

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

WILLIAM MEAGHER

*Interviewed by: Don Kienzle
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INTERVIEW

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

Q: Good morning, this is Don Kienzl. Today is Monday, June 10, 1996. I have the pleasure this morning of interviewing Bill Meagher for the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. Bill, would you like to begin by giving us a little bit about your background, where you came from, and your education?

MEAGHER: Okay, my background, where I came from, and my education. I was born in New York in 1930. I grew up for the first years of my life in New York. I went to school there through the second year of high school when the family moved to Texas. The basic reason was for a climate that was friendlier to my father, who had asthma. We lived in El Paso, Texas for about eight years. I went to the University of Texas at El Paso for undergraduate work and subsequently went to the University of Texas for graduate and Masters Degree in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management.

Q: Did you come from a Labor background?

MEAGHER: No, I did not come from a labor background. My father was a cotton broker by profession before the cotton market disintegrated in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Other than that, I don't have a particular labor background, except that I worked all my life. I started at age 13 or 14 at odd jobs and part-time jobs, summer jobs, and a number of different professions. I delivered groceries, fished, worked on the railroad as a carpenter's helper, which was dragging huge locks that weighed two tons with other part-time workers. Together they were collectively called creepers because they were very slow.

Q: Were you a union member in any of these jobs?

MEAGHER: I was a union member on the railroad, but that was for a very short period of time. I went back to college actually after working three months on the railroad. Subsequently, I worked summer jobs as a used car salesman but we were not organized. I worked as a merchandiser that was also non-organized. Then I went to work for the telephone company after I graduated from school. At the telephone company, I was on the

management side. I was an Assistant Personnel Director.

Q. This was after your undergraduate degree?

MEAGHER: Yes. Right.

Q: Could you put dates on these?

MEAGHER: I could put dates on my undergraduate degree in 1952 and graduate degree in 1954 from the University of Texas. Then I went to work for an automobile agency. I actually did collection work. This was also interesting and not organized. It was interesting. This was in El Paso, where I learned a little Spanish too. Then I went into the service. I was drafted into the army in 1954. I did basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas. Subsequently, I went to the CIC School (Counter Intelligence) in Baltimore, Maryland. The school has since disappeared. I went by to see where it was and there was a parking lot. Then, I went to Germany. I served in Germany for about a year and a half and got out of the Army in Germany and went to school at the University of Munich. I subsequently went to the University of Zurich for about a year, and studied psychology and philosophy.

Q: You were in counter intelligence in Germany?

MEAGHER: Yes. It was an interesting period. It was an interesting time to be in Germany.

Q: Debriefing refugees from East Germany?

MEAGHER: Actually, some debriefing, but mostly in security. The organization was broken up into different sections and responsibilities. We did background, security, and investigations on both U.S. and German hires of the U.S. government.

Q: What city were you in?

MEAGHER: I was in Stuttgart. Then I moved to the University of Munich. I then moved to Switzerland and went to the University of Zurich for about a year. In the meantime, I got married.

Q: I see.

MEAGHER: I came back to the United States in the midst of the 1987 depression. I am sorry, 1957. There was a serious recession. I got into the department store business as a personnel director. It was Stern's Department Store in New York. It has since gone out of business. It was on 42nd street near 5th and Broadway.

Q: Good address!

MEAGHER: Yes, good address. It is now a huge office building. How much do you want? After a couple of years with Stern's, I went to work for the Royal McBee Company, the

successor to the Royal Typewriter Company, which has also gone out of business. I worked for them in Personnel Management in Rochester, New York. Then I transferred to a plant in Athens, Ohio and worked as the Personnel Manager in Athens, Ohio. I worked with Royal McBee for three years. I went from Royal McBee to the Federal Mediation Service. I applied for the Federal Mediation Service and went to work for them in Louisville, Kentucky. Later, I then went to Detroit, Michigan mediating labor disputes, which was obviously a very interesting profession. This was in —I have to get the decades right—in 1968. I took an assignment with the Agency for International Development (AID) in Turkey.

Q: Before we go to Turkey, can you describe what the criteria were at that time for entry into the Federal Mediation Service?

MEAGHER: It was basically some practical experience in working with Labor Management Relations either on the labor side or management side. My experience was on the management side.

Q: Had you done collective bargaining on behalf of Royal McBee?

MEAGHER: Yes, especially a lot in Athens. We had a total of 10 unions. We had six unions within Athens, mostly printing trades, machinist and printing trade unions. There were two unions that we negotiated with in St. Louis, Missouri, and one union in Utah. So, there was a lot of grievance settlement and negotiating contracts.

Q: They were manufacturing typewriters?

MEAGHER: Yes. These were all McBee facilities. This was the McBee part of the Royal McBee Organization. They manufactured the predecessors of the automated data processing system. It was a card punch system. It was very popular and very profitable until the automated/electronic equipment began to get established. This pretty much did away with the manual punch card system.

Q: So you went with the Federal Mediation Service? What kinds of settlements did you do?

