler, whose name you must remember, as soon as they left the government, they went over to the other side. One of them became a researcher for the House un-American Activities Committee because they had something on him, and George Wheeler, of course, went to Czechoslovakia.

There is the importance of understanding who were Communists, Communist fellow travelers, and the real underground operators, because Arthur Goldberg, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) long before he became Secretary of Labor or even counsel to the AFL-CIO, was head of the Labor Desk at the OSS. He was dropping people behind the lines for good work in support of the American Zone, the French Zone and the other non-Soviet Zones. Arthur Goldberg finds some of them disappearing, and he instructs his son, Bob Goldberg, who's now quite ill, unfortunately, to find out what he can find out about two things: one, identifying the people and what they did—like George Wheeler. Did I mention to you that George Wheeler's nephew is the head of the Communist Party, the official Communist Party, in the United States?

KIRKLAND: You told me that, yes.

Q: *Well, I want to get it on the record because I'm going to try to interview him.*

So Arthur gives his son the duty of learning what he can about these people. He was to prove from the records now coming out of the Yale University work in the Soviet Union what can now be found out about Alger Hiss, which was the obvious one that we all know, and the people that he dropped behind the lines. Unfortunately, I don't know whether Bob will continue working on that, but I certainly intend doing that. Now comment if you will, and I've used this to get this conversation on the _____. The comment about labor's interest in the Marshall Plan and the precursor and successor organizations like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) et cetera, where I noticed in the correspondence here that Irving was active with the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD and all those other things. Which labor officers were you acquainted with, and how do you feel about their value, not to the government which hired them, but the value of having an honest or dishonest view of the trade union efforts that were reflected to the AFL-CIO in their correspondence?

Let me just give you another example. I see in the Kirkland folder today—I don't know why I was looking at the M's—Ben Martin. Ben Martin sends you—you know, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) fellow—

Do you know Ben Martin?

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *The IUE fellow? He sends you a report that they receive—it's not a secret report because he's given it to you—but he says, "Put this in the back of your mind. You can't quote us because obviously we can't give it to you in any official way but, if it's of any value, do know that this is so," or whatever it is. So we have people like that who have official—Bruce Millan—you know Bruce Millan—says that he purposely never wrote a letter to Victor Reuther because he was afraid of violating government rules. Now I've had correspondence with Victor Reuther, which I thought was defensible, but another person writes a letter accusing somebody in the government of being a CIA agent—now what the hell is—and that I find in Victor's records at Wayne State. Comment on that, if you would, on that, mentioning names, if you wish, or just general categories.*

KIRKLAND: Well, Murray, that was a long time ago, and my memory's quite hazy. I went to work for the AFL in 1948.

Q: *I remember it well.*

KIRKLAND: So much of this history I was spared. When I went to work for the AFL, we had certain people on the staff who later went to Europe _____.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

KIRKLAND: Boris Shushkin and Nelson Cruikshank. Those two people I knew extremely well. The office right next to mine at the old AFL building was occupied by the person who at the time happened to be the international representative of the AFL. What that meant in those days was that he used to work as a delegate to the International Labor Organization (ILO). We had no international department as such.

Q: *Was that Bob Watt? Or Phil Delaney?*

KIRKLAND: I knew Bobby's successor who was Frank Fenton.

Q: *Oh, Frank Fenton—one arm, yes.*

KIRKLAND: In fact, Frank died of a heart attack one day while I was there, and I was with him while we were waiting for his doctor to come. He died in his office and his successor, as I recall, was Phil Delaney.

Q: *Phil Delaney.*

KIRKLAND: That was there—engaged in ILO work primarily, but also some involvement with the Marshall Plan.

Q: *Oh, definitely, yes. Phil Delaney is a good example of—*

KIRKLAND: Phil and I are good friends, very close friends.

Q: *Well, he always referred to me to himself as “my rabbi.” He was a good friend of mine and of Irv Lippy. Do you remember Irv Lippy?*

KIRKLAND: Sure. He had a number of contacts who were very helpful to him, both in State and in the Labor Department. Nate Persons is one of them.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

KIRKLAND: And _____ made _____ Marshall Plan was when the Point Four was introduced in the Truman days. He said all he knew about Point Four is that two deuces on a pair of dice. He somehow got involved in that.

