Pamela Cohen Transcript

ROSALIND HINTON: – seeing what it's doing here. See if I can hear myself. Hello? Well, once you speak, we'll be able to tell, but it seems like it's working. Today is February 7, 2005. I'm in the home of Pam Cohen, and this is an interview for Jewish Women's Archive, Women Who Dared. Pam, if you wouldn't mind just spelling your family name and then your married name.

PAMELA COHEN: Braun: B-R-A-U-N. Cohen: C-O-H-E-N.

RH: Okay. Let's just start, briefly, with your family background. Are you from this area in the country?

PC: I'm from Oak Park.

RH: OK. [laughter] Well, you've traveled a long way north.

PC: Right. [laughter] I haven't gone very far.

RH: [laughter] Okay. You grew up in Oak Park?

PC: I grew up in Oak Park. My parents were both born in this country. My grandmother was a widow. She lost her husband very young, and we were very aware of the fact that he came from Lithuania and was tied to those who did not survive the Nazis in Lithuania. My father was also born in – his parents were also born in Poland, and although I never met them – they died – we were very aware of our humble background and beginnings in Eastern Europe.

RH: Do you know when they came?

PC: My grandfather escaped the czar's army. My grandmother came as a very young child after the pogroms in Vilnius – excuse me, Kishinev. Many years later, when my husband and I – I don't know if you remember those years, when you fly to Europe as far east as you could afford to pay, and then you could make all the stops going west. [laughter] Remember those days?

RH: That's wonderful. [laughter]

PC: Well, after we were first married, I had just graduated college, Lenny was starting a business, and we decided we were going to go to Europe. This is related. My mother said, "You got to go to Israel." So, she paid for the add-on between Athens and Israel, and when I got to Israel, I met a cousin and my family who came from Lithuania, and there I saw a picture of my grandfather's grandmother.

RH: Is this on your father's side?

PC: This is on my mother's side.

RH: Mother's side.

PC: So, the family – we have oral and visual evidence of precedence as far back as, probably before the Civil War, which for Eastern European Jews is rather unusual. But I grew up with a sense that you came from somewhere and that you were privileged to have had grandparents who were courageous enough to have left. That was kind of always something you just knew – ou knew where you came from.

RH: What did your grandparents do here?

PC: My grandfather came – when he came, he was painting railroad signs, and he saved enough to buy a little paint store in Maywood. The house was behind the store, and my father at thirteen years old ran the store – really ran the store because my

grandfather went back to Poland to see his mother and left my thirteen-year-old father in charge of the contractors and the payroll.

RH: They grew up fast back then.

PC: They grew up fast. Right.

RH: Wow. So, did you grow up in – what type of Jewish home? Was it a Reform, Orthodox?

PC: I would call it without any identification organizationally. I would call it very typical of American Jewish home for that generation.

RH: Okay. Tell me what that was.

PC: That means you have a grandmother who, if she were still in Europe, would have been observing all the commandments, but her children were brought up first-generation in America so they were much more focused on the Americanization of their children. There's some historic memory, so you had the major holidays but not what they deemed were the minor ones. I would say it was a very identified but non-practicing home. Certainly, my mother had all the major holidays, but then my grandmother knew – I remember when I was a kid, I used to want to light Friday night candles, and if you didn't light them at sundown, my grandmother told me you shouldn't light them. I didn't understand that until – I don't know – forty years later. I didn't understand what she was saying to me. But it was a very identified – I mean, my mother was very conscious of teaching us that you were Jewish, and when you walked out in the street, you had to have a certain dignity, and you had to comport yourself a certain way, and I remember – it was, I think, maybe a reaction from a first-generation Jew in America whose mother spoke with an accent and who had a sense of the fact that you had to be maybe a little bit better than everyone else. Maywood was a very small town, and my grandfather had

a very prominent name. In fact, he was asked to join the Ku Klux Klan.

RH: Oh, my. What an honor. [laughter]

PC: [laughter] So, I mean –

RH: Did he join? [laughter]

PC: Of course not. I didn't mean those two go together; I mean he was known in the community. He also later on became the assistant mayor in Maywood. People thought he was like everybody else.

RH: Well, those boundaries can be very fluid.

PC: Very fluid, very fluid. And they wanted – so, I think when my mother dressed us to go downtown or to Maywood, you were dressed properly. There wouldn't be none of these things like torn jeans, like today. There was a propriety.

RH: Well, did his position in town protect you from antisemitism?

PC: No. No. But there were only two Jewish families when I was growing up in Maywood. You just feel different. My memory of going to the school – I don't know if this should be on tape, [laughter] but my memory of going to the school was – and I wasn't aware of it until the '60s, by the way. I was married already. I remember thinking, I grew up feeling like I could understand how a Black person in an all-White school would feel, where there wasn't antisemitism or there wasn't racism. I can't say that I remember anything overt. You just knew you were different. Very different. I remember having a sense of that in the '60 when I was old enough to be able to understand what that feeling was growing up.