MEAGHER: I mediated labor disputes in a number of industries. For example, the tobacco industries, manufacture industries, service industries, newspapers. Most of the negotiations were in mid-sized firms. There is a Colgate-Palmolive plant in Louisville; I had cases there. There was a defense manufacturer during the Vietnam War. There was always a lot of pressure on the negotiations with the defense manufacturers and a lot of pressure from U.S. government sources. These were usually pretty sensitive disputes.

Q: You were doing these things single handily?

MEAGHER: Yes. Mostly the mediators work as individuals. They get assigned a case and they make all the decisions when to meet, how to meet, whom to meet with, and how to resolve the dispute. There are cases, for example, if the visibility of the dispute has impact on the local economy. If it gets a lot of publicity in the press, especially negative publicity, or if

it goes on too long, or if the mediators can't deal with one of the parties, then the Service will supplement the efforts of one mediator with another mediator. Then they will work jointly on the case. Sometimes they will send a mediator from Washington if it is a case of national interest and a major dispute.

Q: Did you specialize in any type of mediation?

MEAGHER: No. The mediators don't generally specialize. They take the disputes pretty much how they are dealt. At least that was the philosophy of the Mediation Service at the time. I subsequently modified that to an extent. This was after I held another position in the Mediation Service. In Turkey, I was implementing a project in labor management/dispute resolution with Turkish labor and management. It was a program that began two years before I arrived. It began in 1966. It grew out of U.S. interests in the Turkish labor movement. The United States had worked with the Turkish trade unions back in the early 1950's when the alliance between United States and Turkey began to develop. I got there in 1968. AID sponsored and paid for the program. Of course, the embassy was interested in it because it had a political and economic impact. The United States had done a lot of work with Turkish labor, and Turkish labor had become important and powerful. They had strikes and then the United States and the embassy said, "Well, we have strikes, so we need to have mediation now." The program I was working on was the effort to help the Turks and develop dispute resolution mechanisms.

Q: The unions at that point were recognized as independent?

MEAGHER: Well, there were two different unions, or federations. Basically, three different federations. One was a small, conservative, religious oriented group. Then, there was a Western oriented group of federations, a Turkish, and a Communist/Leftist oriented federation called DISK—Die Brudenschie Syndikat Konfederation (sp?).

Q: Did you work primarily with the Turkish group?

MEAGHER: Yes. I had some contacts with DISK on an occasional basis. I had most contact with Turkish and the employer's confederation. In Turkey, the employers, by law, are also organized into what they call "unions of employers" on an industry basis. On a global basis, they are organized into a confederation.

Q: How would you evaluate the result of your efforts?

MEAGHER: We did not develop a mediation service. The Ministry of Labor already had a mediation facility of sorts. The mediation was actually done by politicians and lawyers. So there was not any place to focus the effort of mediation. As a result we ended up dealing with the individual unions and with the employer's confederation, and individual members of individual industry members of the confederation. Most of it was training, translating U.S. and other European documents on mediation, resolution, and conducting training courses. We actually did some limited amount of mediation between individual unions that dealt with the U.S. government entities; however, we mostly did training.

Q: Did you learn enough Turkish to be able to conduct mediation?

MEAGHER: Yes. That was one of the big advantages (learning Turkish, that is). I went back to Turkey about 10 years later in 1971.

Q: Can I ask one more question?

MEAGHER: Absolutely.

Q: How much contact with the embassy did you have with your first stay there with Bruce Millan or Harold?

MEAGHER: I got there after Bruce had left. I met Bruce in the United States. Before I went, I made a point of talking to him and we have had contacts on and off since then. That was 1968. With Harold Davey, he came about mid-1969. There was quite an extended gap before he got there. We had very close relationships and worked very closely together.

Q: And the embassy was generally supportive of what you were doing?

MEAGHER: Yes, the ambassador and AID director at that time was a former labor leader.

Q: Do you remember his name?

MEAGHER: I have not thought about it for a long time. I know he came out of the woodworkers, actually, the timber workers up in Washington and Oregon. He was one of the founders—a very well known labor leader. Jim Killen. He was the director of the AID mission at the time. And the Ambassador at the time was Ambassador Hanley. The AID mission was Joe _____. He took over the AID mission about two years after I arrived there.

Q: You were there how many years?

MEAGHER: Three years.

Q: Do you want to describe your second tour there before we go on?

MEAGHER: I went back to the Federal Mediation Service in Connecticut. I worked in Hartford for a couple of years. Each area of the United States has a different mode of labor relations because the nature of the work force is very regionalized. It was at that time, but it is more internationalized now. So, it was very regionalized with regionalized leadership. There were different practices and different traditions in the labor relations program. So, moving from one area to another has really been an interesting experience, from Southern Ohio where the plant was located, Athens, Ohio (remote area where that was the largest industry in the community) to Louisville, which has a broader state mentality, traditions, and culture. But, there was a pretty solid union background at least at that time. There was a high

rate of labor organization with the industries there. As in Detroit, there was very strong union tradition, and predominant influence of the United Automobile Workers. Teamsters were also very important in Detroit. As for Hartford, it was very regionalized. We worked all over Connecticut and Massachusetts and as far as New Hampshire. So, looking at Connecticut was another interesting experience. There were new traditions, new people, new representation, and new issues. The period of time was in 1971 to 1973. This was the period of wage price control. This added another dimension to collective bargaining. The government was a partner at the bargaining table.