Q: *He certainly was (incidentally one of the things I find out in interviewing people) the former member of the Council of Economic Advisors under Truman, well over 90 years of age now—*

KIRKLAND: Kayserling?

Q: *What? No, Kayserling was the head of it. He was one of the members. He couldn't get along with Kayserling. No, his name is Blau, Roy Blau. Real technical economist, and I've arranged for our technical economist on finances in the OECD to interview him. I say to Roy Blau, whom I know very well, "Do you have anything to do with the Marshall Plan?" "No, no, no, I didn't have anything." When you question people you start—I said, "Well, what were you doing in Turkey?" He said, "Oh, Turkey, that was not the Marshall Plan; that was Point Four. It was a precursor." Then he starts telling me what he did in the Point Four in the economic area, and he starts exploding and going way beyond the time that we had set for the interview, which we all enjoyed hearing.*

Now with respect to Phil Delaney, who I found to be a very good friend—except he used to get me over from Paris to the International Labor Organization (ILO) to write his speech that he had to do. I don't know why he didn't trust the State Department speechwriter. I was very proud to go.

KIRKLAND: _____ couple _____ in the ILO. I remember there was one period when we had a big issue in the ILO _____ employer representative, whose name I forget.

Q: *Smith?*

KIRKLAND: No. It was _____ what became the Bricker Amendment. It all revolved around the proposition that the ILO convention contravened national _____ ation.

Q: *Yes.*

KIRKLAND: So at the risk of doing someone's, therefore we should not ratify ILO conventions. And the Bricker Amendment, I dare to say, resulted in Chamber of Commerce pressure to try and amend the Constitution to subordinate treaties—to outlaw amendment of domestic legislation by treaty. I think this came to a head during the Eisenhower period.

Q: *Oh, yes, '56, I think it was.*

KIRKLAND: When Eisenhower cut a deal. I don't know whether it was formalized, but that was the root of the stance of the administration: that no ILO conventions would be sent to the Senate for ratification.

Q: *Well, that's—You did a speech for Phil, yes.*

KIRKLAND: The policy stems from the Bricker Amendment.

Q: Well, at about that time Phil got me to do something else. The Soviets prepared a document on freedom of association or something like that, showing that their workers really had the rights that the ILO was supposed to protect, whereas in the United States we had slave labor. Boy, they sure quoted Meany on that “slave labor.” Phil said to me—I was administering half of the Taft-Hartley Law (at that time, I had switched from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB))—he said, “Could you explain the Taft-Hartley Act in such a way which will not criticize the Soviets openly but will reply to each of their arguments?” He sent me each of their publications. I wrote an article, which appeared someplace—but it was published—on the interpretation of the Taft-Hartley Act saying, in effect, the workers continue to have their rights under the NLRB, most of them. To the extent that they are not having their full rights, then they have the right to protest in the way, which I outlined. Phil was very pleased with that. My bio stuff may show where it was produced. Now Phil arranged a remarkable succession of appointments as labor attaché for Irv Lippy. Look at where he arranged this: London, Brussels (crucial for the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), France, Geneva. Those were the best posts around at the time. Yet—do you want to stop to go to lunch or something?

KIRKLAND: I think we should go to lunch.

Q: Well, let me just finish this sentence and say to you that these were good assignments, well deserved. Yet in some of the correspondence that I find here in the Meany Center here is Lovestone casting aspersions on Irv Lippy. He was reporting to one of my employees in the Labor Department how ridiculous some of the statements were that Irv Lippy was making. I didn't know what was behind him. Maybe we can discuss that, but I thought that Lippy was an excellent labor attaché.

KIRKLAND: Well, I can't shed any light whatsoever on that.

Q: Okay, let's stop by all means.

[Break for lunch]

Q: Tell me. Okay, can we resume?

KIRKLAND: Sure, anytime.