RH: I think this is one of the reasons Israel becomes so important, is that the –

PC: Oh, there's no question. I mean, you're a student of history. So, from the time of the Expulsion [inaudible] the year 70, we've gone from one country to another. There hasn't been a country that we've been exempt from feeling that otherness. I think we, as Jews, tend to want so badly to be like everyone else that we will do anything to get that feeling, and we will deny the reality of where we are in history. I think we deny it. I think that we live in America, for example, in a very, very precious time. We've been very, very fortunate in this country. But it's an exception. So far, it's been a historical exception.

RH: I can't deny that.

PC: So, yes, I think Israel has an importance, but it also has a very significant importance religiously and emotionally. My husband and I have an apartment there.

RH: I did read that. I actually have a friend who's visiting me this weekend, and she's Jewish, and we were talking. She says, "I wonder if this is the person my father and I met in the Tel Aviv Red Carpet Club." [laughter] Because her father teaches economics at Michigan State – Max Kreinin. She said, "One day, we were in the Tel Aviv Red Carpet Club, and we met someone from Chicago who had an apartment in Jerusalem." Her father is from Rishon. So she said, "It would be a small world, but I wonder …". [laughter]

PC: It very well could be. It was the only time we've ever been in that red carpet room.

RH: [laughter] Oh, really? She said, "For what it is, the Red Carpet Club." [laughter]

PC: [laughter] Right. But I do remember talking to some people there. It could very well be.

RH: You might remember him because he's a big guy, and he asks a thousand questions, and he doesn't meet a stranger. [laughter]

PC: I can't remember exactly, but it's sure possible.

RH: In any case, that came up yesterday when she was looking through my things. [laughter]

PC: Now, how do you know her?

RH: Well, she's one of my dearest friends. We met in New Orleans. She was involved in the Jewish community there. But her father's Israeli, and she's actually from East Lansing. She lives in New York now. She's the ex-director of an organization called SIECUS [Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States], which is a sexuality – she's in reproductive health.

PC: Maybe. [laughter] When you talk to her, just say hello. [laughter]

RH: Well, she said she's dying to come to the event.

PC: Oh, well maybe we'll get a chance to meet again. That would be great.

RH: To meet each other, [laughter] and this shouldn't be on the tape, this personal thing, but when you mentioned the Jerusalem apartment, she said, "I met this person." She said, "I wonder. Probably a lot of people in Chicago may have apartments in Jerusalem." And I said, "Well, I don't know."

PC: Oh, not that many. Not that many.

RH: [laughter] You probably could tell me all of them. So, she said, "But it was in the Red Carpet room." [laughter]

PC: Could be.

RH: But let's move back and see if we can get us back into this sphere – your family, your parents – were they activists in the community in any way?

PC: My mother was involved in the community. I wouldn't call her an activist. My father was not.

RH: Of course. He was an assistant mayor.

PC: No, that was my grandfather.

RH: Oh, your grandfather. Okay.

PC: Look, I think what I got from my parents was identity. Not religious, but identity, some identity that tied me to my past, my immediate past. I think what I got from my parents was a very strong sense of moral responsibility. I think I got from my mother a very strong sense of communal and personal responsibility. She kind of believed in, kind of like – and don't take this the wrong way, I'm not even going to say it the way that I was – I won't have a chance of doing that. She kind of believed that if you were given the privilege of not having to work, as a woman, you really owed the community. You have to give back. You're not a free-floater. You're not playing golf. You're doing. My mother was a doer. I can't call her an activist, but I would definitely call her a doer. She had a huge heart, and there were always people at the table, and there was always – there wasn't a widow who didn't find a place at her table, or whoever needed anything. They were extremely charitable; my father still is. So, I grew up very nurtured. When I was about sixteen years old, I started reading everything I could read on the Holocaust and the development of the state of Israel. That's all I could read. And I lived a very normal life – I mean, average, typical [inaudible] life, married, and had kids.

RH: Where did you go to high school?

PC: I went to Oak Park High School, and went to Indiana University, and ended up at Roosevelt. I was married very – we were very, very – I was twenty-one years old when I got married, and really a kid. We had three children, and it was really shortly after that,

almost in that form, that I learned about Jews being arrested in Russia. Everything inside me said, “Not again. They’re being arrested in Russia?” I had to really dig for the information. I mean, there was no – it wasn’t public information; it wasn’t written in the newspapers. I had to really do a lot of research to find out where I could get the information. We subscribed – at the time, there was a Jewish paper in Philadelphia, I think it was called the Jewish Observer or the Jewish Advocate or something; it was a weekly, and they ran a little column about what was happening in the Soviet Union. I mean, this was not anything – I didn’t have my own private channels. I was just a young, thirty-year-old woman who wanted to know what was happening. I got the information and was involved at that time. I had gotten involved in an organization which was taking roles in political activism, like various lobbies of the – must have been the early ’70s, and there I would trot in, and next thing I know, I was telling everybody that this Jew was arrested and said to write letters.

RH: [laughter] That’s very interesting.

