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

DALE M. POVENMIRE

Interviewed by: Morris Weisz
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INTERVIEW

Q: It is Saturday afternoon, January 29, 1994. We are in the comfortable apartment on Siesta Key in Florida of Dale Povenmire. I am interviewing him to get a description of his work in the Foreign Service generally, but mostly his experience as a labor attaché and on how that reflected on his assignments in non-related fields. Just begin, Dale, by giving us the posts you were at and at which ones the labor function played a part.

POVENMIRE: All right, Morrie. It is good to see you again. I entered the Service in June, 1957. I had the three month A-100 course at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. From September until December we were in Mexico City for Spanish language training.

Q: Had you known Spanish before?

POVENMIRE: I had a college background in Spanish but wasn't up to a professional level.

Q: Did you seek a Spanish speaking post?

POVENMIRE: No. It was one of those accidents of life. I took Spanish in high school and that evolved into something that affected my whole life's direction. From January 1958 until January 1960 we were in Santiago, Chile. It was my first post and I did all kinds of work there on rotational assignments.

Q: Political, economic, visa type work?

POVENMIRE: Yes, I worked at various periods in the political, economic, consular, and administrative sections of the embassy. It was a good introductory tour. In January, 1960, I returned to Washington where I was assigned to INR, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. After a year in Washington I was one of 400 officers in the Department who volunteered for an African assignment when the Department opened eight new embassies in what had been French West Africa. We did not get one of these assignments but were ordered instead to open a new post in Zanzibar. We were in Zanzibar from June 1961 until October 1963. I was the second man in a two man consulate; we opened the post there.

Q: That was before Tanzania?

POVENMIRE: That was before Tanzania. At that point Zanzibar was still a British Protectorate. It was becoming independent so the Department thought we should have a post there. That post went from a consulate to a consulate general to an embassy and back to a consulate within a span of two years.

Q: Did you know Tom Byrne there?

POVENMIRE: No. Tom had been in Dar es Salaam before that period, I believe. During my time it was Red Duggan who was Consul General in Dar. But Zanzibar was an independent post and we reported directly to the Department. It was real Foreign Service; it was the most foreign post we ever had. There is a whole history right there. After Zanzibar, in 1964 to 1966, we were in Asuncion, Paraguay. I was in the political section and also did labor reporting. From 1966 to 1968 I was on the Paraguay desk in the Department. In late 1968 I was assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon.

Q: Did you have some military background?

POVENMIRE: Yes, I had three years' commissioned service with the Navy in Naval Intelligence. My time with the Joint Chiefs was as the State Department watch officer at the National Military Command Center.

From there I went to Oporto, Portugal, as principal officer from 1969 to 1972. That was a wonderful assignment, but I must say that all of my postings were good experiences. After Oporto I was sent to Caracas from October 1972 until September 1974. Caracas was my first assignment as a full-time labor attaché. As a result of the Portuguese revolution in April 1974, they pulled me out of Caracas and sent me to Lisbon as the first ever labor attaché assigned to Portugal. I was in Lisbon from October 1974 until January 1978 and I think that was where I made a major contribution to the Foreign Service. In 1978 I went to Sao Paulo, Brazil, and was there until 1981 as labor attaché for Brazil and as deputy principal officer for the Consulate General. From July 1981 until September 1983 I was in the ARA Bureau, the Latin American Bureau, as Labor Advisor. After that,

from 1983 until 1986 I was assigned to Rome as Counselor for Labor Affairs. I retired in Rome in May 1986. I retired satisfied with what I had accomplished.

Q: Did you stay in Rome then?

POVENMIRE: Yes, [my wife] Marilyn was the second ranking officer in the consular section and completed her fourth assignment, so I had my last year in Rome as a "house spouse." Marilyn became a Foreign Service officer in 1972 and we were a tandem couple for fourteen years.

Q: After you retired you went with Marilyn where she was posted?

POVENMIRE: In 1987 she was assigned back to Washington for advanced training at the National Defense University at Fort McNair. She then headed the Policy Planning Office in the Consular Affairs Bureau. Later she went to London as Deputy Consul General. We were in London from September 1990 to late 1993 when she retired.

Q: Well, before we get into the details of the assignments, let's have some idea of what your background is, how you became interested in -- or how you were made interested -- in the labor field. You come from where originally and what sort of a family background?

POVENMIRE: My father was a high school principal. During the course of his career we moved a number of times in north-central Ohio.

Q: Were you born in Ohio?

POVENMIRE: I was born in Columbus in 1930. I grew up mostly in Galion and graduated from Galion High School. My father then moved to a major Cleveland suburban high school, Lakewood High School, and remained there for twenty-some years as principal. He enjoyed it very much. It was a school with several thousand students and he had a rewarding career there.

Q: He was a school administrator. Did he do anything in the labor field, negotiating?

POVENMIRE: Teachers were not organized at that time, so I would have to say no. I went to Baldwin-Wallace College and graduated in 1952, majoring in political science. My record was good enough that I was accepted into graduate school at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, graduating with an MA in 1953. At that point Fletcher still offered a one year MA program. That is where I met Marilyn.

Q: Did you graduate from there, too, Marilyn?

Marilyn POVENMIRE: Not from Fletcher, but from Tufts.

Q: So you, Dale, had no particular labor background?

POVENMIRE: Negative.

Q: Political interests?

POVENMIRE: Political and labor interests of a general sort.

Q: Did you think of yourself in the categories that are relevant to our labor oral history as pro-labor, interested in labor, anti-labor? By the way, we've had at least one anti-labor labor attaché.

POVENMIRE: I think I was agnostic in that regard, Morrie.

Q: Later on when I ask you to assess your career I will try to draw you out on the qualities, in terms of their viewpoints, of labor attachés. Some people whom we've interviewed feel labor attachés really should have more than just an interest and should have a pro-labor policy. Others feel as though they should have a friendly relationship but remain relatively independent. So we have a range of views and I would like to ask you from your viewpoint to assess the type of background that is best for a labor attaché. Right now, let's just go to the history. You took the A-100 course in 1957?

POVENMIRE: Yes. From 1954 until 1957 I was in the Navy. I entered the Foreign Service in 1957. I passed the oral part of the examination in 1954. It was the McCarthy years and it was probably just as well that I did not need to go directly into the Foreign Service. We were married on April 4, 1954, just after I finished Officer Candidate School on April 1. OCS was a very intensive period. And then I took the orals for the Foreign Service on April 7 while we were on our honeymoon in Washington. I was able to say to the board of examiners that I had three years in the Navy to look forward to. That was an advantage because they were not then taking new officers into the Foreign Service anyway. They also probably thought that here is a guy who will benefit from an additional three years of maturity in the Navy. So I did pass the orals and came into the Foreign Service when my Navy term was over.

Q: You had labor responsibilities at some posts before your first assignment as labor attaché?

POVENMIRE: My exposure to labor in the Foreign Service began at my very first post, Santiago. Our labor attaché there was Norm Pearson. Norm took his job very seriously. He was a little uptight perhaps but he worked hard and seemed to be effective. I think that subsequent events in Chile proved that labor was an important sector and the labor attaché's role was needed by the Embassy.

Q: You were not there when Allende was president?

POVENMIRE: When we were there Allende was still a candidate. Alessandri was president. Eduardo Frei followed Alessandri and then there was the Allende period.

Q: You covered labor-political or labor-economic affairs there on occasion?

POVENMIRE: I did minerals reporting for a time and the Copper Workers' Unions were very important. One of my contacts was Orlando Letelier, who worked in the Chilean Copper Department . He later became Foreign Minister under Allende and was eventually assassinated in Washington by a Chilean agent. The repercussions of that event are still in the news with the pending imprisonment of the former chief of the Chilean intelligence agency who ordered his murder.

Q: From Santiago you went to Washington?

POVENMIRE: Yes, and from Washington to Zanzibar. This was at the time when we opened eight new embassies in what had been French West Africa and the Department asked for volunteers to go to these new African embassies. There were 400 officers who applied. It was very difficult to live in Washington on a Foreign Service salary. We were one of the volunteers. We were not chosen for West Africa but they soon opened a post in Zanzibar and we were assigned there. Zanzibar was on the brink of independence and the U.S. Government wanted a post there.

When we were en route to Zanzibar in 1961 we learned during a stopover in Cairo that racial riots in Zanzibar had killed some 20 people. As a consequence we stayed over in Dar es Salaam for a couple of days until the situation cooled off. I then flew over to the island. Marilyn followed a few days later with our three small children. We flew in on a 1929 fabric-covered biplane. They weighed not only the luggage but each individual passenger. If the first five passengers did not weigh too much, they would take a sixth person.

Q: Did you have anything to do with Nyerere?

POVENMIRE: No, because Zanzibar was a British Protectorate. Tanganyika was a separate political entity. There were no direct ties at that time. It was only after the revolution in Zanzibar in 1964 that the new state of Tanzania was formed.

Q: I got some very interesting insights into Nyerere as an individual from Tom Byrne, who was head of the political section and DCM in Dar. Nyerere has always fascinated me because he is one of these old revolutionary leaders who thought of himself as a Socialist, who when the going got tough left some of his ideals aside. So again, in Zanzibar you did not do much labor work?

POVENMIRE: Well, I did have some labor work in Zanzibar as a matter of fact. While it was a British Protectorate, the labor movement was one of the few organizations controlled and run by Africans. As in so many new African states, the labor movement

was the spawning ground for the new political leadership. Abeid Karume, the first president of the Zanzibar's Revolutionary Government in 1964, was the former head of the Port Workers Union. Zanzibari labor leaders were involved in the revolution. Some of the people I had worked with had a role.

We left Zanzibar in October 1963. It became independent two months later, in December 1963. Only one month after independence, on January 11, 1964, there was a revolution.

There were two driving motives behind the revolution. First, there was the anti-Western, pro-communist core of radicals who wanted political power. Secondly, they were able to mobilize the African majority against the Sultan and the dominate Arab minority who controlled the government and the economy. They did this by playing upon the pervasive racial hatred of the Africans toward the Arabs. After all, slavery was abolished only in 1897, so it would still be within the memory of some of the older Africans. It was not a paternalistic kind of slavery; it was brutal. One of the most infamous Arab slave raiders in East African history, Tippu Tib, was the grandfather of a part of the Sultan's family.

Q: Did we have an AID mission there at that time?