Q: Okay—We are now resuming after a pleasant lunch, which Lane treated me to and I thank him for it. Next time I'll bring a sandwich. Anyhow, Lane, let's continue with any observations you have about the function of labor attachés and the foreign service. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having them in there? And your feelings about the Marshall Plan and labor's participation in the Marshall Plan?

KIRKLAND: Well, as far as labor attachés are concerned, I think they had greater value years ago than perhaps they do today. Forty or fifty years ago the AFL-CIO had only a limited number of people abroad working in the international arena, and (a) the Federation had a significant voice in the appointment and development of labor attachés and their assignments, and (b) they filled a function that I think was and still is essential of providing an interface with the worker movements in various important countries in various parts of the world.

I'm not so sure that that function is as important to the labor movement today as it was in days past. In the first place (a) the AFL-CIO, through its institutes, now has quite an extensive foreign service of its own. And (b) I think the labor attaché program, to the extent that it still exists, has been pretty much sublimated by the foreign service establishment. Many of the people who go through it are not particularly oriented toward the trade union movement and regard these posts as stepping stones up the foreign service ladder. They do not have a sense of devoting or any intention of devoting their career to trade union affairs. So I don't have the feeling, although I still (and while I was president) made a number of overtures, representations, to the State Department that they should save and strengthen the labor attaché program. I don't have the feeling about it I once did.

Q: You're right. The training program we had, that first training program I told you that involved training good people, top-notch foreign service officers, some of them in the trade union movement, and the trade unionists who were trained under our program got good jobs with the AFL-CIO frequently rather than the foreign service. But the training program was a year of immersion in labor and labor-related problems. That program is now reduced from one year to three weeks, during which they cover not only labor (and I still lecture there occasionally) but they also have to cover human rights in the broader field.

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: Now I would hope that we could get people interested if—we in the foreign service—if we could get the State Department to realize the broader needs. We're interested in trade. A labor attaché can really help with our trade program. Maybe that's not the thing that's closest to your mind, but certainly it's close to the—How can you expect to have a human rights program or a trade program or a science program? One of the guests at my house recently was a guy who's married to or close to Phil Arno's widow. He was a science attaché who happened to have a good trade union sense and served with us in the OECD. Well, the more you can infiltrate the foreign service with people who have an understanding of international labor affairs and in the broader aspects—the greater the possibilities of getting people at the higher levels of the State Department to be aware of the importance of labor issues.

I want to give you two examples to comment on. One is that I'm sitting in my office in Paris in the Hotel Caroline, and a guy comes in to see me. He is a City College graduate like me, but younger—he was 25 or 23 at the time—and he says to me, "Mr. Weisz, I went

to City College, just like you did. I'm interested in labor. How do you get into this field?" Well, I talked to him for some time. He sounds very intelligent. I wrote a letter to Phil Delaney and said you should consider a guy like this for the labor attaché corps. He becomes a labor attaché and is just wonderful. He doesn't stay in the labor attaché field long. He becomes an African expert. The next time I see after that, years later, I see Irving Brown. Irving says to me, "This guy that we have got"—meaning you and me and the State Department and the labor movement—in this African country, wherever it was, I think it was Rwanda or someplace—"is just wonderful." He said, "I come into town, of course, a car's meeting me, and here's a guy on the way in from the airport. He's briefing me on what's happening not only in the labor movement but what I should know that may affect the progress of trade union objectives in this country." This man, Hank Cohen—ever heard of him?—

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *—is one of the—I think there have been only ten—career ambassadors. Not like me, a career whatever I was, but a career ambassador.*

The second example I want to give you is that in 1957, when I came back from Europe, I was in charge of the Division of Foreign Labor Conditions in the Labor Department, and there I find two foreign service officers writing their Ph.D. 's. Herb Wiener was writing his Ph.D. on the British labor movement, and a guy who I'd never met before—he didn't go to City College—Morton Abramowitz is writing a book on labor in China. That's his thing—labor in China. He was just interested in the Chinese language, and he had a year off to work in the Labor Department. He had a general interest in labor. He goes on to become the author of Nixon's change in policy toward China. Good or bad, and I think it was good, he was the father of that. He wrote a brilliant book that's credited by people in all of the entire spectrum of foreign policy and becomes a career ambassador, again the second of this—

KIRKLAND: I know Mort Abramowitz very well.