PC: The only thing I really remember was there was the anti-gun lobby. The various, I would say, things from the politically correct agenda of –

RH: Of the Left, [laughter]

PC: – of the Left, at that time. All those things, and here I come in – and I was extremely timid. I mean, I really didn’t want to speak in front of anyone, didn’t want anyone to [inaudible]. It was very difficult for me. But to make a long story short, someone said, finally, after a long period of time, that there was an organization in Chicago called Chicago Action for Soviet Jewry. It was started in 1972 by three activists after the Leningrad trials. Now, you have to stop me if Marillyn told you any of this.

RH: No. What were the Leningrad trials?

PC: The Leningrad trials were really, I would say, the [inaudible]. The Soviets not only arrested them before they got anywhere near the tarmac, but they used it as a pretext to arrest anyone in any city that had any activity relating to the Jewish revival.

RH: Wow.

PC: And they were all – two were given the death penalty. The rest were given very, very long prison terms, including Yosef Mendelovich. And the world reacted with – Elie Wiesel wrote his book Jews of Silence after that. The newspapers covered the trials. There were two trials. It ignited a movement on the grassroots throughout the world. There were demonstrations all over the world, small, little demonstrations.

RH: Well, I appreciate you giving me the [laughter] history lesson.

PC: So the background to that – the first step, I think you should know, is that there was – and I think probably people do know this, that the ’67 war in Israel was the gasoline that kind of ignited this wave of understanding in the Soviet Union that Soviet Jews could be connected to a people and to a land and to their past. The anti-Zionist news media from the Soviet Union portrayed the war from a very one-sided position. I mean, they made it appear as if the struggling army was – which is true, I mean, they were coming in from all sides – but it was with a tremendous amount of slant against the Israeli army, and a lot of the Jews. It’s funny, I subsequently learned that the same thing happened here, that the visuals of seeing Jews fighting for their land, willing to die for their country, stimulated a sense of identity in this tremendous wasteland where there was assimilation generation after generation after generation. And Jews saw that and said, “If I’m going to die, I want to die there. I want to go down with that army. This is my country. I’m leaving.” And, of course, there was no way to get out. That led to the Leningrad trials. There were two trials. No one was released for eight years, which was quite remarkable that they were released in eight years, but the world outcry for the defendants continued until it was in the Soviets’ interest to release them.

RH: So, you connected to this organization in –?

PC: So, I connected to the organization somewhere like in the early ‘70s. Laurel Pollack was the chairman. It was one council that had connected to other grassroots councils in the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, which was in Washington. [Natan?] Sharansky said that it was a movement led by students and housewives. And it was. We were all volunteers. We were all inexperienced. But we were kind of like the people in the movie Close Encounters – what is it?

RH: Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

PC: Yeah. We all had that vision. We all had the vision and the sense of tremendous personal responsibility that we learned – if there was anything we learned from the Holocaust, we thought that – I subsequently don’t believe it’s true, partially – I’m not sure. If there’s anything that we came out of the Holocaust with, it was the fact that our silence is complicity and that we may not be silent. And that whatever the cost, personally, whatever the cost, we had to do – we had this compulsion. Now, I don’t know whether we were rescuing our history, we were rescuing ourselves, we were rescuing what wasn’t done to six million Jews, but we were rescuing. And it was as if we were rescuing our own children, our own – it wasn’t just some obscure name. It was a real live person that we were involved with, and their pain became our pain. So, in ’78, I became a connector between New York – Chicago Action and this little group of women who were writing letters on gun control and whatever it was. I would come in more and more equipped with information. Laurel Pollack began equipping me with real information, not only about what was really happening in the movement but the history of the movement and who was doing what in the movement, the difference between the grassroots and the establishment, and how the Israeli government played in. And suddenly I felt that with some clarity I could speak to these people about why they should be writing letters. Within a few months, a group of women from New York started joining the organization,

to be in this group that I was putting together. All of a sudden, this organization became filled with people who had heard about it. We started a little branch of – it was National Council of Jewish Women and Chicago Action. It was like a little mini-satellite up here on the North Shore. The idea was that I would give them cases of Refuseniks. I would provide them with a biography that I got from Chicago Action, which was located at that time in Spertus [Institute] in Chicago, and Laurel would equip me with the biographies, and we would adopt, so to speak, a Refusenik. What that meant was we became like a political anchor for that family. So, yes, of course, we wrote them letters. But we contacted our congressman to ask the congressman to write in letters. When there was – in '75, when there was the Nixon Summit, we made sure that this case was on the list that the president brought Brezhnev. We created events to get it in the know – to get notoriety in the local papers, so the local Pioneer Press person would come out and would cover the local thing that we did. But the name would get out. We knew that the Soviets were watching – don't forget we had – even in those years, we had the largest Polish men majority outside of Warsaw. It was a Communist country at the time, and so they knew that they were being watched to some extent. We certainly had the feeling that the Soviets were watching what we were saying. They were watching –

RH: Here in Chicago?

PC: Oh, sure. For sure.

RH: Sorry for my naiveté.

PC: Oh, no, we really – and we saw it, as the period of détente increased, the influence that the Soviets had through a lot of our programs became much more manifest. We could see what they were doing in terms of creating parallel programs. Take the Peace Initiatives. Nixon was trying to – we had various issues on the table. We had SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty] –

RH: Yeah, I was going to say SALT.

