

DK-3, "AVCO –1989 Fall of Berlin Wall – Changes in Military Production"

**Transcript: pp. 11-12**

**Text portion for pop-up/audio alternative**

**Time-Line Location: National/International, 1989 "Fall of Berlin Wall"**

**DK** Well, yeah, I'll tell you a little bit about that and what happened. It all started actually with the change in the international relations with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The army up to that time could not get enough tank engines, we couldn't make them fast enough. They looked at the military plans, looked at the Warsaw Pact and said, "My God, those commies, they've got 60 or 70,000 tanks and we only have 5,000 so we need more tanks. As I said, the army couldn't get enough tanks and they were planning to build a next-generation, even a better tank. You know they always have on the drawing boards future models of military weapons. It looked like there was going to be a long-term, secure future there. And that all changed or began to change with the decline, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the military threat in Europe. Congress started cutting back on the budget. We in the union were trying to push management to focus more on the commercial work to try to stabilize employment there. During the peak production of tank engines, the army, because it owned the plant, they were able to dictate the production schedule. They said our engines are priority. Once you get our engines built and go over it every month, then if you want to make commercial engines, that's fine. The plant was always in a production deficit. In other words, they were always panicking, running at the end of the month to try to meet their quotas for the month. When the army work, in response, what the company did to try to...the army was threatening to take away, to develop a second source for their tank engines. And that would have hurt the business and caused a lot more layoffs. There was a big political fight with the congressional delegation from Connecticut to try to stop the army from developing a second source for tank engines. The union and the company joined together. Obviously we were looking for jobs and they wanted to keep the business. And we lobbied with them in Washington. One of the things that the company had agreed to was to send out all the commercial work. So all they did, they did the assembling and the test of the engine, but the manufacturing of those commercial engines was done all around the country by vendors around the country. So it was our feeling now as the tank work started to slow down, that the company should start this commercial work, you know, to take up the slack. Then in 1994 we had mass layoffs started again in 1992. We had perhaps, the union never did get back up to our peak from Vietnam. The plant went up to about 7,000 employees. Usually it was about 50-50. We had, I think the peak of Local 1010 was about 2,800 members. That was in the mid-1980's, then gradually the layoffs began...