Q: *He was ambassador of foreign relations.*

KIRKLAND: And we're still very close friends.

Q: *Right, now—*

KIRKLAND: In fact, he just sent me this—

Q: *Oh, really?*

KIRKLAND: —Op Ed piece he did in "Newsweek"—

Q: *Oh, I saw it.*

KIRKLAND: —on Kosovo.

Q: *Right. He is critical of some of the things the State Department is—*

KIRKLAND: He's a wonderful person.

Q: Yes, he's wonderful. Well, the point I am making and asking you to comment on is this whole section in my history which says that contributions of people with labor-based histories to the foreign service—Alan Strachan becomes a big shot in the AID program and ultimately in the Colombo Plan. I could name many of them. The wonderful expert on Japan who started out as the assistant labor attaché in Tokyo and ended up by being the top advisor, the counselor in the full sense of the word, the counselor to the former head of the CIA who was the UN ambassador, Kappelman. I mean, there's a guy whose origins were in the trade union movement and Humphries' assistant and all that. He becomes counselor to the department.

KIRKLAND: Max Kappelman was never head of the CIA.

Q: *No, he wasn't. Did I say the CIA?*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *Oh, I'm sorry. I made a mistake. He was counselor to Baker at the State Department.*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *And that was a top job. So we can go through a whole list of people, and I submit to you that to the extent that people are in the top levels—Aaronson, Bernie Aaronson, you know, the son of what's his name?*

KIRKLAND: Arnie.

Q: *Yes, those are advantages to not only the government but to the labor movement because they are people at top levels who have an understanding.*

KIRKLAND: I have no quarrel with that whatsoever—but I think it depends far more on individual talents and proclivities—

Q: *Absolutely.*

KIRKLAND: —than it does on whatever set of boxes or systems that are in place. I have known ambassadors, for example, in some countries, who had absolutely no labor background whatsoever who turned out to be extremely good and extremely interested.

With them we had very good relations. They were succeeded by people who you would expect would be fairly sophisticated who were turkeys.

Q: *Yes.*

KIRKLAND: And so it's—I recall I was particularly—in the Soviet Union before the fall of the Iron Curtain, there was a man on the embassy staff who on his own initiative—he was an economics officer—undertook to establish contacts with trade union dissidents in the Soviet Union, contacts that ultimately became very important to us when we were able to begin operating over there. He was so good I went to Larry Eagleburger and asked Eagleburger to make him, in addition to his other responsibilities, to appoint him as labor attaché. He was the first labor attaché in the Soviet embassy. His name was Mike Gafulo.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

KIRKLAND: Terrific guy. Most of the contacts that we had over there, aside from some of the earlier dissidents who had reached out to us, we got from Mike Gafulo. He had gone out of his way to get to know them and he weathered efforts by the Soviet officialdom to squelch him and get him out of the country.

Q: *Oh, really?*

KIRKLAND: He weathered it because Jack Matlock gave him latitude and backed him up.

Q: *There's another good guy, Matlock.*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *Well, yes, I agree with you. It depends on—*

KIRKLAND: Matlock had no history in the trade union movement, but I think he had a sense of the importance of civil society.

Q: *He certainly did.*

KIRKLAND: And—

Q: *Let's not talk about him in the past tense. He's still going.*

KIRKLAND: I recall when I was allowed to visit—let's see I think it was in 1989 or '90—I was over in Poland for the 10th anniversary of Solidarity and then by virtue of an invitation from the city council, which had changed, of what was then Leningrad I went to a human rights conference in Leningrad. I got word from Matlock—this was close to Labor Day—that he wanted to have in the Spassel House a reception for American Labor

Day, and he wanted me to come and preside at that reception: the American Labor Day in Moscow—

Q: *Moscow.*

KIRKLAND: —and that the invitation list would be our list.