POVENMIRE: We did not. We had just the two officer consulate and a one officer USIA operation. We had a local staff of about nine people altogether.

Q: The language was English?

POVENMIRE: At one official ceremony we attended there were four consecutive translations. Swahili was the lingua franca for almost all of Zanzibar's 300,000 people. English was the language of business, the government, and most people with any degree of education. English was widely understood in Zanzibar Town but Swahili was much more common. Omani Arabic was also widespread, as that is where most of the 50,000 Arabs originally were from. You also had a large Urdu and an even larger Gujarati speaking communities because of the 20,000 Asians there who basically ran the commercial sector. There were also a number of Goans, Parsees, and Comorians. It was a polyglot mixture of cultures, races, and religions.

Q: Were the Asians resented?

POVENMIRE: To a degree. Many fled after the revolution in January, 1964, but not too many Asians were killed. Several thousand Arabs, I've heard up to forty thousand, but certainly many Arabs were killed and thousands of others fled the island. There weren't too many guns around so much of the slaughter was up close and personal, with machetes. I heard later from several people that some of the revolutionaries drove around town the day after the revolution with the testicles of the murdered Arab police chief tied to the radiator of their car.

Let me give you a little background. During our first week after arriving in Zanzibar we encountered Abdulrahman "Babu" Mohammed. Babu was the Secretary General of the predominately Arab Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP). He was a far-left radical who had worked as a journalist in London. He was not seen with favor by the British. On this occasion Marilyn and I accepted a dinner invitation from an Asian businessman. We were picked up in his car but instead of being driven to his home we were taken on narrow dirt tracks far into the interior of the island. There in a clearing in the middle of a coconut plantation, with only a kerosene lantern nailed to a palm tree for light, was Babu, a couple of his lieutenants, and three or four prostitutes. We weren't exactly kidnaped but neither were we voluntary guests at this particular party. Their purpose was to discover why the U.S. was opening a Consulate. We talked for a couple of hours on a reasonably cordial basis, ate chicken cooked over a fire on sticks, and tossed the bones over our shoulders into the darkness. It made for a memorable evening.

Several months later, the night before our new Consulate was to open, some of the young ZNP radicals allied with Babu threw a Molotov cocktail against the front door of our offices. It was a serious attempt to burn the building but the fire was extinguished before major damage was done. We held our opening reception the next day as planned.

In a real switch, Babu later left the ZNP and became Secretary General of the Afro-Shirazi Party. Following the revolution, he became the first Foreign Minister of the Revolutionary Government and rapidly established ties to the communist bloc.

The point I should make is that during our time in Zanzibar anti-Western, Third World, Pan African attitudes were so common and widespread in Africa that, even though there was opposition to the U.S. from the radical faction in the ZNP, many in the Afro-Shirazi Party did not trust us either. Looking back, it is interesting that we seldom felt personally endangered or threatened. The racial hatred that existed was almost entirely by the Africans against the Arabs and rarely if ever directed against the 300 or so "Europeans" in the Colonial Service and the tiny foreign communities.

Most of the labor leaders who were involved in the revolution were certainly pro-communist and anti-Western. There were only about ten people in the labor movement who had leadership ability. If they wanted help or assistance they had to look to the Eastern Bloc. It was not unusual for them to be invited to Moscow. When one became ill with hepatitis he was taken to Sochi on the Black Sea to recuperate.

We just did not have the resources to compete. I did make an effort to strengthen some of those whom I considered to be the less antagonistic labor leaders. I befriended the deputy leader of the labor confederation. Here I made a tactical mistake. I went to a lot of effort to get him a grant to the Harvard Trade Union training course. It wasn't really appropriate but it was the only thing I was aware of we had to offer. After we finally obtained Washington's approval for the grant, the leader of the confederation, Moyo, objected and claimed he should have been selected -- even though he had earlier rejected any overtures. I can see from his viewpoint now that he was not about to have his deputy go off for

training and come back in a stronger position. So Moyo did not allow his deputy to go to the course and I learned the painful lesson that if you are going to accomplish anything, you have to work within the power structure that is there.

Q: You said that Karume, who became the first president of the Revolutionary Government, was a former head of the Port Workers Union. What were his relations later on with his own union? Was he still running the union?

POVENMIRE: No, he was very much a political figure after that.

Q: Did the union embarrass him in government by making demands that he couldn't meet? That is the common problem of a trade union leader who leaves the labor movement for government.

POVENMIRE: No, because when Karume assumed power after the revolution he did not have the character to be anything other than a despot. He was soon assassinated after imposing an oppressive, completely arbitrary government. The only thing he was interested in was the use, and abuse, of power.

Q: Was the AFL-CIO active there?

POVENMIRE: Tom Mboya was then the major friend of the AFL-CIO in East Africa. I don't recall exactly when it was that Mboya was assassinated in Kenya but it was about this time. I know I dealt with Irving Brown in setting up the grant for the Zanzibari labor leader. Zanzibar was pretty small potatoes on the African labor scene but important in the East-West confrontation because of its strategic location.

Q: You had no direct relations with Irving Brown? Because at that point he was very important with many of the Europeans.

POVENMIRE: He was then running the AFL-CIO program for Africa as well so we had correspondence with him. I did not meet him until later.

Q: Any visitations from trade union people in America?

POVENMIRE: No, we had no such visitations. We had very few resources to do anything with labor in Zanzibar at that time. We were able to work through AID programs out of Dar es Salaam and we did eventually obtain a grant to build a small teacher training school, not labor related, in Zanzibar with the idea that this was sort of our token grant to Zanzibari independence. But the major responsibility was still held by the British.

Q: Did the British have a labor attaché there?

POVENMIRE: No. It was a colonial administration. The Colonial Office was there.

Q: They did have labor officers in many of their colonial administrations.

POVENMIRE: Nothing that amounted to anything in Zanzibar.

Q: British Council?

POVENMIRE: They did have British Council but it did not do anything in labor.

Q: Any other observations about your service in Zanzibar?

POVENMIRE: Just to the effect that in this developing country the labor movement was once again the cradle for the political leadership. Personal relationships are so important on the ground. I taught the deputy leader of the confederation to drive a car. Just a few days before we left Zanzibar he very untypically asked that if I had an extra bottle of whisky he would really like to have one. That was so strange because basically it was a Muslim society and most people did not drink. It was so unusual for him I wondered at the time why. I suspect now that it may have been for one of the first meetings that this revolutionary junta had to plan the revolution. Perhaps, if my tour had been longer, we possibly may have learned a whole lot more about what was going to happen than we did.

Q: What about the regulations on liquor?

POVENMIRE: Well, we couldn't take it with us, Morrie. He became Minister of Labor in the new government. I suspect that I did not teach him to drive very well because I heard later that he ran over somebody in a Jeep.

Q: I'm rather surprised that with the political and security aspects, the Cold War, that there were not more resources.

POVENMIRE: I think we were just stretched too thin.

Q: And from Zanzibar you went to Paraguay?

POVENMIRE: In Paraguay I was in the political section and was also designated as labor reporting officer. This was 1964 until 1966.

Q: What was the nature of the government?

POVENMIRE: Alfredo Stroessner had been in power since 1954. Between 1948 and 1954 Paraguay had had eight presidents, four in one year. From extreme instability, Paraguay went to extreme stability.

Q: What was his labor policy?

POVENMIRE: Paraguay had a very tame labor confederation, the CPT. When I did the annual labor report I made about ten or twelve recommendations, which rather shocked some people because I don't think that Embassy, Paraguay had made policy recommendations on labor for a long time. One of these was to establish an AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) program. At that time AIFLD's Bill Doherty had a reputation among our embassies in Latin America of being something of a bull in a china shop. He operated pretty independently and I think a lot of our embassies were reluctant to be involved with AIFLD. This is the feeling I had.

Q: This is after Serafino Romualdi?

POVENMIRE: I met Romualdi once, when he came to Paraguay [just before he retired as director of AIFLD].

Q: Am I to understand that a guy like Romualdi or Doherty could come into Paraguay? The impression I had was that Stroessner was such a dictator that he would not have allowed them into the country.

POVENMIRE: I did recommend that AIFLD come in. Ambassador Snow approved this recommendation; it went through channels. As a consequence Jesse Friedman came down from Peru, where he was assigned with AIFLD. That is where I first met Jesse. I have always liked him and we work well together. Eventually AIFLD sent in two Paraguayan exiles, one by the name of Lava, and another with a Basque name. Unfortunately these two came in as labor organizers and were perhaps too effective. After about six weeks they were picked up by the Paraguayan police and thrown into jail.

Q: It was possible that Romauldi came to visit Jesse. You knew that Jesse was his stepson?

POVENMIRE: I did know that. My recollection is that Romauldi swung by first in order to evaluate the situation. It was not an official labor visit whatsoever.

Q: Anything you would like to say about Bill Doherty, Jr., would be useful in terms of other comments we've had, including from his brother who didn't get along with him too well.

POVENMIRE: I was just going to add that these two Paraguayan exiles who came back to Paraguay had a lot of courage. When they were thrown into jail Bill Doherty and several others from AIFLD came down to Paraguay to visit them and to talk to the Paraguayan authorities. I think that also demonstrated a lot of individual bravery on the part of the AIFLD people. It was still a difficult time in Paraguay and I would not have wanted to have had to do what they did.

Q: Were these two citizens of Paraguay?

POVENMIRE: They were Paraguayan citizens, yes. After several weeks and Doherty's visit they were released from prison and allowed to leave Paraguay again. I think a tacit, unspoken compromise was reached whereby AIFLD was permitted to establish a labor training institute in Asuncion but supported no further outside efforts to organize unions within the country. Basically the creation of the institute was a positive thing in that it demonstrated to Paraguayan workers that they weren't left in a void where the only alternative was communist underground subversion, that there was a free labor movement out there which was sending help and training into Paraguay. The institute was something that worked because it eventually created a cadre of people who had some knowledge, some training, in what a free, legitimate trade union should be.

I might mention that during the time that the two Paraguayan organizers were active I hosted a party at my house for them and also invited the leaders of the tame Paraguayan labor confederation, perhaps naively but also in hope of facilitating a meeting between them. I think, in retrospect, that we were fortunate the evening ended with only verbal fisticuffs instead of an actual brawl. It was an exchange of opinions that was educational all around.

Q: The AFL-CIO did not get a black eye internationally then by allowing themselves to be seen as being used, by cooperating with the Paraguayan authorities?