PC: – and so the Soviets needed to control how Americans dealt with their issues bilaterally. They needed to affect how Congress saw them, how the State Department saw them. And what they did – one thing that they did – they did a lot of things. They created their own independent initiatives that were basically Soviets' – I'm going to shock you. Take a deep breath. There was a U.S.-Soviet – and I've forgotten what it was called – a peace initiative, which was controlled by many of the very far-left wing movements in this country, which was basically controlled by the Soviets. There was U.S.-Soviet – there was the sister cities program –

RH: Yeah. [laughter] The sister cities program?

PC: – was very much influenced by the Soviets.

RH: You're kidding. [laughter]

PC: Sister cities.

RH: OK. You mean to their cities?

PC: To their cities. Right, their cities... whatever opportunity they had to interface with the West, it was KGB that was on their front. Which stands to reason.

RH: Yeah, to a certain extent, you're right.

PC: They brought in an American – it was very frustrating, because whoever – whether it was the psychiatrists, the psychiatric association – exactly while they were meeting with the Soviet psychiatric association, the Soviets were abusing psychiatric drugs to quote-unquote "treat" political dissidents. And the U.S. American Psychiatric Association sat there and never –

RH: – said a word.

PC: And the people who were the head at the hospitals who were administering these psychotropic drugs came into this country, got visas, and sat with the most highly respected psychiatrists in this country. The same thing in every single field. Medical, where you had medical abuse for Jews or for dissidents.

RH: So human rights accountability for this détente, these different détente measures, is what you're telling me. There was no human rights accountability.

PC: There were no human rights –

RH: Except for you.

PC: There was nothing.

RH: Except for you guys.

PC: The physicists, the American Physical Society – fortunately, the physicists had a few really exceptional leaders, and they were phenomenal. Argonne Lab's Fermilab – they understood. Well, Andrei Sakharov was the Soviet academician who developed their hydrogen bomb. He became the dissident – in fact, Sharansky, he's now creating almost like American foreign policy – Bush is really relying on his democratic ideas; it's all from Sakharov. So, American physicists had a lot of contact with the scientists, which I can tell you about because it was one of our ways that we got information in and information out. So, these parallel organizations – Soviet Jews and scientists and dissidents set up what we call parallel – they set up their own independent structures. The U.S.-Soviet Group to Establish Trust was an authentic organization led by dissidents and Jews and grassroots here. The Scientific Seminar in Moscow was composed of scientists who were thrown out of their jobs and who were stripped from their academic degrees, and they had a seminar, periodic seminars in which they invited the leading scientists of the

world to come. They came and tried to get visas to come in and meet in independent apartments and gave papers. The Soviets didn't close it down. But the scientists, because of the contact with their colleagues, had a very clear view of what the Soviets were doing. They were an exception. I would say they were really an exception.

RH: So one of the things it sounds like you did – I didn't mean to interrupt you.

PC: Go ahead.

RH: – was to try to set up contacts, like with the scientists and the different professional organizations, to have them address it on kind of a very local level.

PC: That was our life. That was exactly what we did. We sent our own – the first thing we did was to set up channels of information. That was number one. We had to get information on Soviet non-compliance to international accords. In 1975, the Soviets were among sixty-five nations that signed the Helsinki Accords. It was a very, very important defense for human rights because the Soviets wanted legitimization of their eastern borders, the Baltics. They wanted trade. And we wanted human rights. So it was set up – the accords were set up so that there had to be progress in all three baskets – economics, human rights, and arms. They had to proceed in tandem. There couldn't be advance in one, and the meetings were set up. Soviets had to sign off on the right to leave a country – family reunification. That was the basis of the language that was used in the accords – not of freedom of immigration but family reunification, but the right to human contact and cultural rights. So, just through the human rights basket alone, it gave us access to use the language to hold all kinds of conferences, international conferences on – the international postal union could have a conference in which we would testify on Soviet non-delivery of mail. I mean, they censored out everything. They censored and purloined all kinds of mail going in – millions of letters would be in KGB archives. So, we could fight them on that, we could fight them on the telephone jamming, we could fight them on the Radio Free Europe jamming, we could fight them on non-

immigration issues, on non-reunifi – we could fight them. And so after ’75, we had an arsenal to use, and our biggest support was the American Congress.

RH: Really?

PC: Biggest support. Millicent Fenwick, one of the congressmen from Massachusetts, as a matter of fact, went to the Soviet Union and met with, I think, Alexander Lerner, and I don’t know, this was probably after Sharansky or right before Sharansky’s arrest, and they set up the Congressional Helsinki Monitoring Committee. In Russia, the activists were monitoring the Helsinki Accords. They were all arrested, they were all thrown into prison, but they set up non-official Helsinki Accords monitoring committees, and when the congressmen came to Russia and met with them, Millicent Fenwick and others, they set up – they asked the Congress to set one up, and the Congress set up a Helsinki Monitoring Committee, the Helsinki Commission, which still is in existence. And now it was our job, the grassroots movement, to build it into something because what it was, it was just a name. We had to be able to provide the Helsinki Commission – all the violations of Soviet non-compliance. We did nothing but try to get the information: who was refused permission, who was arrested, whose phones were cut – everything that happened in the Soviet Union.