Q: Is that good or bad?

MEAGHER: I think everybody admits that it was bad. It made it a lot more difficult. Well, it changed the free collective bargaining, with the emphasis on “free” where the parties are relatively free to make decisions that they have to live with. With the intervention of the government into the process, even in a somewhat passive way, having the agreements approved. Of course, the end point in a negotiation and collective bargaining process influences that whole process right from the beginning. So, in determining demands or determining the responses from the management, you are always looking at the end point: where is this going to lead? What happens next? How can we maintain the support of stockholders, and management? You see the people who do the bargaining are not the top management. They have to be very sensitive to what their top management views are and how they perform.

That end point is a very important determinant in the process. Everyone is making a case throughout the bargaining; they tend more to make a case rather than look for a livable solution. So, I think that was one of the negative parts of that process. Also, it did one thing. It stilled the cause for compulsory arbitration. I think that experience has had an important impact on the withdrawal of the government from labor management relations to a large extent.

At least, direct intervention has been limited. You had a lot of direct intervention during the Vietnam War. The disputes were strong. There was a strong interest in any dispute that had anything to do with the war effort. There was a lot of pressure, a lot of indirect intervention, and a lot of realization on the part of workers. Not necessarily on labor, but on workers that these were important. Two things: One, they were important disputes, and they had a lot of leverage. The workers realized that. Also, they realized that these were temporary jobs; this was not going to go on forever. There was a limit to the window in which they could utilize the bargaining pressures. One dispute that I remember very clearly (I was not involved in it), but the machinists were bargaining with—I forget what the company was. Anyway, President Johnson became very involved, and successfully got them to agree. He also became involved with the machinists’ dispute and got them to agree to a settlement. The president of the union at the time, just his whole demeanor at the press conference announced—he sent the message to his membership that he was not happy. This was not his settlement. His arm was twisted, but it was not his. The settlement was rejected. I think it was Ray Seymour who was involved. This was 1966, 1967. You felt a lot of pressure as a mediator to get a settlement. The parties did not feel that much pressure. They felt more latitude. They had the safety net

of having the government lean on them rather than to press them into solutions.

Q: Where did you go after your tour there?

MEAGHER: I went to Washington as a troubleshooter working out of the Washington office.

This was 1973. I worked as a troubleshooter for disputes around the United States out of Washington for about six months to a year. Then, I went to St. Louis as Deputy Director. These represented promotions for me. I went to St. Louis, and this position was a combination of mediator/troubleshooter/administrator. It involved helping the mediators out with problems that they had with their cases, making contacts with people that could influence the settlement of the case, and dealing with a number of very pragmatic operations. I was in St. Louis for three years. Then, I went to San Francisco. This was a lateral transfer. Actually, the person who had that job there wanted to go to St. Louis, and I wanted to go to San Francisco. So, we switched. That was the same job, but it was a different environment. Each one of these areas has a different environment, and tradition in collective bargaining, and so forth.

Q: How would you characterize St. Louis and San Francisco?

MEAGHER: St. Louis is much more traditional heavy and service industry. It is a more established relationship as opposed to San Francisco. San Francisco, at least at that time, was more dynamic. There were a lot of service industries that we dealt with, for example, the hospitals, trucking transportation/distribution, and grocery industry. The region of San Francisco covered Hawaii, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, all of California; it was quite a diverse operation. It ranged from mining and service industry to manufacturing. It was also high tech with Silicon Valley. It was an interesting area in which to work, but expensive too.

Q: After San Francisco?

MEAGHER: It was back to Washington. I was promoted to a new job in Washington doing evaluation of different organizational components of mediation. I was making recommendations on how to improve the operation, assignment process, and follow up process, as well as how to save money on the operations and the selection process. It was less hands-on with the clients, and more administrative.

Q: And that was about the time you entered the Foreign Service?

MEAGHER: While I was in Washington, I was appointed to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), established at the direction of Congress. Congress established a formal labor management/relations program. They introduced procedures for establishing bargaining units and for dispute resolution. They established an oversight board, and I was appointed as a member of that board in addition to my job. It was basically part-time. It was interesting, nonetheless, in helping to implement a new system in a rather unique environment. In other words, how does a watchdog agency get watched? It was an interesting experience to see how the GAO adjusted to a new procedure for handling its labor relations.

Q: I see, so you were focusing on GAO at that same time?

MEAGHER: No. That was in addition to my work with the Mediation Service. It was similar work in oversight function. The GAO leadership wanted to get people who had various experiences in mediation and labor experience. It was oversight of the GAO system, which was also another interesting aspect. From there, I went back to, or into, the Foreign Service. This was in 1981.

Q: How did you organize your entry into the Foreign Service?