POVENMIRE: I think, Morrie, that there was a very careful division so as not to be seen as cooperating with the government, or even as cooperating with the established trade union confederation. This was an independent institute which maintained a separate status and as a result I think it was played well. During the turmoil that followed Stroessner's decline and the turnover of government there, the elections and all the rest, I think the fact that we had an established and operating AIFLD training program was an important and positive influence on the attitudes of the Paraguayan unions.

Q: The local tame labor confederation was affiliated internationally in any way?

POVENMIRE: It was affiliated with ORIT [the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers]. I know that Arturo Jauregui came through Asuncion while I was still there and gave a useful press conference. [Secretary General of ORIT at the time.]

After Paraguay, I went back to Washington to be Paraguayan Desk Officer, and later on to Oporto.

Q: Before we get to Oporto, you said earlier you made some recommendations in your annual labor report. How were those greeted? What were the reactions in the Embassy and in the State Department?

POVENMIRE: I think that everybody was delighted to have some kind of policy initiative in Paraguay that we could do and would be positive. It received no negative feedback or static. I just suggested it and, boom, it happened.

Q: That is really wonderful because it is one of the good marks for the annual report in a specific case. This is not a general reaction one gets. So many of the annual reports put out by your colleagues and mine never get any response. O.K., now you are in Oporto. Did you go directly or have any home leave?

POVENMIRE: First I was on the Paraguayan desk for about two years and then a year with the JCS at the Pentagon.

Q: Oh, yes, so you were able to observe some of these developments.

POVENMIRE: Yes, then I went to Oporto in September 1969 and was there until September 1972. This was the period during the Caetano interregnum after Salazar. There was a general loosening mood but the corporate state system of government was still in force.

Labor was very much under the government's thumb. Theoretically, regional management associations would bargain with regional unions and the government would oversee the process to insure that both sides got a fair settlement. In reality, the government used the unions as a method of controlling labor. The unions were expected to be a channel to transmit authority downward rather than upward. Union membership was compulsory and there was automatic dues check-off. The unions had job placement offices for their members, which was another way of keeping their people in line. By law, unions were kept small and divided as they were organized on an occupational rather than industrial basis. A company employing 200 workers might have 20 different unions represented, each with its own contract. Strikes were illegal. Union officers had to be approved by the government and were widely considered to be nothing more than government hacks.

The only independent labor event I recall happening during those years involved an Oporto bank worker who organized a strike and who was arrested and died in custody. His girl friend committed suicide by throwing herself out of a third floor window. It was a messy incident that made clear the government's attitude that independent labor unions were not to raise their head. In reaction there was a sit-down demonstration of small proportions, several hundred people, on the main street in Oporto. This would have been in the spring of 1972. The Portuguese police came along and hit the demonstrators and other people on the sidewalk with batons. There was a group of American tourists in the city and some of the Americans were hit and injured by the swinging batons. Later that day I went around to the police chief and made the most forceful protest I ever made in my Foreign Service career. I was surprised to see tears appear in the eyes of this bullet headed police chief. The police went around to the hotel of the most seriously bruised American, took her to the hospital for an X-ray, and paid the bill. I mention this because this was indicative of the extent of independent labor's presence in Portugal in the period 1969-72.

Q: I take it you did not wait for instructions from the Embassy to raise hell about the

incident?

POVENMIRE: I did not. My relations with the Embassy were such that I felt I had the authority to go around and protest at the local level without necessarily getting instructions.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

POVENMIRE: One of the best, Ridgway Knight. I had positive feedback from Ridgway Knight all the way along.

Q: I had not realized there was that degree of labor opposition and strikes in Portugal.

POVENMIRE: That was the only time I ever heard of labor activity during that period.

Q: Was this before or after Gorrell?

POVENMIRE: Juan Gorrell had been Consul. He was replaced by Peter Johnson. I followed Johnson.

Q: But was Gorrell living in Oporto at this time?

POVENMIRE: Gorrell had retired from the Foreign Service and gone to Caracas as head of the American-Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce. I first met Juan in Oporto when he returned to visit his married daughter who was living there. It was during the first weeks of my tour. We had a messy case of a Vice Consul who went bad under the previous Consul. I was very much involved in cleaning that incident up. It was I think the first case in recent times where the Department prosecuted a Vice Consul for visa fraud. I had just recently arrived in Oporto when Juan came back. He stopped by to tell me of rumors he had heard about possible fraud and I told him what I had already uncovered. We established a good relationship.

Q: Did he come back to live there or was that only later?

POVENMIRE: He came back to Oporto to live only later on after he worked in Caracas. After Oporto I also went to Caracas, so we had some time there together again. Then eventually he did go back to Oporto to reside and he died there.

Q: And then you went to Caracas?

POVENMIRE: I left Oporto late in 1972 , after another anticipated assignment fell through. I left with commendations and a good record after a first tour as principal officer. I gather I was assigned to Caracas as labor attaché because that was one of the vacant positions the Department had not been able to fill earlier. I did not seek a tour as a labor officer but there I was. So I went to Caracas as labor attaché without real training or

orientation. For example, I did not met Andy McClellan [AFL-CIO Latin American representative] before I went down to post.

Caracas was all right. The Venezuelan labor confederation, the CTV, was well organized. There were a number of leaders there who had worked closely with the AFL-CIO over the years. The leaders of the Petroleum Workers Federation, for example, were on good terms with their AFL-CIO counterparts. In effect, it was a learning assignment for me.

Q: Do you see advantages or disadvantages of going in without training?

POVENMIRE: I could have used a week or two of consultation to good advantage. I was only fortunate that it was not a critical time in Venezuela. I spent time getting a feel for the job -- who was Elmer Foster, what was the background of the dispute between the Chemical Workers and the Petroleum Workers -- and learning the labor ropes. AIFLD had been thrown out of Venezuela several years earlier for its political activities and I had to coordinate its return. The AIFLD representative who arrived was Mike Hammer. We got along together very well.

Q: Don't you think it was better to have on-the-spot training? Some people have criticized the training courses, of as long as a year when Steve Low went through the program, with the Harvard trade union program for three months and then an eight week course in which they learned labor history, philosophy. Some have said the time might better be spent with a training period abroad.

POVENMIRE: I can see the point because I would hate to spend a year in formal labor training. It is the individual leaders -- their political orientation and their interrelationships -- and a feel for international labor's structure and organizations, that you have to learn. If you are fortunate enough to have the time to gain this experience at the post, that is certainly better. I was lucky. I don't think a labor attaché needs training in how to be a union organizer.

I helped to ease the introduction of U.S. flag LASH [Lighter Aboard Ship] vessels into Venezuelan ports without the opposition from the Port Worker Unions which occurred in some other Latin American countries. A number of training grants which allowed Venezuelan union leaders to visit U.S. ports and talk with their U.S. counterparts were a big help in this effort.

I also tried to keep a perspective on the family planning programs that several American groups were trying to promote in Venezuela. The Venezuelans working in this area were concerned that they not be overwhelmed by all of the outside efforts from people who wanted to do good on their behalf. It made sense to keep overall control of Venezuelan projects in capable Venezuelan hands. Too direct an involvement by U.S. organizations easily could have turned counterproductive.

Q: What about the political and trade union situation there?

POVENMIRE: The Venezuelan labor movement was a bulwark of democracy. Free and democratic elections had been held regularly ever since 1958 when Perez Jimenez was thrown out. Leadership of the government had alternated between two opposing political parties, the AD and the Christian Democrats. The CTV was certainly one of the better and most sophisticated Latin American trade union movements and was oriented mostly toward labor objectives. Although leaders aligned with the AD, Accion Democratica, held most trade union posts, there was enough of a Christian Democratic presence that the confederation was not controlled entirely by one political party. Quite a bit of tact was required in order to keep good relations with all factions within the CTV.

Q: What about relations with the Catholic-oriented trade unions and the AFL-CIO?

POVENMIRE: The left-wing Catholic organization, the Latin American Confederation of Workers, CLAT , had its headquarters for all of Latin America in Caracas. CLAT was headed by the very anti-American Argentine, Emilio Maspero. I had some useful contact with CLAT's foreign affairs guy, Henry Molina, who was from the Dominican Republic.

I had a bit of an entree there. Back when I was doing labor reporting in Paraguay, besides the tame government-aligned CPT, there was also a very small CLAT-affiliated organization. [The CLAT was then known as CLASC but it later dropped "Christian" from its name.] Because it was the only alternative labor organization in Paraguay, I proposed one of its founders for a leader grant and, surprise, he was approved. He was probably the first CLAT-affiliated leader grantee ever. His name escapes me now but he eventually became the head of the CLAT training school in Buenos Aires. He even came through Caracas one time while I was there, which was helpful for my relations with CLAT.

Emilio Maspero, on the other hand, avoided all contact with me. I understand he had had a bad experience with the authorities during one of his early visits to the U.S. Whatever the reason, he was bad news. I did make sure that both Washington and the West German Embassy's labor reporting officer, who was a Christian Democrat, were fully aware of the virulently anti-European and anti-NATO pronouncements and publications put out by CLAT and Maspero. The Federal Republic's Embassy was apparently not previously aware of some the radical positions endorsed by CLAT. The West German Christian Democrats were, of course, by far the biggest financial supporters of CLAT through the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

I believe that my work in Caracas regarding CLAT eventually paid off. I understand that the Konrad Adenauer Foundation later exercised better control over CLAT's subsidies. I know that Maspero and Molina eventually came to Washington and met with some senior AFL-CIO officials. The result was less antagonism and a somewhat better understanding between ORIT and CLAT.

I had another experience in Caracas which was instructive. On one occasion I was standing on the fringes watching a labor demonstration organized by the small communist-controlled confederation. There were perhaps four or five thousand demonstrators in the plaza. I saw one of the organizers of the demonstration edge back into a corner, facing away from the plaza so that his voice would be reflected off the buildings, and he began shouting slogans to incite violent responses from the crowd. This was a calculated action to manipulate the crowd while not being seen doing so.