Q: *Oh, that's great.*

KIRKLAND: So we gave him a list of something like 90 or 100 people from all over the Soviet Union, from as far as Sakhalin and from Kazakhstan, from the Kuzbaks and the Tomblaks, from Siberia, from Vakuta. They all came by one means or another. I stayed at Spassel House and we had this reception. It was a great affair. I had a group with me, and we sort of divided them up and took little groups of these various people who were on my list and spent a little time schmoozing with them and rotated around. It was a great evening. The interesting thing is that I encouraged Matlock to include some prominent members of the American press on the invitation list. I thought this was perhaps a newsworthy affair. So he had five or six of them on from the leading American journals and networks: none of them showed up.

Q: *Really?*

KIRKLAND: Except somebody from Radio Liberty. None of them showed up, so it was a nonevent.

Q: *They had some good people there, including the guy who's been writing for "The New Yorker" lately.*

KIRKLAND: None of them were there. None of them came. It being Labor Day, I guess they were off in their dachas somewhere.

Q: *Well, just what you said now reminds me of Phil Kaiser when he was ambassador to Hungary. Knowing of my Hungarian background, he invites me to visit him and to speak to the American—whatever they got there—to the people who follow American events. They were a very sophisticated crowd, but he wanted me to address them on the issue of American opposition political parties, including the Socialist Party. Well, they were shocked at that. Phil, of course, didn't attend, because he wanted them to be free. He did send his wife with my wife to listen. It was a very interesting and sophisticated discussion of issues, which they didn't know we had any voice in the United States.*

So I agree with you. There are good people—Sam Berger—who could have been better than he as an ambassador until Nixon got rid of him? He was excellent. So there are obviously very many different ones. I guess what we end up with is a feeling that good people and bad people can be on all sides of all issues. There's a germ of people in the

foreign service who have an interest—Don Keinzle, who took my place and interviewed you with Jim Shea, He was the representative of the AFGE (American Federation of Government Employees) in the election that I ran for the foreign service designation of a collective bargaining agent. I was quite impressed by him, and I said to him, “Would you be interested in a labor attaché post?” He said yes. It was arranged, and he was absolutely wonderful as a labor attaché to so many different places. He served in the Soviet Union, by the way. He has a great interest in church affairs. It was out of that—he’s Russian-speaking and all, and he’s now in Germany with his mother-in-law taking care of some problems that she has. I think we have to think of identifying people as comers who might be useful in the overall foreign policy field.

KIRKLAND: Uh-huh.

Q: *I got some notes here that I want to—Hold on a second and I’ll turn this off.*

KIRKLAND: Well, I think there’s been quite a—

[Interruption]

Q: *I want to tell you that there is a responsibility the Labor Department and the trade union movement have in this respect. It mustn’t be hidden. You had the opportunity to have a voice in the administration of the State Department through two ways. When I said “you” I meant the American trade union movement. First, to encourage the Labor Department to exercise its authority as a member, a full member, of the State Department’s Foreign Service Review Board. That has not been taken advantage of by recent Secretaries of Labor. They have a voice there. They send a lower representative who is very assiduous and attends the meeting but he cannot do the sort of thing that Phil Kaiser did when he was a member of the Board of the Foreign Service. He pounded his fist and got the AFL-CIO to help pound the fist—the AFL and the CIO, both of them together—for the exercise of the authority that they did have. The trade union movement is to be blamed, I think, for not pushing the government in that respect—*

KIRKLAND: I don’t think that’s true at all.

Q: *Oh, good. Please tell me why not? You don’t think they have any responsibility, or you don’t think they’re exercising it?*

KIRKLAND: I don’t think it’s the labor movement’s fault at all.

Q: *Aha.*

KIRKLAND: In the first place, there’s been a view in some quarters that the Labor Department should take over the labor attaché program. That was resisted for years by the labor people in the State Department—

Q: *Right.*

KIRKLAND: —who were opposed to that.

Q: *To the Labor Department taking over the labor attaché function.*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *That's a function of the State Department, but exercising the authority they have as a member of the Board of the Foreign Service—that is an important thing, which Reich did not do. I spoke to him personally about it.*

KIRKLAND: That who did not do?