MEAGHER: Well, it was sort of organized for me. Someone asked me if I would be interested in going to Turkey as Labor Attaché. I spoke Turkish, and had experience, and still knew a lot of people. I also had the labor management background. I felt that it was a good combination, and they felt that it was good combination, so they accepted me.

Q: Who knew about this?

MEAGHER: The Foreign Service people. Well, actually, the Labor Department people, whom I had worked with during my first tour in Turkey. They knew of this opening and asked me if I would be interested.

Q: Was there any specific person?

MEAGHER: Well, the main person was Harold L. Davey, who was the coordinator.

Q: So, he was really your entrée into the Foreign Service? He promoted the concept to the folks in the Office of Secretary for International Labor Affairs (S/IL)

MEAGHER: Well, S/IL was in a transition period at the time. When I first heard of it, they were in the process of filling the job. By the time it got around to me, they had already assigned someone to the job in Turkey.

Q: Tom Martin?

MEAGHER: It was Tom Martin. I don't think Tom had any labor experience when he got the job. I don't know, very limited. Anyway, he apparently did a good job. However, the next time it came around, they came back to me and said, "Well, Tom is leaving now; are you still interested?" I was still interested. This was in 1981, the second round. 1979 was the first round, the first time they approached me on it. I was in San Francisco the first time, and had moved to Washington by the time the second time came around. But, I was still interested. It still took about close to a year to go through all of the process. It was eight months to a year, or something like that. Well, you know, it was government bureaucracy. We did not have an overlap, but I got there fairly soon after Tom left.

Q: Did you take a leave of absence?

MEAGHER: No, I did not. I threw in my lot with the Foreign Service.

Q: That is quite a leap of faith.

MEAGHER: Well, I thought I had pretty good credentials, three foreign languages: German, Turkish, and French. I also had good labor experience. I understood the labor point of view, and understood the problems. I also had knowledge of Turkey, in particular the job I was recruited for.

Q: Did you have any additional training before you went out to Turkey?

MEAGHER: I had a couple weeks of consultation because I had already been there. I knew the people, and actually, one of my main contacts in my first tour in Turkey was one of the early arbitrators in the Turkish labor management system. He was, how should I say, one of the architects of the system. He played a key role in the evolution of that system. He had been one of my main contacts during my first visit there on an academic exchange, and so on. He was the minister of labor at the time that I went back. Everything was pretty well set. At the airport, he turned out to be the interpreter. We did have a good relationship and a very good exchange of ideas throughout his tenure, and my tour.

Q: In the early 1980's, Turkey had a military take over, didn't it? Did that change the quality and parameters of your work there?

MEAGHER: Yes, it definitely did. There were definite changes in the responsibilities and the role of labor attaché compared to a technical advisor. And, the military takeover was the 12th of September. It was the benchmark of the developments before and after that date. This was in 1980. This was eight or nine months before I arrived.

Q: What did that mean in terms of the labor movement?

MEAGHER: I have to think about how that changed. There was a lot of interest in labor, mainly political interests, and a lot of pressure on Turkey, mostly from Europe for having suspending normal labor activities. One of the main labor organizations was closed. This was a radical leftist group, which had different shades of radical left but the leftist group closed it on the grounds of creating disturbance. They closed it and arrested the leadership of the union, and put them in jail. They began a trial that lasted for over two, or two and a half years. At the same time, we felt, and the embassy felt that we needed to—well—it was a terribly ambiguous relationship. We were strongly committed to Turkey as an ally. It was still pretty much deep into the Cold War period, and we still had the tensions in the Middle East with Iran, of course. There was a strong interest in keeping Turkey stable, and democratic, and in that order. Stable was more important. I think there was also the realization that you could not have an unconditional commitment to an undemocratic Turkey. We had to move Turkey back toward a democratic society, and an interim period of stabilization of the political and social situation. This was

acceptable, but a long-term military dictatorship was not acceptable.

Q: Were you particularly concerned about these leftist labor leaders?

MEAGHER: Well, they were certainly of a concern. They were leftist, but they were labor leaders. They had legitimate unions that had collective bargain agreements with companies. Many of them had contacts within the Soviet Union and other Eastern European companies, but I do not think that it was ever demonstrated that they were subversive. In fact, the trial ended basically exonerating them.

Q: Was there much impact of military dictatorship on Turkishe?

MEAGHER: The military dictatorship limited the latitude of their activity. As you could expect there was a continuum of political attitudes within Turkishe and DISK. DISK had split off from Turkishe, so there basically was a continuum, and part of that went with DISK. Within Turkishe, there were more, let's say, leftist, rightists in the colloquial understanding of that. There were unions that stayed in Turkishe that were more radical than some of the unions within DISK. So, it was a continuum, and also they were under a lot of pressure to stay out of politics and to be neutrally supportive of the status quo. I think everyone recognized the hope that it would be a transition period. One of our functions, at least the way the embassy conceived it, was to keep the pressure on for a return to a democratic government.

Q: Was Turkishe able to maintain its independence from the government?

MEAGHER: It did maintain its independence. I think, under the circumstances, that they did the best job that they could of representing. Some of the unions within Turkishe were openly supportive of the DISK people. They were openly critical of the government's attitude toward them, but this was a military government from 1981 to 1983. I think. I think this is when the new constitution went into effect. It was a military led government.