Later in Lisbon I saw exactly this same sort of thing occur. During the period of high political tension in mid-1975, there was a demonstration involving perhaps ten thousand people directly in front of the Ministry of Labor. It was organized by the communists in opposition to the Labor Minister, Tomas Rosa, who was one of the more moderate members of the revised revolutionary government. I had just come from meeting with the Minister and was just about to leave the Ministry when the demonstrators showed up. I found myself looking out with nothing but locked glass doors between us. I saw one of the organizers in the very front row turn and really hit his neighbor and then they both shouted and ducked back, pushing and shoving, into the crowd. You could almost feel the adrenaline surge among the front ranks of the demonstrators. Fortunately the Portuguese, even under the stress of those revolutionary times, still retained enough self-restraint that this demonstration did not turn into a riot, but I had the feeling it easily could have. The radical military leaders of the revolution still had control of all public security organizations, like the police. I later saw a photo of the Labor Minister taken at the time, which showed him looking over the balcony of his twelfth story office at the massive demonstration down below. He looked scared, as he had every right to be. When I went back to see him the next week the twelfth floor was equipped with newly installed security gates. It was perhaps fortunate that the Ministry had only two very small and antiquated elevators, each of which could carry about five people, and one narrow stairway.

Q: Anything else about Venezuela before we go on to Lisbon?

POVENMIRE: Only that just before departing Caracas I wrote a report about Venezuelan concerns about an American settlement in neighboring Guyana, which was located in a region of Guyana the Venezuelans claimed for themselves. The Venezuelans thought that the activities of this community were questionable. As it turned out, they were right. The community was Jonestown.

Q: This was before the mass suicide?

POVENMIRE: I think this would have been about six months before.

Q: Jim Leader then followed you in Caracas?

POVENMIRE: No, it was Dan Turnquist.

Q: Leader then was before you?

POVENMIRE: Marty Forrester preceded me in Caracas. Jim Leader came later.

While we were in Caracas the Portuguese revolution occurred on April 25, 1974. Thinking back, it was almost the high tide of the perceived threat from the Communist Bloc. George Will wrote an interesting article one time in which he recounted conditions at the time of the Portuguese revolution. You had in Africa major communist-inspired revolutions on both African coasts, in Mozambique and Angola. Leftist regimes dominated a number of other African countries. In Latin America Castro's Cuba was still seen as a serious threat. There were guerrilla insurgencies, aided by the Cubans, in several Central and South American countries. In Asia, Vietnam was lost and the rest of Southeast Asia threatened. On the Euro-Asian land mass, the Soviet Union was probing at the edges of Western Europe and was poised to take over the government of a NATO country located on the Atlantic coast of the Western alliance. If Portugal had fallen to the communists, there would have been some who would have believed that the tide had turned definitively against the West. I have reason to think there were even some in the U.S. Government who were prepared to believe that Portugal was lost to communism. So 1974-75, the time of the Portuguese revolution, was a very dangerous period for the West.

Q: I like your careful use of the word "perceived" danger. A person of my age and my experience in dealing with the communists sees that as a time when there were cables going back to Moscow telling them to make it into a real revolution. I really think there was a real threat of the communists taking over Portugal entirely. It was a crucial period.

POVENMIRE: It became obvious soon after the revolution in 1974 that things were going badly. The Department was concerned and made a number of personnel changes in Lisbon. Because of my experience in Portugal they pulled me out of Caracas and sent me to Lisbon as the first labor attaché ever.

Q: Was Carlucci there then?

POVENMIRE: No, Carlucci had not arrived yet. The previous ambassador was still at post, although Dick Post was DCM and, in effect, running the embassy even though the ambassador, an out-of-depth political appointee, was there. Carlucci arrived I believe in early 1975.

You know, Morrie, it is hard to exaggerate the euphoria that swept Portugal after the April, 1974, revolution. For fifty years the extreme right, big business, and government had formed an interlocking directorate, a kind of stagnant, Neanderthal capitalism. We used to say that Portugal had six of Europe's richest families and six million of Europe's poorest people. The Caetano government had little popular support. It toppled after only a figurative push of the hand by the armed forces April 25 movement .

At the time of the revolution the platform of the April 25 armed forces movement called for the restoration of civil rights, free elections, rapid decolonization, and programs to assist the working class. This platform had wide support. There earlier had been no scope permitted in Portugal for the development of a legitimate, democratic, political opposition which could have pushed for similar reforms. Mario Soares, the Socialist leader, was living in France when the revolution happened. Portugal was wide open and whoever stood up and shouted became a leader. The communists were the only group on the ground ready to stand up and shout.

The Communist Party had built up a clandestine organization during years of opposition to Salazar and Caetano. They were able to play upon the public's admiration for their long-time opposition to "fascism." To be anti-communist was, ipso-facto, to be labeled pro-fascist. The communists moved quickly to expel "fascists" and got their people in key positions in government, the media, and labor.

The economic and social goals of the armed forces revolutionary movement soon became blended with those of the communists. The senior leaders of the April 25 movement seemed ready to serve the communists' purposes at almost every turn. The military itself became badly disorganized. Discipline disappeared. In some units groups of enlisted personnel insisted upon voting approval of any orders they were given.

The blundering political right allowed itself to be implicated in two self-destructive counter-coups. These provided further pretexts for the communists to arrest political opponents. "Peoples' justice" replaced the courts and workers commissions, voting by show of hands, took over hundreds of factories. The communists quickly dominated Portugal's two television stations. The only independent radio station, owned by the Church, and even the new Socialist Party newspaper were soon closed down by phony labor disputes.

From the communists' point of view, the military April 25 movement made one crucial mistake. That is, they promised elections within one year. Of course the communists hoped to manipulate developments during that year so that they would be able to sway the election and control any government which would be voted in.

Q: Reflect on it from their point of view. Didn't they have to promise elections and then control the government that came out of the elections. Think about 1917 when the Bolsheviks promised elections in March and then manipulated the post-election period so that the democratic forces were defeated.

POVENMIRE: I think the communists tried to do that. I remember a diplomatic corps luncheon we went to which was addressed by Admiral Rosa Coutinho, known as "the red admiral." This was about March, 1975, just before the elections. His line was "we've promised elections, we'll hold elections, but we're telling everyone to cast blank votes because they haven't had a chance to vote in fifty years, they don't know how, and we heroes of the revolution know what is best for the people." It was a frightening, chilling

demonstration of military arrogance, and of political arrogance, because he was also a leading government figure. I believe he was Minister of Defense at the time. There was a large element in the revolutionary military who -- if they had not thought so at the beginning -- began to think, hey, political power is pretty nice, we'd like to hang on to this for a while.

With regard to labor, the communists were glad to keep the old compulsory union membership and automatic dues check-off systems. And they moved to create a single national labor confederation. The proposed law governing union organization is what first provoked an open break between the communists and the socialists. Some in the Socialist Party faced up to the communists power grab and did force into the law a provision calling for mandatory secret ballot union elections. But before these secret ballot elections could be held, the communists convened a national labor congress in July, 1975, and created a new national labor confederation, Intersindical-CGTP . Naturally, they dominated the Intersindical-CGTP completely.

Let me give you some examples of the labor policies of the early provisional governments. When I arrived In Lisbon In October, 1974 , there were government-supported trade union demonstrations several times a month. Ten or twelve thousand people would march through the streets of Lisbon and then end with a big rally in one of the central plazas. Before I arrived in Lisbon, an Embassy officer doing labor reporting was spotted at one of these rallies. He was grabbed and marched by the crowd for several blocks before being turned over to the police as "an American spy." Later a Cuban General came to Lisbon and spoke at the Lisbon bull ring in a closed session for Portuguese trade unionists.

On another occasion the Communist Party created an arbitrary road block on the main highway between Estoril and Lisbon. The police stood by while red-shirted party members searched every vehicle. I was waved through because of my diplomatic license plates but everyone else had to open the trunks of their cars.

The elections of April, 1975 , marked a crucial turning point. The Portuguese people demonstrated their innate good sense and distributed their votes from left to right in about the same proportion as in any mature European democracy. To everyone's surprise, the communists got only about 13 per cent of the vote. It really restored my faith in the democratic system.

Even so, the situation remained very dangerous all through 1975 and 1976 as the communists and their allies continued to use their positions in government and other organizations to manipulate and exploit the situation. On November 25, 1975, the radical military, aided by the communists, attempted a coup to consolidate the gains that they had made since the revolution and for two days Portugal teetered on the brink of civil war.

Morrie, one of the most moving experiences I had in the Foreign Service occurred at a USIA-sponsored concert in Lisbon at the Gulbenkian auditorium. This was before the

1975 elections and at a time when there was much fear and oppression in Portugal. This USIA-sponsored group of unknown gospel singers came and sang. The hall was packed with several thousand people. Their first song -- I choke up -- was met by a virtual wall of applause. The Portuguese so needed some object, some symbol around which they could rally. There was the sense that everyone there desperately wanted to show how strongly they appreciated support, any kind of support. I'm sure the singers never had such an overwhelming audience response either before or after that concert but they certainly earned star billing that evening. It may have been one of the first small turning points, an indication that, yes, there was a U.S. presence and people could demonstrate their support for it.

The first thing I did after I arrived in Lisbon as labor attaché was to try to inventory the various trade unions, where they were. I did this through phone books and by making contacts. Then I tried to determine, are there any friends out there?

Q: Fortunately you were already well versed in the language.

POVENMIRE: I knew the country, I knew the people, I knew the language. Any labor leader in office prior to April 25 had disappeared. I looked at Tom Herron's last labor report and it had no relevance whatsoever to conditions existing after April 25.

Q: You mean the people who had been active in the unions actually disappeared?

POVENMIRE: Not in the sense they were killed or assassinated, but they were nonentities. Again, an interesting Portuguese trait. They had a real revolution, and I use the term in the sense that there were indeed revolutionary changes, but there were only a handful of people killed in the whole event. Still, it could have turned very bloody on several occasions.

Q: What does it say about the attitude of Americans toward non-political but possibly important groups that you might have to work with even under bad circumstances. For instance, the attitude of the AFL-CIO that did not want anybody in the American Embassy who was labeled "labor attaché" because it would give the impression they were recognizing slave labor organizations.

POVENMIRE: That is why it would be good to have an alternative organization. If the AFL-CIO felt it would be compromised by being in there perhaps somebody else could come in and deal with them.

Q: Do you have any comments as to what sort of an organization? For example, the British always have the British Council. They can carry on labor programs through that. The Germans have their politically-oriented foundations. We in the U.S. have our Harvard professors who can come and tell the Russians how to reorganize their economy, but we have no non-official labor relations organizations.

POVENMIRE: I thought that the Institutes for Democracy would be the solution. In practice, I'm not so sure how they have worked out.