Q: *What?*

KIRKLAND: Who?

Q: *Reich. Rob Reich. I felt seriously about it. I had been retired, but I was doing some training work for them. I said to him—he met me; he was very polite—and then I said, “Look I don't have many opportunities to talk to the Secretary of Labor. Can I tell you that you have on your desk a memorandum drafted by the staffer who is representing you on the board of the foreign service saying to the board of the foreign service, ‘We want to exercise our authority there,’ and you haven't signed that.” So he made some cockeyed excuse. I forgot what it was. “I got a whole lot of things to think about.” You know, it was a nominal thing for him to sign a piece of paper and then get that going, I looked at Phil Kaiser as my ideal—*

KIRKLAND: All I'm saying is that that's not the fault of the labor movement.

Q: *Oh, yes, well, it's the fault of the labor movement insofar as it should be pushing the Labor Department to do what it can do instead of what it can't do. They set up duplicate guys to cover the same areas that are being covered by the State Department. That is ridiculous. My son was a senior staff member in the OILA, the Office of International Labor Affairs, and he just found it terrible there because, in effect, part of his duty was to parallel what was being done by some guy in the State Department who is Richard _____n. He quit and went to work for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and then he became a schoolteacher. I think there is work to be done on both sides.*

KIRKLAND: Perhaps.

Q: *Let me go through some of these notes that I have—*

KIRKLAND: There was created, and it still theoretically exists—I don't know whether it's ever had a meeting in recent years—but at the time that the United States withdrew from the ILO, on our initiative there was created another Cabinet committee. This was supposedly chaired by the Secretary of Labor and with representation from State, Commerce. It was the National Security Advisor's Office, the AFL-CIO, and Business Council. All policy relating to the ILO was supposed to be cleared through that committee, which was supposed to meet from time to time. During my tenure it did meet from time to time, and the basis of our return to the ILO was worked out through that entity. It was through that entity that we created a tripartite committee known as TAPIOLS to review ILO conventions to see if we could not begin to—

Q: —*enforce them?*

KIRKLAND: —bring them to the Senate for ratification on a basis of consensus, although it was a difficult process, requiring tripartite consensus. The first break with the old Eisenhower deal with Senator Bricker led to the submission of the first series of ILO conventions to the Senate for ratification. Some of them, most of them relatively non-controversial, were in fact ratified in the first rash of ILO ratifications since before the Bricker Amendment issue was hot. That body is still supposedly in existence. I don't think it's met. I don't recall that it met during Reich's tenure at all. I don't know whether it's met since.

I do know that after I retired, when I was a public delegate to the United Nations (UN) at the 50th General Assembly, the issues debated in the American delegation were, when Madeleine Albright was UN ambassador, as to the budget and the UN people, the US people at the UN. It seemed to be moving in the direction of sacrificing a contribution to the ILO and to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and a couple of other agencies in order to preserve the maximum contribution to the ILO. I protested that on the grounds that there was in existence this interagency body and no such decision should ever be considered without it being tabled at that body. Madeleine didn't know such a thing existed.

Q: *Well, she's got a whole lot of things on her plate, but I think that she could get somebody to do it.*

KIRKLAND: I don't blame her for that.

Q: *No, she could get somebody.*

KIRKLAND: I would say that primary responsibility was on the Secretary of Labor since he is ostensibly chairman of that body and responsible for convening it.

Q: *Well, now the Secretary of Labor has her own problems.*

KIRKLAND: I suppose.

Q: *And she's got to face—*

KIRKLAND: I think she's a good person, and I can't believe that those things are of much substance.