RH: You’re speaking “we.” So, can you tell me a little bit about you and your –[laughter]

PC: That’s what I did. That was my job. That was my job. My job was, in ’78, here I was – set up this little satellite group from the North Shore, and I had been working for one Refusenik. We had all been working to try to get this latest one out. When he came out, we brought him to Chicago and had all kinds of meetings with the press – it was a perfect publicity stunt. Take him to Congress, do all the things that you could do to get notoriety for the issue, and I said to him, “What could we have done better?” And he looked at me and said, “Why didn’t you come?” We booked a trip – it was September. My husband and I went to Russia. We came back – that was in ’78. That was my first

trip. Went to five cities. We were briefed by Laurel Pollack from Chicago Action. Marillyn had been there a few months before, we met with her, and we did nothing but meet with Jews and bring back all kinds of information that we were asked to bring back from Chicago Action and wrote a comprehensive report which was circulated to these briefers around the world. We had people briefing tourists, which, of course, I became later. Right after that, shortly after that, Laurel left Chicago Action – she just needed out.

RH: [laughter] Just exhausted.

PC: Exhausted. It was eight years and no money. We're not funded by anyone, [inaudible] going to run it, raise our own money. She had an office, and to some extent, we were also – I don't want to get into it right now, but we had problems with the establishment. We were not the beloved of the establishment, either, which we can talk about.

RH: Okay. [laughter] Keep going. We'll circle back.

PC: So, she left, and I had a kindergartener. [laughter] I didn't like announcing when a meeting was. I mean if I had a meeting at my house, in front of this whole group, I had to write it on a note card – I mean, I really didn't like speaking in public. I didn't like anyone [inaudible] even – any kind of anything in public – still don't. I have no organizational experience. I had three little kids, and she left. I had no choice. It was just no choice. I went to one of the women who had joined this little pilot group that we had, this little satellite group, who was much more upfront than I was, and asked her if she would be a co-chairman. And I went to my teacher – at that time, I was taking Jewish history with Marillyn. Marillyn was a Jewish History teacher. I was in her class, and I was the one who, every time I would come to my Monday class on Jewish History, would say, "Marillyn, can I just write the address of this Soviet official on the bulletin board and ask everyone to call this Soviet official for this person?" Of course, she would say yes. "Marillyn, can we just tell people they have to flood the Soviet embassy with telephone

calls next week?" And write down the phone number. I asked Marillyn, who had – she was a spokesperson, she had a public presence, and she was visible in the city, and she had name recognition and tremendous communal respect. No one knew who Pam Cohen and Carol Warren were – and no experience. Marillyn had the same sense of moral vision, uncompromising moral vision. So, I asked her if she would be the third co-chairman, and she said okay, but she would only do the briefing. She was teaching full-time. So she became our official briefer. She would prepare all the tourists that were going to Russia [on] how to behave, how to act, how you conduct yourself, and I would provide the cases. Because my field, really until I retired, was – until after the fall of the Soviet Union – I knew what was going on in Russia. I used to have foreign correspondents go to Helsinki and call me. They were stationed in Moscow, and one guy used to go to Helsinki to go shopping at Stockman's and would call me from a relatively safe phone and ask me what was going on. I knew what was going on. I developed chains of underground information so that we would know who was being arrested because if we didn't, the Soviets could go in and do anything.

RH: So, it was to offer them protection?

PC: It was to offer them protection.

RH: The more publicity –

PC: The more publicity, the more we could tell our Congress, the more they could tie everything that was – we had to make it in their Soviet interests to unify families and let people out of prison. They had to be backed into a corner because they weren't going to do it because they had an American sense of fair play or honesty or truth. You were dealing with cultural differences that are historic, from – and a very corrupt government and KGB who are running the show. Our job was to be able to provide the information to Congress and to make it in the congressman's interest to want to make this his interest as well, through publicity in his home district and letting his constituents be able to inform

him – we didn't inform him directly. We informed him through his constituent synagogues and local organizations that began to be involved. That was the name of the game, until – one other point I think I want to go back to is we were talking about historic peaks. If it was '67 and the Israeli war, it was also in '75 with the Helsinki Accord, it was also 1972, when the grassroots – and today, a lot of people take credit for it, we have a lot of revisionist history in America.

RH: Yes. [laughter]

PC: Our organization was looking for a long time to find a way to tie economics – trade benefits – to Soviet immigration. It eventuated in the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of – I think it was – 1974, which Kissinger – it wasn't through Kissinger. It was through Henry Jackson's office, which was – so, he was out of sight, and put together with Vanik this legislation with a grassroots backing, tying trade and "most favored nation status" to immigration. So, we were providing the Congress, who was providing the President, with evidence of Soviet behavior to determine whether or not the Soviets could have a waiver. And that was – it was critical for us. So, when Victor Louis in the – I think it must be the late '70s – probably it was right after the invasion of Afghanistan, had a press conference with the anti-Zionist committee, which was a Soviet-created body of the top official Jews, including the rabbi of the Moscow Choral Synagogue, which was an anti-Zionist committee, which was a mouthpiece for the Kremlin's position on Jews. Victor Louis held a press conference and said, "The last Jew has left. The last train has left the station. Jews no longer want to immigrate."