Q: In some places good, in some places, so so.

POVENMIRE: We have a variety of organizations. It seems some group should be able to undertake programs that the mainstream organization may not wish to do.

Q: But this was the secret of the communists' success, to the dangerous degree they were successful, the absence of anything else?

POVENMIRE: All organized support for the old regime just self-destructed and disappeared. There was nothing in existence, except the April 25 military junta and the communists, to replace it.

Q: Soares came back when?

POVENMIRE: He came back in 1974 but he was starting practically from zero.

Q: He did not have a trade union background.

POVENMIRE: He did not. He did have great personal courage. I was at the May Day celebration in 1975. The communists had organized the parade, which ended in a massive rally in a soccer football stadium, so that their unions were first in line. The Socialist-led unions, there were some few at that time, marched in the latter part of the parade. Once the communist unions were inside, the organizers said O.K., no more, the stadium is full, nobody else can come in. I was up behind the speakers stand, unofficially, very unofficially. You could see this mass of people down below waving these great red Communist Party banners. The stadium was fairly full, but a couple of thousand more easily could have fitted in. There was no way for a casual observer inside the stadium to know that there were groups still outside wanting to come in with their Socialist Party banners.

At that point both the Communist and the Socialist Parties still technically shared power with the revolutionary military April 25 movement, although the communists' role was far larger than that of the socialists. May Day was a major event and Soares obviously wanted to speak to the rally. I watched while he tried to enter the enclosed speakers stand. Communist security guards tried to keep him from entering and he literally had to push his way through. Once inside, the communists could not keep him from speaking without forcing a confrontation between the two political parties into the open. It was really a case of push and shove and Soares proved he had a lot of guts. There were no public security forces to enforce order. The police were totally ineffective and subservient to the military's newly created "Continental Operations Command."

Q: A French socialist told me about that time that he wouldn't be surprised to learn that Soares was overthrown, just like Kerensky was in 1917. But Soares did not have a trade union element with him in his political organization.

POVENMIRE: Nothing that amounted to very much at the beginning. They tried to organize them. The first time I came around to establish contact with the Socialist Party labor guy, a man named Madureira, he was very reluctant to meet with me.

Q: You introduced me to him.

POVENMIRE: Right. At the beginning he did not wish to risk being tarred by the presence of the American Embassy. Only after several months of low key overtures and playing by his rules, was I able to establish some kind of working relationship. He agreed, eventually, that he would pick a couple of candidates to go to the U.S. for labor training. He first chose a coal miner from up north, near Oporto. The processing was approved and the grant arranged. I was at the airport the day the candidate was supposed to come to Lisbon and take the plane for the U.S., but he never showed up. He told us later that he was afraid to leave because the safety of his wife and children had been threatened back in the mining community where he lived. That kind of pressure and terror was making everyone aware that a real threat existed in Portugal.

Gradually the Socialist Party did get a small trade union effort organized. And the Social Democrats, the PSD, who had their strength mostly in the north, under the leadership of Sa Carneiro, also created a trade union presence, primarily in the banking and insurance sectors. Over time these two non-communist trade union groups did take root, but they were organized around two completely separate political movements. By 1976 these two union segments were fairly well established but they were not in any way coordinating their efforts. It was obviously in the interest of both factions to at least have contact but surprisingly, the leaders did not know each other. I knew the leaders on both sides, the socialists and the social democrats. The natural thing was to invite them to lunch. They were both willing. We had a good lunch. It was the first time they had met. I won't say that it was as a direct consequence of this meeting, as they followed through on their own initiative, but they did eventually create a unified labor confederation, the UGT , in opposition to the communist-controlled Intersindical-CGTP Confederation. The UGT, over time, developed considerable strength.

Q: The UGT had variations in strength, north and south.

POVENMIRE: Yes, it did. The PSD was stronger in the north and among the white collar unions. The Socialists had their greater strength in the south.

Another thing about my time in Portugal was that I was able to develop contacts with each of the four successive Labor Ministers in the various provisional governments. The first, Manuel Curto, was a labor lawyer and a Socialist Party member. I think his

appointment may have been as a sop to the Socialists in the early provisional government following the revolution. Curto was never very effective.

Curto was replaced by Major Martins, an Air Force officer who had single-handedly taken over the Lisbon airport control tower at the time of the April 25 revolution. Martins was a fighter pilot. His labor background and expertise was that of a fighter pilot. His strength was his position within the April 25 movement and his connections. He was an opportunist. On May Day, 1975, Martins was the official representative of the provisional revolutionary government at the official celebration in Oporto. He told me after his return the following week that it had been the largest celebration in the city's history. From his manner, it seemed clear that he felt that it was in tribute to him personally and to his role in the revolution. Politically, he was friendly with the more leftist elements in the April 25 movement. However, my relations with him were on a workable basis and he agreed to accept a leader grant to visit the United States. He was the first cabinet minister of the revolutionary government to accept a visit to the United States.

Martins was eventually replaced in a successive provisional government by his deputy, Captain Tomas Rosa, another Air Force officer. Rosa also accepted a leader grant visit to the United States. His role was much more constructive than those of his predecessors. Rosa was followed about two years later by a very capable Socialist trade union official, Maldonado, who had led the socialist trade unions into the unified confederation with the social democrats.

Q: May I ask you to comment on these first three labor ministers. It may be because of my background and because of the history of communist/socialist trade union activities way back to the Russian revolution that I have developed questions along these lines. What we have found in other countries is in the initial post-revolutionary situation, the communists never under any circumstances would want a person with a strict social democratic background. They tend to go either for a secret communist, or an opportunist who they felt they could mold or control. The first two of the people you have described sound as if they might fit that description. The category then divides into two groups -- those who are real underground communists and remain with the communists, and those who are opportunists and just go on a day to day, month to month basis and who frequently turn out to be more favorably disposed toward us as they see the development of power relationships. How do these first three ministers fit into these categories? Did you ever suspect, especially the military who were involved in the revolutionary movement, may have been secret communists or at least under their control and influence?

POVENMIRE: I don't think Curto was. I don't think he had the management capacity to run the Ministry. He did not have the experience or ideological backbone to effectively defend a socialist position against the more forceful communists. I don't think anyone could have at that particular time. But Curto was wishy-washy, a technician with a labor lawyer background.

Martins I would put very much into the category of opportunist. He felt at the time, as many in the April 25 movement did, that the winds were blowing in a leftist direction.

Rosa I would put more in the category of a person who saw what was happening and who was concerned over some of the extremist tendencies in the April 25 movement.

Maldonado, in terms of having the knowledge and expertise, was the best qualified of the four for the post of labor minister. He was out of the intellectual and training side of the trade union movement. He had the intellectual baggage necessary to do the job. He also had the full confidence of the Mario Soares.

I always felt, Morrie, Lisbon was the most important time in my Foreign Service career, in part because of some events that we haven't gone into here. I was able to provide information that was not otherwise available to the Embassy. At certain periods it was of critical importance, particularly around the time of the attempted coup in November, 1975.

I appreciated several comments I received later from people I respect. When I left Lisbon Gerry Holmes wrote to say I had done an outstanding job in perhaps the most challenging assignment faced by any labor attaché in recent years. Later Frank Carlucci, when he was Secretary of Defense, made a point of telling our Ambassador in Rome that I had been a tremendous help to him when Carlucci was ambassador to Portugal.

Q: That is certainly characteristic of Gerry to be so appreciative. He has now retired and has agreed to be interviewed. Did you get a promotion? What was your grade at that time?

POVENMIRE: I was promoted to FSO-3 [FSO-1 under the later, revised system] when I arrived in Lisbon. I made it into the Senior Foreign Service before I went to Rome. I was promoted to the grade of OC in the political cone, not on the supplemental labor attaché list.

Q: Let me ask you a couple of questions. I came to Portugal at that time, as you remember, to run a seminar. There was an old, heavy-set guy who wished to set up a training program of some kind. That was the excuse given for me to come over and give some lectures on the American system. During the course of this I was told by Irving Brown, and by Carlucci, that they wanted me to observe something broader and that was the sort of AID program that should be developed. Brown, knowing that I had this kind of experience during the Marshall Plan, felt that it might be useful, and I was to come up with a recommendation for the type of an AID person they needed. Was that clear to you? Did you know about the second purpose of my visit?

POVENMIRE: I don't recall that I did, Morrie. Frankly we were happy to get all of the support that we could during that time. I think we, the Embassy, had submitted various requests for training. The State Department was responsive. Whenever I made a proposal

I always felt there was a good chance it would be accepted. I think the attitude in Washington was that our people in Lisbon needed all of the help they could get.

Q: Wasn't it early 1977 when I came there?

POVENMIRE: That would be about right. I don't recall that I was aware that people had approached you on this matter.

Q: Wasn't my name put through some clearance process by the Embassy?

POVENMIRE: Not directly through me, no.

Q: At that point we didn't even know each other.

POVENMIRE: We made a request for various types of training programs and I think I probably heard that you were the person coming out to do it. I was delighted and I think that it worked out very well.

Q: It was a great experience. I never would have been in Portugal. I was just curious because of the things we will be discussing later about the relationship between the Embassy labor officer and AID programs. Later on I would be taking the position that nothing should be done with regard to aid without the knowledge and support of the labor attaché.

POVENMIRE: Later on the AID program did come in and I regarded it as being entirely supportive of the kind of things I was trying to do. I know at one point I made a trip to Paris to iron out with Irving [Brown] some of the details relating to the establishment of the Free Trade Union Institute, which was set up primarily to work in Portugal.

Q: O.K., we're through with Portugal. From Portugal you went to?

POVENMIRE: I was assigned as labor attaché to Brazil, but stationed at the Consulate General in Sao Paulo rather than at the Embassy in Brasilia. That was because Brasilia is fairly isolated in the interior while the country's industrial base and trade union strength is centered around Sao Paulo.

Q: This has been an important issue in Australia, with its isolated capital at Canberra, its business center at Sydney, and its trade union strength in Melbourne.

POVENMIRE: It can be argued either way. I know Ambassador Sayre was not terribly happy that I was in Sao Paulo because I was not right on hand to provide the Embassy direct input. On the other hand, for the kind of reporting I was doing, it was probably better for me to be in Sao Paulo. Being in Sao Paulo also allowed me to step into the role of deputy principal officer there at a post larger than two-thirds of our embassies and with six other agencies represented.