Q: *Well, let's see what else I have on my list to prod you with. I hope you don't take objection to these at all. I want to talk to you a minute about Abe Raskin, who was a very dear friend of mine, the first person who ever interviewed me when I was a student leader at City College and he was covering City College for "The New York Times." I found him to represent a tendency on the part of newspapermen in my adult life as being so concerned about the confidentiality of sources that they were inclined to publish things without checking them at the source. I had the experience when I was in the State Department of conducting this election. It was a collective bargaining thing, and he was very interested in it. He interviewed me and I was happy to talk to him. I thought we'd get a good article out of it. Well, when the article came out it had some such obvious mistakes, and I called him, and I said, "Why didn't you check this with me like I asked you to before printing it to make sure that—" You know the election procedures are very intricate. He said, "Well, I didn't have much time, and, secondly, I don't give the opportunity to somebody I've interviewed to review what I say." I said, "I didn't want to review it; I wanted the opportunity to tell you if you had made a mistake that you might want to correct." You've been interviewed by a whole lot of people. Do you find this a happenstance? Does it happen often to you that you feel sort of misquoted? What do you do about it?*

KIRKLAND: Well, I think that's a circumstance that's quite common in the press, particularly the labor press. I've never read—I think I can say it in a sweeping way—I've never read an account of a situation or a circumstance that was reported in the press involving labor with which I was intimately familiar that I felt bore any real resemblance to the actual facts.

Q: *Really?*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: *Any way of correcting it in the labor field?*

KIRKLAND: Forget about it.

Q: *You don't try to answer those things, and you wouldn't answer them in the AFL-CIO newsletter?*

KIRKLAND: No. I remember Abe Raskin very well. I think everybody in the labor movement and the Executive Council pretty much assumes that Abe had one primary source.

Q: *Dave Dubinsky?*

KIRKLAND: Yes. We used to joke that the time between an event being discussed and it getting through Dubinsky to Abe Raskin was approximately 30 seconds.

Q: *Well, that too has its disadvantages. As I told you Abe was a wonderful old friend of mine. I had been interviewed originally by Lou Stark, his predecessor—*

KIRKLAND: I knew Lou Stark very well—

Q: *—who was not guilty of that.*

KIRKLAND: Stark was head and shoulders above Abe Raskin in terms of the integrity of his writings and the accuracy of it.

Q: *And the accuracy. I once did something for the NLRB for Dave Sapos—*

KIRKLAND: Abe was troubled by delusions of superiority and the idea that he knew better what the labor movement should be doing than the labor movement did itself.

Q: *But Stark, even where he felt that he knew something—*

KIRKLAND: He was given to sort of pontificating in that direction one way or another.

Q: *I did this thing for Sapos about how much money it saved the union, the government, and everything else to have a reasonable procedure for collective bargaining. Dave said, "This is a really important point," and he brought Lou Stark—I think it was at his house. There wasn't a thing that was missing or lost in what he produced. Abe on the other hand in Tunis for the 1957 congress of the ICFTU in Tunis, one of the big issues was whether the teachers' federation in Brussels was going to come. There were two opinions. One was Lovestone's position and Dubinsky's that they weren't going to come because they objected to something the AFL-CIO enacted. The other position was the teachers' union, the International Federation of whatever it is, position that they had a conflicting engagement. Now I told Abe when I saw him that this is going to come up. There will be these two positions, and be careful to reflect both of them because the other side may win, you know. He pontificated and suddenly he cuts his hand and has to be taken to a hospital. It was serious-not serious, not life-threatening, but serious enough to him. I take him to the hospital to do the translating. I warned him about this again and on the way back. The next day I see in "The New York Times," which we'd gotten, of course, out there, that he had adopted one side—I didn't care which it was—to the exclusion of mentioning the other. That was the problem. It was not which side it was.*

KIRKLAND: Yes.

Q: That was—I chided him about it. It didn't—He was a character. Well, Lane, I think I've taken enough of your time, unless you'd like to give me some more opinions on anything.

KIRKLAND: No, _____, Murray.

Q: On anything. It's very nice—

KIRKLAND: It's good to see you back in good health.

Q: Yes, comparatively. The system is, and I would have done it here, you're supposed to sign a release like you did for the first thing. I'm assuming you'll sign a release if I give you one, subject to your correcting it when you see it. Thank you very much for everything and I'll be able to make my three o'clock pick-up, take some stuff from the files, and again, thank you very much.

End of Interview