Q: I can recall that the European trade unions were very much concerned at this point about constraints placed on Turkishe, and struggling how they could figure out how they could restore Turkishe to sort of the pre-dictatorship position.

MEAGHER: Well, they were supportive; at least several American unions were supportive of the DISK people as well. The embassy also was supportive in the sense of showing support (without interfering in the due process of the trial). There were people that were actively involved in the revolutionary activities of the pre-takeover of Turkey. There was credible evidence, at least, that they were interested in changing the form of the Turkish government. Still, the due process, and the U.S. concentrated emphasis was on the due process, was the Turks' business, but that we should show our support for due process for democratic principles. Again, there was the understanding that it would be a temporary transition period that would give Turkey an opportunity to stabilize its politics and serve again as a reliable ally in an important part of the world.

Q: Aside from these political issues, were there economic issues like collective bargaining going?

MEAGHER: There was collective bargaining going on. Strikes were prohibited for a period of time, but it was a relatively short period of time. It certainly was a chilling effect on strikes. There was no doubt about that. Within a couple of years, strikes began again. Subsequently, there were a number of pretty broadly based strikes in the mining industry, and U.S. bases. So, it was about two years. For about two years, there was a real chill put on active labor management relations, strikes, and demonstrations. Demonstrations had to be authorized by the military. It was a real chilling effect, of course, of the military takeover.

Q: As I recall, elections were held, was it around 1985 or so?

MEAGHER: The elections, I think, were held earlier. I think it was 1984. I think it was about—I am trying to pick a benchmark of when that would have been. I think it was 1983 or 1984.

Q: Did that signal the reestablishment of democratic processes?

MEAGHER: Yes. As for the DISK trial, I went to see what was happening and to see that it was a trial, that there was representation, and that people were going to have an opportunity to defend themselves. They did. I think almost the military court acquitted all of them.

Q: Was there a feeling that foreign interests had an impact on the outcome of this trial?

MEAGHER: Well, there was the feeling of being grateful for the support of the Europeans, who had shown the most support. On the other hand, the United States had not been that outspoken, at least on the official level. The United States sort of took a hands-off attitude. It is hard to evaluate what kind of an impact the informal initiatives of the United States to avoid trials and to expect a due process if there were convictions.

Q: You were there for a number of years? So what happened at the end of the trial in terms of democracy?

MEAGHER: I can't get the years exactly straight. I left in 1986. It must have been in 1983, 1984 when the first elections were held. There was a broad spectrum of people running for election. There was a religious conservative party, a social democratic party, basically two social democratic parties. One was more rightist, and the other more leftist. The Azal party won the election. They were the motherland party. The other was the "correct way" party. The government that was formed was a type of conservative government. I believe it was 1984. They were business and enterprise oriented. Fairly successful revitalization of the economy. The new constitution put severe constraints on the political activities of labor. The constraints were rather severe. The Turkish understanding of U.S. labor was as a business unionism limited to economics and staying

out of politics. That was the Turkish understanding of U.S. labor, which of course is not quite an accurate reflection. So, the former DISK unions were outlawed. I don't think they were ever accepted back. However, they did have influence within the existing unions. I don't know how they have evolved since that time.

Q: You mentioned the religious unions

MEAGHER: Yes. Those unions had become increasingly influential. The just labor party was influential at that time.

Q: Did you follow the problems of the Turkish guest workers in Germany?

MEAGHER: Yes.

Q: Did they come back and have any impact on the political or labor scene in Turkey?

MEAGHER: Well, I followed it from Germany, because I went from Turkey to Germany. I met a lot of the Turkish guest workers. Whenever I saw someone whom I thought was Turkish, I would start talking Turkish to them. I tried to get some reaction from them about their problems in Germany. This was around 1986, 1987. However, I do not know about their impact back in Turkey. There are studies on that, where they have gone, and the German contribution to providing new job opportunities to help repatriate these workers. The thing in German is it is impossible to get German citizenship. Basically, practically speaking, it is not possible. There are Turks who had been there for years, 10, 15 years, and they are still not citizens. This is true of many other nationalities. There are many other nationalities that move to Germany. Now Germany has a very liberal asylum law, but a strict citizenship law. So they tend to have these transient pockets of migrant workers who do not really have a stake in the country. They continue to exist as sort of sub-cultures. This is unlike the United States where the United States tends to encourage integration into society. The German approach does not. That has disadvantages. Well, probably both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. I think that the U.S. system is better because you don't have large segments of people who are not interested in the country. They are just interested in a job or job opportunity. They are not interested into the society, and therefore have no impact on the society. I think that is, by definition, a difficult problem, where you have large segments of the population not interested in the society, its development, or its welfare.

Q: I think in the middle 1980's the German's were offering financial incentives for guest workers to return to their country of origin. Was that happening when you were there? How would you assess that, and was it very successful?