Q: Do you think the ambassador feels that he has less control over the attaché when he is stationed away from the embassy?

POVENMIRE: Probably so, although I don't think there was a difference of opinion over the kind of reporting I was doing.

Q: I'm not referring to differences of opinion but, in the case you mentioned you became deputy to the consul general. The Department of Labor or the AFL-CIO might object because you had broad responsibilities countrywide and you possibly couldn't follow developments they were interested in. Maybe now is the time to discuss, with the reduction of labor attaché positions overseas, the degree that your labor function was sacrificed to more general responsibilities.

POVENMIRE: Morrie, my attitude is that you have to balance overall U.S. Government interests with the resources available. With regard to meeting my responsibilities toward the Department of Labor, I've usually found that the Labor Department will respond to and support initiatives coming from U.S. missions abroad, but it seldom generates requirements on its own. My feeling is that because I was also engaged on broader issues I was perhaps more effective on labor matters, my input was taken more seriously, certainly at the country team level.

Q: After this session I will tell you why, from my experience, I come from the other direction but let's continue. Sao Paulo was the trade union center. How about labor-management affairs?

POVENMIRE: Likewise. The American Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paulo was sometimes the largest, sometimes the second largest, Chamber outside the U.S. It vied with Mexico City.

The labor confederations had their headquarters in Brasilia, but the confederations were far divorced from the much more significant labor developments at the local and federation level. For example, the really important labor leader in Brazil was Luis Ignacio da Silva, known as "Lula," who was the head of the metal workers in Sao Paulo's industrial suburbs. He was a populist leader who led several successful strikes and demonstrations. He eventually organized a political party, the Workers' Party, and was a leading contender in several elections to become president of Brazil.

I first met Lula in early 1978 during my initial round of contacts in Sao Paulo . I was invited out to his union headquarters. The meeting, held over lunch, was more in the nature of a press conference as a Swedish television crew and another Brazilian journalist were there to interview Lula. I was kind of an add-on and not the focus of the meeting. After the lunch, however, I had the chance to chat informally with Lula. He was interested that I had been in Portugal and indicated that he wanted to talk further in the future.

Shortly afterwards I returned to the U.S. for what I thought would be a short trip but it unexpectedly was changed into home leave. I had come to Brazil on direct transfer from Portugal. Although I met with Lula on a number of occasions later, I was never able to establish the kind of rapport that I sensed I could have had with him at the beginning. I think it was in part because of the delay in the follow-up after the initial meeting but even more because in the interim, there developed around Lula a cadre of people who were always very careful to stay close to him, to intervene, and to select his contacts. I regret that, because of the political prominence he attained. He has great charisma and native intelligence.

Q: What finally happened to him after he lost the elections? Did he go back to the trade union movement?

POVENMIRE: No, he is still the head of the Workers' Party. I have not kept up with Brazilian politics, but I'm sure he is still a major political figure there.

Q: Did Lula have relations with AIFLD?

POVENMIRE: He never had relations with AIFLD.

Q: What about the individual trade unions?

POVENMIRE: People from his trade unions would participate in AIFLD training programs. AIFLD had a training institute, IDASIL, located in Sao Paulo and run by Brazilians, some of the most capable trade union people I've ever had the privilege of knowing. It was a very worthwhile program and generally accepted by the Brazilian trade union movement. People from Lula's unions would sometimes attend courses there, basic trade union training courses. Lula himself would never particularly identify with IDASIL or AIFLD at all. He probably felt it was beneath him.

Q: How did you get along with the AIFLD group?

POVENMIRE: I got along very well with the AIFLD people. I worked closely with the IDASIL institute. When I first arrived in Brazil I was pleased to find that Mike Hammer was the AIFLD representative, stationed in Rio. I first knew Mike in Caracas. He and his family lived close by there. He then went to El Salvador to work with AIFLD's land reform programs and after that was assigned to Brazil. Every time I went to Rio I would stop by to see Mike and we coordinated our efforts closely. About a year after I arrived in Sao Paulo, AIFLD asked Mike if he would go back to El Salvador. It was a real shock to hear on the radio on January 4, 1979, that Mike and two other AIFLD people had been gunned down by right-wing terrorists in El Salvador.

Q: That was a real tragedy.

POVENMIRE: It was a tragedy. You know, don't you, that Mike is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. It was authorized by a special act of Congress. I was able to help his son get a scholarship to the Fletcher School at Tufts University. He subsequently entered the Foreign Service.

Q: Anything else on your time in Brazil? When were you there?

POVENMIRE: From January 1978 until August 1981 .

Q: Let me ask, since you had a direct transfer and then home leave, what were you able to do on home leave that was helpful? Often people go out to a post and only find out after they are there of people back home they should have contacted.

POVENMIRE: Morrie, I'm sure I went around to AIFLD again and saw Andy McClellan at the AFL-CIO. I think I stopped by to see Msgr. Higgins because the theology of liberation people were so important in Brazil. I would have seen the people in ILAB in the Labor Department and the Labor Advisor in the ARA Bureau. I think Dale Good and Tom Bowie were still in S/IL.

I think one of the more useful things I did in Brazil was to obtain a leader grant for a labor lawyer in Sao Paulo, by the name of Pizzanotto. He had been considered and rejected before but I was able to override the objections. He had what I think was a very successful trip to the U.S. I felt vindicated because he subsequently became the Labor Minister in the first elected Brazilian government, replacing the military governments which had taken over from Goulart.

Q: I want to ask, how do you feel about these restrictions on leader grants, either because a person isn't quite kosher from the view of the American labor movement, or because there is some suspicion they are "leftists," when the labor officer believes that a candidate is a good gamble and not a tool of the other side?

POVENMIRE: My feeling is that it is a situation which can best be judged by the Embassy, not exclusively by the labor officer because there may be sometimes overriding considerations. I think there should be overall Embassy input.

Q: Nominations by the labor officer but an understanding of overriding considerations?

POVENMIRE: Absolutely.

I helped to establish a direct Department of Labor to Ministry of Labor relationship which led to a number of productive programs. Labor Minister Macedo came to the United States. Bill Usery and Bill Gould presented programs in Brazil. I had the opportunity to meet Ray Marshall for the first time when he was the U.S. Government representative to the inauguration of Brazil's newly elected civilian president. We flew together from Rio to Brasilia. He was very impressive as Secretary of Labor.

Q: I told you I interviewed him recently. I also did some work for him about 1978. A very impressive guy.

POVENMIRE: After Brazil I was assigned as Labor Advisor in ARA. This assignment included a trip to El Salvador, with Jesse Friedman, to observe AIFLD operations there. I must say it was a nervous time for me. It was one of the nasty periods of the revolution there. The Embassy was sand-bagged like a fortress. We had a labor reporting officer at the Embassy, Bill Brown, who did a first rate job. The AIFLD people working there really had courage, particularly their Salvadoran crew, because they had to do a lot of traveling around the countryside where many land owners were opposed to the land reform program.

At the request of the ARA front office I also made a week-long trip to Suriname to assess the situation there. This was in September, 1981 . The Department was very much concerned over the deteriorating political situation since the military coup and takeover directed by Lt. Col. Bouterse. Cyril Daal headed Suriname's major trade union confederation and was one of a number of community leaders calling for a return to democratic government. I met Daal and talked with the people who worked with him. My report recommended ways in which international labor support could be directed toward Suriname. Late in 1982 the unions threatened a general strike against the junta. On December 8, the military burned the union headquarters and destroyed opposition newspapers and radio stations. Daal and fourteen other leading Surinamese were arrested, beaten, and murdered by the military with the personal participation of Bouterse. It is always a delicate matter, in a case like that, knowing whether you are being helpful or endangering the people you are trying to work with. I think that if the people on the spot ask for your help, we should give it to the extent we can legitimately do so and it is consistent with U.S. policy. The important thing is not to mislead them into thinking we will help when we really can't do so.

Q: It was shortly after that they arranged for a team to come from various Latin American countries. It included one so-called labor person from Suriname who the AFL-CIO refused to have any dealings with. I was responsible for arranging a program for the entire group and had to find other things for this gentleman to do. Do you have any feelings as to whether or not it is appropriate to have people designated by the local government go on teams of that sort? I don't know who the labor advisor was in ARA at that time.

POVENMIRE: It must have been after my time because it is something I am not aware of. I left ARA in 1983 to go to Rome.

Q: It caused a bit of embarrassment in the Labor Department I must say.

POVENMIRE: It would depend very much on the individual case, I would think. There were a lot of terrorized people in Suriname. I was a member of the U.S. delegation to the

Inter-American Labor Ministers conference, held in the Dominican Republic in December, 1981. I talked with some of the Surinamese delegation whom I had met before during my trip to Suriname. It was a delicate and difficult time for them, something they were not comfortable with.

Q: Anything else about your time in ARA?

POVENMIRE: One general thing, Morrie, which was true not only for my time in ARA but all through my assignments in labor. That is the extent to which international labor is a network of interrelationships. Everybody knows everybody else, by reputation if not personally. I had an idea of the political orientation of most important Latin American leaders and their confederations, the activities of the international trade union secretariats and their representatives, the different currents within the American labor movement and the personal rivalries there. As is to be expected in such a contentious field, many of these people have strongly held views. It is also not surprising that there are often disagreements between them. I'm impressed by how many of these individuals are willing to talk about what is going on, and who is doing what, because it is their life's work and they are passionately committed to it. If you are a good listener and have enough experience to ask the right questions, people will tell you the damndest things, even information that it is not really in their interest to pass along. You know this, Morrie, you are a good listener.

Secondly, by using this web of information, which comes from networking and from a variety of reporting from the field, the Labor Advisor or the labor attaché at an embassy performs his most important and useful function. He, or she, must use judgement as to the best way to promote the U.S. national interest. I count among some of my most important achievements things which did not happen, events or proposals which would have worked against U.S. interests, broadly defined, which I successfully opposed. Sometimes we admittedly face conflicting interests. Are we helping the interests of American workers when we assist American firms to invest abroad? On issues like that I'm happy to let our democratic process decide and I'll push for whatever policy is approved. One of the great satisfactions of my career is that I never, ever felt that what I was trying to do was contrary to the best long-term interests both of the U.S. and of the foreign country involved, unlikely as this might seem. Basically it all comes down to promoting the democratic process, economic development, and social progress. How many people can finish a career with that kind of satisfaction?