RH: Who is Victor Louis?

PC: He was the major press person for the Kremlin in those years. The Soviets were constantly trying to tell the American government, "Well, we can get …" What they were saying was, "We now qualify for MFN, we now qualify for a SALT agreement, we now

qualify to be respected among the Council of Nations, because we have accomplished everything we want to accomplish in immigration; everyone has left." Well, it was our job to be able to provide the names – and we put an ad in the New York Times with the names of people and how many and what the dates that they had first asked for permission. We had thousands of families who wanted to be on the list. That was our job. At a time when, after the invasion of Afghanistan in '79 – now, how we did that. We did that chiefly by making phone calls. Soviets would pull the telephones out, cut the wires, and jam the lines, but there were public ways you could make phone calls through the post office, through messenger calls. Mostly, we used tourists. We really relied on using a network of people who would go to Russia and who would bring articles that could be sold on the black market because you were also funding that movement. People were not working, and prisoners were – people were not allowed to –

RH: So you're talking about regular newspaper articles that you could just sell on the black market? Is that what you're talking about?

PC: What we sent in was material assistance. We sent in material goods – cameras, tape recorders –

RH: Oh, the kind of items that you could sell on the black market. I got it now.

PC: Right. Now, we also did what you just said. We also had to bring in information in writing because we were in a consult – our relationship with the movement was not paternalistic. So, we consulted with the leadership across the board. In order for us to take a position on Jackson-Vanik or take a position on legislation, we needed to be able to consult to find out what they wanted us to do. So, one of the people in Chicago Action – we used to photograph – and we also wanted them to know, in terms of moral support, what was being done. We were putting out newsletters. We were doing what they asked us to do. She used to photograph – Betty Kahn, may she rest in peace, used to photograph whatever we wanted in print. (Hettie D'Louis?) from our office used to have

boxes of film shrink-wrapped, so it would look like regular film. Our tourists would bring it into the Soviet Union without going through inspections. We also had a group of Finns, Christian Finns, who would bring in our film for us. In darkrooms underground, throughout the country, these films could be read. We did that with books. They had no Jewish books. They had no Jewish tapes. They couldn't read Hebrew. They had to self-teach themselves Hebrew. Everything that they needed to sustain the movement had to be brought in from direct aid that went to prisoners in the camps because we had angels in Russia, Jewish Refuseniks, who would get information and helped prisoners. So, on every level, it was sustained by the grassroots movement. In the process, it changed us. I think, first of all, for me, I am a child of this movement. They parented me. They raised me. I learned. I grew up. I was maybe in my early thirties when I got involved – maybe thirty-four when I became involved. They first taught me how to think, to see the difference between propaganda. There is propaganda, and it came – with the Soviets, it was very easy to trace and to delineate the difference between words and actions. It was called monitoring. You tell me you're going to assure me that we're going to have immigration from Odessa and you're going to open five of your offices. Great. We're going to monitor how often they're open, how many people are working, what are the refusals, what's the basis of the refusals, and people there were willing to go to prison for us to get that information, and we had to get it in every – so, I had to learn the difference between assurances and implementation. And I learned that. I learned, I think from them, a tremendous sense of moral clarity. I mean, Anatoly Sharansky can say something, and I understand him before the sentence is out of his mouth, because I'm his child. He raised me. I understand the thinking. I understand the thinking of Sakharov, and I totally accept it. I don't accept the theory of Kissinger. I don't accept this moral relativism. I don't accept it. So, those are two very clear ways – and the third way was – it was [an] awakening. It wasn't an awakening as much as it was a flashlight into my own shortcomings. I could see what I didn't know. I could see the tremendous gap in my own education. I realized I don't know anything. I realized what I didn't know. I used

to say when people would say, “Well, do you read or speak Hebrew?” I used to say – I came to say, “I don’t because my Hebrew teacher’s in prison.” I came to realize that these people, [who] were so much larger than life to me, were willing to sacrifice their freedom – their freedom – going into the Soviet Archipelago, going into a prison camp, in order to have one book in Hebrew in their home. You know how many prisoners, how many people went to prison because they had Leon Uris’s book Exodus? Do you know that in prison camp, people were copying it? There are stories that they were copying it on matchbook covers. It went from hand to hand because of the idealism, the sense of the state, what was going on – there was no information. They were willing to sacrifice everything for what I didn’t have to sacrifice anything for. So, one of the first people that I met in Russia was a man by the name of Leonid (Volosky?). He was a cyberneticist, he had a PhD, and his wife Mila. Very educated people. Applied for a visa, was rejected, knew nothing about anything, taught himself – learned Hebrew, through an underground – in an apartment somewhere, although it was illegal. You could not teach Hebrew. Although the Soviets said, “You have a right to your cultural identity, and you have a right to have access to cultural materials,” they declared war on the Hebrew language. They used anti-Zionism as a veil of antisemitism. We’re seeing it now in Europe; that was the first time we saw it. We were able to fight it in the Soviet Union, and we don’t have the will to fight it today. But we did fight it. Anything in Hebrew was used as evidence in trials accusing Jews of defamation of the Soviet state social system or distributing anti-Soviet materials. Those were the two articles – I think it was 170 and 171, if I’m not – don’t quote me, but I think that’s what it was. Everyone went to prison on these two accounts. And when [inaudible] became a Hebrew teacher and conducted song festivals on various holidays in the woods, Jews used to flock – because it was their way of identifying with something Jewish. He ultimately became a Hebrew teacher, and of course, they arrested him. They first exiled him to Gorky, where Sakharov was, and then they arrested him and gave him three years of prison. But I remember when he asked me for books, I didn’t know what they were; I bought one copy for him and one