MEAGHER: Well, I doubt that it was successful. I don't know for sure if it was successful. This was because of the great disparity of what you could earn in Turkey as opposed to Germany. This disparity was rather great. There were some people that I know that did go back. Again, there are studies of these issues of what they did, and how successful the reintegration was. Some of them were rather alienated because some of the

families had children that had grown up in Germany and learned German as their first language. They were then sent back, or went back, to Turkey and this was certainly disruptive on them.

Q: Before we return to your German assignment, are there any other observations that you would like to make about Turkey?

MEAGHER: Well, I think that Turkey does have a good, sound labor movement. It had to weather some difficult times. Nineteen eighty was not the first takeover, nor was it the first revolutionary change in Turkey. Revolutionary changes happened in the 1930's; then Turkey went back to a more rightist regime. Then, the military lynched it back to the center. The rightist regime was the religious right, and it also, ironically, has tended to be an economic right in terms of encouraging private enterprise. This was especially true of the presidents who were in power at the time.

Q: Under these turbulent conditions that have existed in Turkey, it is amazing that a viable labor movement could establish itself, and continue on. Why was it successful in Turkey when so many other countries that had similar kinds of problems found it impossible to establish a labor movement? What was the secret of success in Turkey?

MEAGHER: Well, the secret is survival. The military in Turkey is interesting. They had been reluctant dragons, but they had wanted to get out of the ruling. Of course, they had lots of indirect influence, but they were willing to get out of a leadership role. They took over the government in 1960, but they allowed another non-military government to develop. This was basically a leftist military concept. In 1971, a similar leftist move by the military occurred. By leftist I mean opposed to the right and economic liberalism. They wanted to have a more planned and secular economy. I remember this very well because I was in a hotel during this time, when the tanks rolled out in 1971. We stayed there for three days waiting to find out what was going to happen. There were tanks right outside of my hotel. So, it was an interesting time.

Q: The military saw itself as correcting the problem, but civilian rule was the legitimate state of affairs?

MEAGHER: Well, yes. A legitimate state, but, at least in the first two takeovers, they were not following the ways of a secular society. I think, in my opinion, the primary motivation for the takeovers was internal Turkish, related to the religious right, and how to deal with the economy. It is these issues, not pro or anti-Western motivations. There had been elements there of communist sympathizers that had played roles, or had been affected by the actions of the military, but the basic motivation has been economics, the religious right, etc.

Q: How about the support from the embassy?

MEAGHER: Excellent. My last year I was political counselor and this was an interesting experience.

Q: What were the other issues you dealt with?

MEAGHER: Well, the role of the labor attaché in Germany was—I need some time to think about that—as to how it differed. One way: it was more established what the labor attaché did in Germany. The labor attaché's function was well established. I am trying to think of some of the issues that we dealt with at the time. One issue was the base relationships. The base relationships were important. The United States was pulling back economically in Germany. There were concerns about what would happen to the German workers. That was an issue that the labor attaché became involved in, and tried to mediate, so to speak, but with a limited portfolio. I know of several meetings that I had with the labor representatives and the military in trying to resolve these problems, and deal with the uncertainty about the future. I was only in Germany for a year. Our son had to come back for medical reasons. So, we curtailed in Germany. The year went very fast. After Germany I came back to Washington in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA). This was a whole new set of issues to deal with.

Q: Had you ever focused on Latin America?

MEAGHER: No. As I said, I grew up a few years in El Paso, so I knew a few words in Spanish. Most of the words I knew were not repeatable, but it was an interesting area. There is still a lot of U.S. interest in labor. Not as much as previously, though. There were certainly issues of labor rights and abuses, and the tendency to clamp down on labor usually in the name of stability. All of these Central American countries knew that we were interested in stability. Anything they did had an air of maintaining stability. I had a great deal of respect for the people I worked with. I had a great respect for their ability to deal with the problems. There were a great number of committed and capable people, scarred by the “slings and arrows” of both sides (the conservatives for supporting labor in Guatemala, and the banana plantations in El Salvador, and on the other hand the liberals). It was a very narrow line in which to walk for personal and political security. But, there were a number of very competent people with a lot of influence and savvy.

Q: How did you find the ARA Bureau? Was it supportive of your efforts?

MEAGHER: Yes, it was generally supportive. I would say, very conscious of the importance of labor, both as a reflection of U.S. interests, and on the other hand as a source of subversion, a way to subvert U.S. intentions in Latin America.

Q: Were you there during the tenure of Abramowitz (Note: August '89 - July '91)?

MEAGHER: Through the last part of Abramowitz.

Q: Was he involved with the human rights aspect?

MEAGHER: Yes, he was. He was very supportive of the labor function. He was very

conscious of it.

Q: After ARA you went to?

MEAGHER: The Special Advisor's Office.

Q: Please describe your duties and the issues there.

MEAGHER: It was a lot of administrative work. I worked under Tony Freeman. He was a professional. He did that job very well, and had a wide array of contacts. I think we had good team. Then, I went back to Washington in 1988. There were a lot of administrative things to the job. For instance, recruiting, selecting, and training labor attachés. There was some travel, in fact quite a bit of travel to Central and South America. There were personnel and worker rights issues to deal with, as well as some Latin American issues, again, assuring that labor issues were addressed in the policy making process. That was one of our key roles. Some were issues of U.S. union complaints about foreign companies.