Just before I left the post of ARA Labor Advisor I was invited by AIFLD to speak to one of the graduating classes of Latin American trade union leaders at the George Meany Center. That gave me the opportunity to put down some of my thoughts.

Q: Do you have a copy of that which we can include in the interview?

POVENMIRE: I may have. It was an emotional speech for me. I confess my voice broke when I talked about some of the people I had known and worked with.

Q: Did it appear as an AIFLD document?

POVENMIRE: They excerpted it in one of their newsletters. I worked very closely with Bill Doherty and AIFLD during my time in ARA and came even more to appreciate what they are doing under very difficult circumstances.

Also while I was in the ARA Bureau I was able to get State Department funding, for the first time ever, for a week-long training conference for labor reporting officers from ARA posts. The Labor Department had funded two previous conferences some years ago. I think the people who attended found it useful. Every officer attended every session in spite of the temptations they must have felt to take advantage of being in the Department to take care of other matters.

Q: Did you participate in the sessions?

POVENMIRE: I organized it and brought in speakers who could speak to a particular issue better than I could.

Q: It was related primarily to the Latin American labor situation. Did you give any attention to the problems they had, as labor reporting officers, of only giving part-time to labor-related matters?

POVENMIRE: No, I did not deal with that. I was next assigned to Rome in mid-1983 as Counselor for Labor Affairs.

Q: What grade were you?

POVENMIRE: I made the Senior Foreign Service in 1982.

Q: You followed who?

POVENMIRE: I followed Tony Freeman. I also followed Tony into Sao Paulo.

Q: At that time what was the labor, political, and economic situation in Italy?

POVENMIRE: The issue upon my arrival was the "scala mobile," an automatic increase in the basic wages linked to the cost of living. It is very similar to what you have in Brazil even today because inflation is built into the system. The communist-led CGIL labor confederation supported the position that the automatic cost of living increases should be perpetuated. Italy's politically weak coalition government was prepared to go along with that position. It was only the Christian Democratic CISL and the predominantly Socialist UIL labor confederations which opposed the automatic increases. For trade union confederations to oppose automatic cost of living increases on principle is one, uncommon; two, requires courage; and three, is an uphill battle. Indeed, in a closely

fought national referendum they were ultimately successful in defeating the position of the CGIL. It seemed an unlikely decision but one which showed a remarkable degree of political maturity in Italy.

Q: At this stage the CGIL was not as pro-communist as it was in earlier times.

POVENMIRE: The CGIL had moderated quite a bit although at times they would come out on issues like Vietnam and missiles for NATO. Between one thing and another the CGIL would still take politically unfriendly positions. It was always a question as to whether the CGIL's moderation was a tactical maneuver to garner wider support. I always believed, for example, that if the Portuguese Communist Party had been less militantly hard-line, it would have been more successful in its effort to subvert democracy there.

Q: Togliatti was still living?

POVENMIRE: I don't believe that he was. Luciano Lama was the leader of the CGIL.

Q: Was he oriented toward Euro-communism?

POVENMIRE: Yes, he was a Euro-communist. I attended a speech that he made to a group of foreign labor attachés. At certain points in the speech he would look at me and talk positively about Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. He had his facts about them right, too. He was a very sophisticated person. I recall one of our Foreign Service officers, a woman, who commented on Lama's sex appeal.

Q: At that point the CGIL was trying to earn recognition in Europe.

POVENMIRE: Not only in Europe but they were also seeking some signs of recognition from the U.S. The CGIL had a majority of communists and a minority of socialist members. The secretary general was normally a Communist Party member, and the deputy secretary general, a Socialist.

Q: From the Nenni wing of the Socialist Party. Was there a split among the Socialists between the Nenni group and the UIL-type people?

POVENMIRE: The two groups were not labeled that way when I was there but I would accept that distinction. There was a definite split, but not a great deal of antagonism, between the two factions.

Q: You see Nenni was not trusted by any of the Social Democratic types that I knew because of this history.

POVENMIRE: You had the UIL, with the bulk of the socialist and some of the more centrist unions, under Secretary General Benvenuto. And the Christian Democratic CISL, which was the second most powerful of the three confederations. U.S. policy at that time

was still to shun the CGIL and have contacts only with the two democratic confederations, even though the socialist elements within the CGIL were beginning to stake out positions at variance with those of the communists. We still felt somewhat constrained by all the history of U.S.-Italian relations over the years.

We did take one new departure. For the first time we sent a leading member of the CGIL, we invited the leader of the socialist faction of the CGIL, to the U.S. on a leader grant. The AFL-CIO did not object although they did not arrange his program. Ottaviano del Turco was invited and had a good trip. He particularly wanted to visit Warren, Ohio, where many people from his Abruzzi village had emigrated to work in the steel mills.

Q: Did any of the individual unions in the United States host him in spite of the anti-hosting position of the AFL-CIO's international office?

POVENMIRE: I would need to check the record on that, Morrie. He had a good visit. It was difficult to arrange. On the other hand, I think we found people within the trade union movement to receive him.

Q: In the Amalgamated possibly but not the ILG. Were you criticized?

POVENMIRE: There was at that time another factor which possibly made it easier. There was a discernible tendency among some within the Socialist faction of the CGIL to pull out of that confederation. There was the potential for a split and that was a consideration.

Q: As between two alternatives, one, that we were not going to host anybody from that organization because of its connections with the Comintern -- which may or may not be deteriorating. Or another possibility, that if there is a smidgen of a chance of encouraging a breakaway group from the CGIL, we should do all that we can to encourage it. If we are nice to them maybe they will either quit or be thrown out.

POVENMIRE: Something like that. On the other hand, it was not without risk. It was all out in the open and every faction would try to spin the invitation to their own advantage.

Q: Do I gather you initiated this?

POVENMIRE: I did.

Q: O.K., good. It turned out well, I gather?

POVENMIRE: I think it turned out well on balance.

Q: How much of that new approach could be attributed politically to the Democratic Party approach, the liberal, academic views of Ambassador Gardner, the predecessor of Ambassador Rabb?

POVENMIRE: Gardner had left before I arrived and a new team was on board. I don't think his influence carried over. Max Rabb was receptive to proposals put to him. I don't think he came with any set ideological fix. He was very pragmatic.

Q: Was he a businessman?

POVENMIRE: Rabb was a political leader from New York. He was the first heavyweight to introduce Ronald Reagan to the New York establishment.

Q: Wall Street lawyer, wasn't he, and very active in the Jewish community?

POVENMIRE: That's right.

Q: His receptive nature is interesting in light of other things which happened all over the world with the Republican regime. Here, because of his good contacts with President Reagan he could go further in changing policy than others.

POVENMIRE: Another aspect of our time in Rome was the continuing terrorist threat. Marilyn was very much involved with helping the American victims, 15 wounded and six killed, of the Palestinian attack on TWA at Rome's Fiumicino Airport. There were also the Red Brigades. Of the six people wounded or killed by the Red Brigades during our stay in Rome, I had direct or passing contact with four.

Q: Did you have to take personal precautions?

POVENMIRE: No more than anyone else at the Embassy. One of the victims was the chairman of the Italian Senate committee on labor affairs, a regular contact, who was "kneecapped." One who was killed was a professor of labor relations, whose wife was a American citizen. A third who died was an American Foreign Service Officer on detail to an international organization. It certainly did not influence policy but it made life unnecessarily exciting.

Another aspect about my work in Rome is that I think I felt more constrained than at any other post. There was a lot of baggage from the past. Anyone having labor contacts with the American Embassy was certainly aware of this and sensitive to the connotations. We had visits from various American trade unionists, some of whom had contacts in the past with their Italian counterparts.

Q: A lot of history had gone before as I'm sure you know. To what degree did that impact on your work in the labor field? What comments were made by Italian labor or business people about earlier American labor efforts?

POVENMIRE: Not too many, really. The relationship was pretty good. I think that everybody recognized that Italy had been an ideological battleground in the Cold War.

The Italians were politically sophisticated and recognized that they had been sought after by both sides.

Q: And even played one side against the other on occasion.

POVENMIRE: Well, you might say so. I couldn't possibly comment.

Q: (Chuckles) My experience is covered in other places. You stayed there until you retired?

POVENMIRE: I retired in 1986. I found, Morrie, that it wasn't as much fun as it used to be. I found that after I did the annual trauma, the annual labor report, I decided it was not something I wanted to do again. Trying to balance the demands of both the political and the economic sections was more than I wanted to contend with. I think some people may have been surprised I retired when I did. I've never regretted it one moment.

Q: What you just said about the political and economic sections leads to something I wanted to ask you. Your place in the Embassy, where you served, were you always in the political section?

POVENMIRE: I was always in the political section when I worked as a labor officer. I think that is fitting. The Foreign Affairs Manual treats labor in the political volume and I've always felt more comfortable with a political focus on labor.

Q: There are a number of countries, Denmark for example, where the labor attaché is in the economic section because of the importance of economic issues. Were you a member of the country team?

POVENMIRE: In Lisbon, Rome, Caracas, yes, I was always a member of the country team.

Q: Was that where you made your economic input into the Embassies' reporting? What were your relations? Once you were in the political section, were there efforts by the economic sections to have you do more economic reporting? Were there conflicts?

POVENMIRE: True. I always felt I worked primarily for the guy who did my evaluation. At every post where I served I found the political aspects of labor to be by far the more important and the more interesting. However, in Caracas and Rome I did attend the economic section staff meetings and found I was being pulled in two directions. There was certainly a significant economic aspect to the work and I did incorporate that into my reporting to the degree I could.

Q: You cleared your reporting through the economic section?

POVENMIRE: Interesting that you raise that. In Rome I did not clear my final annual labor report through the economic section because I felt that even though it was a good report, they would have wanted more extensive and comprehensive economic data than I wished to include.

Q: Any criticism because of that?

POVENMIRE: The DCM commented in my final evaluation about my annual labor report. He said that one could learn more about Italy from it than from any other single report the Embassy had submitted in the last year. He liked it.

Q: Did the economic section have any input into your evaluation?

POVENMIRE: No.

Q: What was your relationship at your posts to other elements of the Embassy? Commercial section, science section? They may have had dual reporting responsibilities like the labor officer.

POVENMIRE: I've always taken pride, Morrie, in getting along well with other sections. I think part of the problem in Rome was just burn-out after trying too long to keep everybody happy. I liked the people in the economic section in Rome; they were capable people. But I finally reached the point where I felt I couldn't serve two masters. That certainly is one of the more difficult aspects of being a labor officer.