copy for me.

RH: [laughter] He was your Hebrew teacher.

PC: He was. He was. When I learned in – it must have been the early ’80s; it was before he was imprisoned. He was going to have a kosher kitchen. He was going to kasher his home. I had been lobbying my family for a long time, but when he was going to have a kosher kitchen in Gorky, how can we not have a kosher kitchen in Deerfield? How can I not? What’s the choice? How can I not? I saw many years later Anatoly Altman, who was one of the Leningrad defendants. In ’78, they were released. I saw him in Israel. We had an event for them at the Knesset, and the next day, I was getting ready to leave, and I was picking up my family at the museum in Tel Aviv, and he was standing in line. This man was going to hijack an airplane to let the world know what was happening in Russia, and now he is standing in Israel with his wife after eight years of torture in these camps and prisons. I mean, torture. I’m getting ready to go to the airport to go home, back to the States. I remember crying all the way home from Israel. He paid for eight years for a one-way ticket. He turned his back on everything. He knows he could not take anything out of the country – no bank account, no money – could never go back and see family again – one-way, cut yourself off, start with nothing. And I could buy a two-way ticket and keep an American passport and have money in a bank. They had a tremendous effect on me. Tremendous effect. They struggled to find their own place in history, their own place in Judaism. Many of them became very religious, and as soon as I retired – before I retired, for about two years before I retired, I started learning Torah. I also taught myself Hebrew, to read and understand, and I started taking classes and learning, very much like they learned in private apartments with a private teacher, and then started this network of adult education classes because American Jews are very much like Soviet Jews, very much – very educated, very professional, very assimilated. I saw no difference – I saw a lot of commonality. Very attuned. Although Soviet Jews had one thing I think that Americans don’t have – I think that many of those who became

Refuseniks and dissidents always were raised with a sense of knowing what propaganda was, and I don't think American Jews have a sense of propaganda, of secular propaganda. I don't think that there is an ability – and I'm not sure why it is – to be able to look at something independently and come to your own conclusions if conventional society doesn't approve [of] you. Whereas the Soviet Jews could come to their own conclusions and break with society, even if that break meant they were going to go to prison. American Jews aren't going to go to prison. We're not going to break. But the need for acceptance is so tremendous that –

RH: If it's any comfort to you, critical thinking is one of the things all the young people lack when they come to college. [laughter] You just made me think of W.E.B. Du Bois, who used to – he has this very famous remark where he said African-Americans had to be born with a second sight. He was talking in the early 1900's. I think the people on the margins are born with a second sight in the sense they have to, to survive, don't you think?

PC: Maybe. You may be right. Maybe you're right.

RH: And that second sight is the critical thinking skills, the knowing not only who you are, but who your enemy is totally.

PC: And be able to have the freedom to be able to come to certain conclusions without any emotional tie-in. It's like, "Oh, I can't do this. I know this to be a fact, or I believe this to be true, but I can't act on it because…". I see that in American society.

RH: Because I'm not confident?

PC: Not confidence. I think we have certain – I want to say idols. I think we have certain ways of revering ideas that at one time might have been very true, maybe aren't true today. I just don't think people can really look and see the world today with a lot of clarity. I really don't. I never really thought that was going to be part of our society,

although I have to go back and qualify that because during the time of my period of activism, there were very prominent attorneys in America who met with the Soviet prosecutors when they came through Chicago. I mean, that I didn't have a heart attack. These prosecutors represented the Soviet Kremlin's quote-unquote "legal venue" for prosecuting dissidents and Jews. I mean, except for those who they threw into psychiatric hospitals, everyone went through a gristmill of some kind of a show trial conducted by the prosecutor's office. Well, the Soviets sent the main – I forgot what he was – he was the Kremlin's top prosecutor to America, to Chicago, and I want to tell you that they had a luncheon for him at one of the finest city clubs. He was wined and dined. People were sure that if they could only be nice to him and talk to him. So, I'm not sure. I'm not sure the ability to be deceived is restricted to today's society. I guess it was the same way. I mean, all the businessmen – Donald Kendall of Pepsi Cola and Bronfman – all the people that were trying desperately to do business with the Soviet Union did it without qualifying their issues with – I shouldn't say for us – I don't know if I want to use those names. I'm not sure if that's restricted to today. But I think we were so surrounded, Rosalind, by people who really knew what it was to dare, who really knew – men and women [who] lived extremely inspiring lives. I can't say I lived in Deerfield. I don't think I really lived here. I think my head was there all the time. It wasn't just something that we did when we weren't – it was in our heads all the time. This can be a disincentive, I think, maybe, but for me and for my colleagues, when the phone rang at three o'clock in the morning because they knew that this was who you called when somebody was carted off and the KGB pulled them off, or there was a search going on in someone's house or someone was being interrogated, you just didn't say, "Well, I'm sorry, I'm sleeping," or, "I'm sorry, I'm making dinner," or – I mean, you had people [inaudible] it was before we were observant, and I remember, hours before Rosh Hashanah one year, the phone rang, and I think it was Shamir who was the Prime Minister of Israel, was getting ready right after Rosh Hashanah to meet with the president, whoever it was, and I had three hours to like try to put pressure on the Prime