Q: Unions were most active in that area.

MEAGHER: The one that I remember best was the clerks commercial workers' unions. They were complaining about a European company's affiliates in the United States and it was European owned. Food Lion was one, but I think that was another issue. Food Lion was one of the issues that the union raised. How that came to us, I think was as a complaint raised against Food Lion in the international floor. The OECD. Anyway it was the advisory committee to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It was in conjunction to a complaint filed with the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD by a union. We were trying to explore and see if there was a way to resolve it. We met with Food Lion and the clerks, but it is a process basically.

Q: Since Food Lion is still openly non-union I suppose that there was no satisfactory resolution?

MEAGHER: Yes. I think there is domestically a de facto jurisdictional agreement. It is not an agreement, but it is sort of jurisdictional orders where the food and commercial workers are organized, primarily in the metropolitan areas, if they really don't raise a lot of hell about Food Lion operating outside of the metropolitan areas. But, when Food Lion comes into the metropolitan areas and threatens their organizations there, which Food Lion always does, then they are upset about it. They do what they can to kick them out. They have been fairly successful in doing that and keeping the major non-union concerns out of the metropolitan areas.

Q: What about personnel issues? Did you find that they were whittling away?

MEAGHER: Always pressure on the Labor Attaché positions to reduce the number and

dilute the function with other functions. But, at the same time, there was an opening in Eastern Europe in the former Soviet Union where labor offices were needed. This is because there were newly independent unions being formed and evolving in these countries. There was a need to have someone look after them and give them appropriate support.

Q: Do you want to comment on the activities in Eastern Europe?

MEAGHER: Well, it was interesting. It was a very interesting development. Tony, of course, was probably the first U.S. diplomat to go to the former Soviet Union as a labor officer, and meet with the workers in the other unions that were developing in the former Soviet Union. I think he played a really important role in making these contacts and opening the way for U.S. labor to become involved and they did indeed become quickly involved.

Q: Was the American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL/CIO) supportive at the beginning?

MEAGHER: Yes, I think that they have always been supportive in terms of dealing with the independent unions. Even if you went to Moscow and you met with the independents, this gave the message of equality, and it was always clear that the _____.

Q: Did the AFL-CIO have any reservation about meeting with the official unions?

MEAGHER: I am sure that they did. I do not know of any time when they had met with them. Officially, anyway.

Q: This was while you were in there?

MEAGHER: Yes.

Q: Were there other issues that should be highlighted?

MEAGHER: I am sure if I thought about that there would be some. We did have an opportunity in some cases of pointing out problems of a particular country that the United States was supporting. We would informally show that an anti-labor action could ultimately have an adverse impact on U.S. relations. In Panama, for example, they squeeze the labor people pretty hard. They were looking for U.S. support in other areas. They also looked at how to continue their activities that would make it more difficult for the U.S. to continue supporting them. Additionally, the AFL-CIO had a quite a bit of influence on U.S. policies in the area. As such, that added to the righteousness of our position.

Q: Any other issues?

MEAGHER: I can't think of any off hand. I am sure there are others.

Q: Do you have any semi-observations about labor attaché functionality or disfunctionality?

MEAGHER: I think it is a very useful function and it isn't any longer self-serving to say that.

Q: Since you are now retired.

MEAGHER: I think it is a very useful function for a couple of reasons. Maybe there is a logical extension of the labor attaché corps that would make it more useful and ensure longevity to connect labor and other employment social issues into a job, or into a function at the embassies.

There are a lot of social issues that labor is usually interested in. Also, health and welfare, child welfare, poverty, hunger, and things like this. These are social issues that somebody ought to be responsible for to some extent. Not to say that the government or the private sector ignores these issues, but they are issues that don't get covered if you cover management, if you cover the private sector and government activities. These, per se, do not get covered. And, the danger is, I think, that you don't cover them because you only have people that are assigned to the private sector, business, and commercial attaché. Or, you have the political attachés interested in politics and only interested in these other issues if they have an impact on politics. They may not, but they have the potential for having an impact, but do not warrant enough of an impact from the other sections to receive attention. There used to be a balance to that.

Whatever your policy is, you should know what is going on. I think labor, social, and poverty issues could make a logical package for in-depth understanding. I think a lot of labor attachés do that, but it is not defined. So, it tends to be amorphous and everybody may or may not do it. The Foreign Service does not focus on these issues. There is nobody in the embassy that focuses on these issues, unless the political counselor or ambassador says to focus on these issues or unless they become political issues, which may or may not happen.

Q: Would you include human rights?

MEAGHER: Yes! Human rights! Absolutely. Human rights are an important part of that.

Q: Are there aspects of the labor attaché to be highlighted? Did you get what you expected when you joined?