Q: It is the commercial aspect which I think is most important, in light that the commercial section of the Embassy would have a continuing interest in labor matters. They might get into labor problems, particularly if an American business was thinking of investing. To what degree was your advice solicited as to what sort of labor relations problems existed?

POVENMIRE: Occasionally people came around and asked about labor relations. It was a particular issue in Lisbon at the time of the revolution. The Embassy held weekly sessions there with the American business community. At several other posts sessions with resident American businessmen were normally held on a monthly basis. I always participated in these meetings.

Q: Did they initiate those meetings? Did they ever make any terrible mistakes that might have been avoided if they had come around.

POVENMIRE: Sometimes they made mistakes. I don't know that I was ever in a position to keep them from making those particular mistakes. The people who made the mistakes were not the ones who would have asked for advice anyway.

Q: That was a far cry from years before, when we were very concerned.

POVENMIRE: There was an occasion during the revolution in Lisbon where an American manager was held captive by the workers in his factory. The commercial attaché and I went around to talk to the workers and tried to get him released. They eventually allowed him to escape through an unlocked window.

And one time in Paraguay one of the Embassy's economic officers and I flew in a chartered light plane far into the Chaco to resolve a dispute between a group of Texas fundamentalist families and Paraguayan ranch hands. The religious fundamentalists had been hired by an American soy bean farmer to work his ranch in the Chaco because they objected to the compulsory education laws in Texas. Relations with their co-workers on the ranch had deteriorated to the point where the Texans had barricaded themselves into their log houses and threatened to shoot the ranch hands if they came near. The stand-off had gone on for several days. Everyone was at fault. Fortunately nobody got shot.

I will say, on an entirely different scale of difficulty, there was the problem of trying to deal with labor relations between American military base commands and their local-hire labor forces. That was a problem which I never felt we were adequately prepared to address. There was never any guidance from the Department and the DOD labor specialists sometimes seemed to compound the problems. The situations were sometimes very touchy and often had potential for serious negative political fall out. I helped base commanders sort out a couple of problems but it was always on an ad hoc basis.

Q: I can see that. Did you ever have an assistant labor attaché?

POVENMIRE: I had an assistant labor attaché in Rome. Rome was the last post in Europe to have an assistant labor attaché.

Q: What is the proper line of demarcation between the functions of the attaché and his assistant?

POVENMIRE: I think it is academic at this point because I can't see that there will be any assistant labor attachés in the future.

Q: But the division of functions between yourself and the Foreign Service nationals?

POVENMIRE: Again, it depends on the individuals and their strengths. In Rome we had one of the more senior national employees of the Embassy, a long-time employee who was highly qualified, the best I ever came across in my Foreign Service career. He was very knowledgeable on the political side. We had another employee who was very good on the labor-economics and analysis side.

Q: Was there any disposition on the part of these people to be attracted by offers from American companies? What we've found the last few years is that in the developing world these employees soon quit and go outside where they can make more money.

POVENMIRE: I had that experience in Oporto where we had a very capable national employee on the commercial side. Texas Instruments was considering locating a factory in Oporto and we made a considerable effort to help them. The company thanked us by hiring our employee, whom we had gone to considerable effort to train. I can't blame either the company or the employee. He eventually became their plant manager.

Q: It argues for a good training program so that employees can move up.

POVENMIRE: That, and adequate pay for our national employees. I do think that at most of our embassies the national employees are paid at very competitive rates.

Q: Another general question. Do you have any views on the types of backgrounds that are of special value in doing labor work? Foreign Service? Academic? Business? Trade union? Or is it all dependent upon personality and personal ability?

POVENMIRE: I think, Morrie, it all depends on the individual. I don't think that a labor attaché needs to have a trade union background. It is much more important that a labor officer be oriented entirely toward supporting U.S. Government interests at that particular post. In fact, if a labor officer is deemed, by other officers at a post, of pro-labor bias or of being the resident organizer, his effectiveness in dealing with other officers at the mission is seriously reduced. Objectivity is the key.

Q: How was your work affected by issues of the Cold War and McCarthyism? Did you ever feel a victim?

POVENMIRE: No. In fact the McCarthy era indirectly may have worked to my benefit. When I took the Foreign Service oral exam in 1954 the Department was not taking new officers into the service because of the McCarthy problems. Because I had just started my duty in the Navy, my examining board knew I could not enter the Foreign Service until three years later. That was probably an advantage.

Q: The existence of McCarthyism and the whole disputatious atmosphere generated by McCarthyism, did that affect you?

POVENMIRE: I never felt constraints. When I came in I probably shared the political attitudes of most young officers at that time. I read Harlan Cleveland's Reporter magazine and thought the Manchester Guardian was a good newspaper.

Q: And that wasn't held against you?

POVENMIRE: Apparently not. I was also reading the Christian Science Monitor because of its balanced news coverage.

Q: That's a wonderful paper. O.K., let's talk about your experiences as a Foreign Service spouse. That will be on another tape.

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The following is the text of a speech given by Dale Povenmire to a class of Latin American trade union leaders upon their completion of a training course sponsored by the American Institute for Free Labor Development. The course was conducted at the George Meany Center. The graduation was held at AFL-CIO Headquarters on April 15, 1983. Povenmire was serving as Labor Advisor to the ARA Bureau at the time.

"You have just heard in the introduction that I have worked in Chile, Paraguay, and Venezuela. I should be embarrassed not to be speaking to you today in Spanish. But you also may have noticed that the countries I have served in for the last nine years have all been Portuguese speaking. Therefore I assure you that it is easier for me and more comfortable for you if I speak in English and use the very competent and skillful interpreters we have here today.

I am honored to be asked to speak to you today. Honored and humbled. Being a diplomat in these times is not just working at a desk inside an embassy and attending receptions. In my 26 years in the diplomatic service I have known some very authoritarian regimes, been exposed to exotic diseases in Africa, been followed and harassed in post-revolutionary Portugal. One of my Foreign Service classmates was kidnapped by terrorists in Guatemala. Another was shot and severely wounded in Brazil.

Yet these incidents pale into insignificance when I think of the tasks that you have set out for yourselves as union leaders.

First, there are the long hours of hard work as a union officer, much of it on weekends when others are enjoying themselves with their families and friends. Much of this work seems to have very little reward or appreciation. I don't envy you that.

There are risks of losing your employment because of union activities. And of being slandered by employers and police as "communists" and sometimes being harassed. I don't envy you that.

On the other side, there are the allegations by the communists and their friends who hold out cheap and easy promises for the future, anything for the sake of gaining power. We can see that whenever they do gain control that they then use their power, not to benefit workers, but to further their own political objectives. Such people and their allies allege that democratic leaders -- and we all know it is false -- are sold out to "imperialism" and management. I don't envy you standing up against such allegations, not being able to make cheap and easy promises of utopia just around the corner -- promises that nobody can keep.

And how many times, in some of our countries, have union leaders put their lives in risk in order to defend the rights of organized labor? I don't envy you that.

I do envy you other things. And that is why I am honored and humbled to speak to you today.

I envy you the role of leadership that you have achieved. Your very presence here today means that you have been recognized by your compatriots as leaders. It means that you have already demonstrated that sense of dedication necessary to set you apart from ordinary men. I envy you that leadership.

I envy you the courage that you have demonstrated to confront the risks that union leadership involves.

I envy you the determination that you have shown to confront the problems, the frustrations, and the hard work involved in being a union leader.

I envy you your great sense of justice and your willingness to act in order to improve conditions of life for yourselves, your fellows, and your children, even knowing as we do that social progress does not come easily.

I envy you these things because they are the traits of leaders, of people who not only lead their unions but of leaders ready to defend the democratic values of their societies. It was not until 1944 that the U.S. Government appointed its first labor attaché, with the intention of getting a better understanding of workers abroad, their political goals and their economic ambitions. Since that time it has become ever more evident that workers, through their unions, have a vital role in society.

In this hemisphere we have the example that the Venezuelan CTV played in returning that country to democracy. The Brazilian trade unions are in the forefront of the political opening taking place in Brazil today. Costa Rica's President Monge and Jamaica's Hugh Shearer are fine examples of those who came from the labor movement to become the leaders of their countries. It would truly be difficult to list all of the leaders in Asia and in Africa who emerged from the labor movement as their countries became independent. You are a part of this great movement.

The state of freedom in a society can be measured by the state of health of the labor movement. Unions embody, in the discharge of their functions, the fundamental rights of man. A free trade union must exercise the right of free speech, of free association, of movement. And it must have access to a free press, the only other institution which dictatorships target for destruction faster than they target the trade union movement. If you examine the actions of dictators, you find that the first thing they do is destroy the free press. Their second objective is to destroy the free labor movement. That was the case in Russia under Lenin, in Germany under Hitler, and in Cuba under Castro. It is not possible to establish a totalitarian regime without first gaining control of these two

institutions. What a telling example we have of this when this week Romania made it illegal for certain categories of citizens to possess typewriters, because that totalitarian regime fears the power of free ideas.

Our strength is the strength of democratic ideas and values. In the open discussions that typify democratic societies we sometimes get the impression that those who support authoritarian and totalitarian societies are gaining. I do not believe this. For the first time in recorded history all of Western Europe is under democratic, elected governments. There are now more democratic, elected governments in this hemisphere than ever before. Democratic standards are increasingly the norm by which all governments are measured. Countries in this hemisphere which have temporarily varied from a democratic tradition are -- some more rapidly, others more slowly -- all committed to a return to democracy. It is the Cuban government and the Nicaraguan government, where elections were promised but not held, that need to justify their failure to do so.

You have been given an opportunity to participate in this great democratic process. If you are like I am, you might wonder, can I measure up to the challenges? Could I stand up for trade union rights as Tucapel Jimenez did in Chile? Could I stand up for the principles of democratic government and organized labor as Cyril Daal did in Suriname? As Rodolfo Viera, Mike Hammer, and Mark Pearlman did in El Salvador?

In honesty, if put to the test, I do not know how well I would respond. I do take satisfaction and comfort from one of our naval leaders from the dark days of World War Two. He said there are no great men in the world; there are only great challenges that ordinary men rise to meet.

I am confident that you have what is necessary to rise to meet the challenges that you will face in your countries upon your return. I wish you Godspeed."

End of interview