MEAGHER: Well, yes, pretty much. I think it is a combination. It is amorphous enough that you can influence what the attaché does. It is as broad as you want to make it. I think every attaché can define things in this way to some extent. It depends also on what the situation in the country is. If you are in a country of rapid change or sudden change that affects labor, social, and human rights affairs, then you focus on those issues. And those

are very important issues. The embassy's, Washington's and ambassador's interest is very important. Turkey is a good example. Everybody was interested in Turkey as an ally and interested in keeping Turkey stable, democratic, and as peaceful as possible. I do not know how we cover the ethnic problems in Turkey. I do not know how the embassy covers them. I am sure that they must cover them very closely because it affects the stability of the country—the Kurds, for example.

Q: So what you're saying is the labor attaché would naturally be a logical choice to look at ethnic issues?

MEAGHER: Could be. It depends, I think. In Turkey we had an interesting ambassador who I worked very closely with. He had a fascinating and long background and a very good understanding of the importance of Turkey. That importance could not only be one sided; it had to be multiple. The ultimate long-term support depended upon Turkey moving toward democracy and acceptance of worker rights. He was a man with a very broad perspective. This was his fourth or fifth embassy too. He was at Sri Lanka, and a number of other countries. He had a philosophy of diplomacy that was helpful.

Q: Which was compatible with the concept that the labor attaché had a certain area of responsibility that fit in....(MEAGHER interjects)

MEAGHER: It was compatible with the idea that labor was an important element in the equation, and that labor rights and maintaining them was just as important as the political end.

Q: You retired then, in 1992?

MEAGHER: 1992, yes.

Q: Do you want to say a few words about the work that you have done since?

MEAGHER: We organized with well-known labor management relations on a labor management project, dealing with the coal industry—coal industries in the former Soviet Union. And now in Poland as well. Why the coal industries? They have traditionally been one of the most dynamic in terms of labor leaders and the potential for disturbing stability, detracting from the stability of other countries, including our own. This is related to a lot of issues, the isolation of the coalfields, the danger of the work, the kind of people attracted to the work, or forced into the work in some cases. We just saw this as an industry that could offer opportunities for developing labor management relationships and contributing to the stability and restructuring of the industries, thus rejuvenating and contributing to stability of achieving that goal.

Q: I take it now that you are working with a grant as opposed to your initial start up money?

MEAGHER: Yes.

Q: Would you like to describe what you have accomplished?

MEAGHER: It is a long story. That is another interview. There are huge problems in the coal industry that are not going to get resolved overnight or by one organization or effort. It is going to be a question of time and investment. There are lots of things that can impinge on your success or failure. There is obviously the political and economic situation and so on. What we have tried to do, again working in a labor management context, is to help—to do what the local indigenous people are willing to do. One thing about these countries is that they are not the traditional underdeveloped country that we and other assistance organizations are used to dealing with. They have huge economic and structural problems, but they also have a high degree of sophistication, which makes it in some ways more difficult to work with.

This morning, I just met with a group of Russian mining engineers. They know what is available in terms of technology. They don't know the market structure; they do not know the relationship. They have no experience with the relationship between economic viability and safety, economic viability and the welfare of workers, and stability. This has all been one thing for them, that is, there is a plant that produces a quality product, more or less, under the Communist system, but everything else is taken care of. It is a whole new mentality of being economically viable. It is getting those concepts, really, at all levels. Getting these concepts and implementing them are really huge problems. It is an adjustment of thinking, financing, and mentality and institutions.

So, we have tried to get the World Bank interested in the coal industries and to facilitate their work because it does take intervention, major economic and structural intervention, to make a difference. In Russia, we, the bank, and others have brought a program of restructuring to the implementation stage now. That is, restructuring of the industry. This also means the restructuring of all the institutions involved, or at least the rethinking of their roles, and how to carry out those roles. In Russia, the independent unions have been for reform. Initially they were for reform, privatizing the industry and making it more efficient. That they really understood what the implications were with job loss and dislocation is another question, but all the countries have been consistently committed to reform, especially in Russia. Probably Russia is the most reformist. The Ukraine and the independent union is pro-reform even though they know that it is going to be painful. They are more pro-reform than not.

Q: Was there a time frame in which you hoped to achieve these objectives?

MEAGHER: You as who?

Q: You as being your organization in Washington.

MEAGHER: It is a long time frame, not that we will be involved in it indefinitely. I think we have played an important role in getting it started, in facilitating to World Bank's work and in bringing labor into the process, a very important role. Especially bringing the

progressive labor elements into the process, I think has been very important. Establishing relationships among the management and the local government has also been a key issue. And we hope to continue to participate in this restructuring process and to utilize our expertise and human resources, both local and U.S. human resources, in facilitating this restructuring process.

Q: Sounds like a tremendous challenge, but you bring to it a lot of very valuable experience.

MEAGHER: Yes, we sort of bring a lot of pieces together.

Q: Before we conclude, would you like to make any final observation?

MEAGHER: I think we will end here.

Q: Thank you very much for your participation and putting your observations on the record for future scholars, and others who are interested.

MEAGHER: It is a pleasure!

Q: Thanks a lot, I appreciate it.

MEAGHER: You're welcome.

End of interview