Minister of Israel, who was in a hotel in Washington. I mean, there was nothing you couldn't do, and there was nothing that wasn't expected of you to do. It wasn't just like, "Okay, this is like an organization that I'm working on …".

RH: "And it's five o'clock. Let me go home." [laughter]

PC: There was no such thing like that.

RH: How did you put pressure on Shamir?

PC: If I remember, we all had to call various congressional offices and various people, and literally call the hotel – try to get to him. I mean, some things were maybe unrealistic, but there was no other way. Or maybe for us to call the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. I mean, I don't remember exactly what the specific thing was, but there was an action that they were calling from Israel. There were activists who came out of Russia. I think it was in 1982; there was a group of activists. There was no activist movement in Israel. They were looking to set up some kind of a grassroots movement parallel to what we had here, which was responding directly to the activists in the Soviet Union, not going through any governments. We helped fund that movement. Don't ask me how because we were barely funding our own. They would call us with information and activities, so we were not only getting it from Russia, we were getting it from Israel, and the more people left – whoever left Russia – many of those activists stayed as local experts, giving us advice and bringing out information. So, we were getting it two ways.

RH: I'm going to just stop this because I'm going to put another tape in.

PC: Okay. And I'm going to give you some more water.

RH: Okay. [laughter]

[END OF TRACK 1]

RH: I think we're on now. [laughter] Why don't you tell me one more time, again, because it was these people, as you were saying when I first walked in, who gave you a sense of your own Jewish identity, and how important that was, and sent you to Hebrew school, and such as that. So, their impact on your Jewish identity, and also it seems like an impact on your next phase in your life, of passing that on to others.

PC: Yeah. I don't think I could have gotten to where I am now – I don't think I ever, growing up, met an observant Jew. I don't think, growing up, I ever saw, really, an observant Jew. It's hard to go back, but in retrospect, I think I thought that whatever that was, whatever that meant, either was lost in the Holocaust or was lost on the ocean coming over. If there was an observant Jew, I think I pictured him as a very old man who was a relic, really a relic. Yet, I had a sense of the fact that the major ideas of civilization of monotheism came from the Jewish people. I also had a sense of the fact that there was a creator. I had a sense of the Divine Creator. But suddenly, as I was thrust into – or as I felt like I was thrust, as this movement exposed me to the various parts of the movement – which were not, by all means, all religious – but those people that I met that were becoming religious, they didn't fit the mold.

RH: The mold in your mind's eye?

PC: Yeah.

RH: [laughter] Okay.

PC: They didn't fit my stereotype. Many of those people that I knew who were religious were very strong models for me. There was, I think, something different about them that I never had seen anywhere else. Now it might have been just my feeling at the time, but at some point, and I remember the moment exactly – I remember exactly what it was. I was in Kyiv; it was one of my last trips, and we had opened an office. When [Mikhail]

Gorbachev had created his glasnost perestroika era, we used the moment to open quote-unquote “human rights offices,” first in Moscow and then Kyiv, and then in Central Asia, and ultimately in other places as well. So we were opening our Kyiv office, and I was there with my national director, and it was a Friday night. Most of the Refuseniks had emigrated, everyone had gone. It was the end of Gorbachev, so the activists who we knew and who we had gone back to see every year, who had assumed the next mantle of leadership – really everyone who was involved in the movement who wanted to leave, left. We were opening the office to monitor what was happening and to kind of see what was at the next stage, and to do it from there, and not from here – use their monitors, use our own people, activists, who maybe didn’t want to leave, but to use it as a chance to make the next more open, more visible. It was a Friday night. Suddenly, we were alone in Kyiv, pretty much alone. It was Friday night; it was Shabbos. I didn’t know what Shabbos was, really. I mean, I knew you light candles. Well, what was a Jewish leader – suddenly, I had a tremendous sense of shame. It was an awful feeling. I remember it completely. I felt a tremendous sense of shame. I’m supposed to be – and I have been – whether I saw it or not because I don’t see myself as a leader, but the truth of the matter was I was National President of the Union of Councils for ten years. I was seen as a leader. And here I was – what kind of a Jewish leader was I? I felt a tremendous sense of shame. I came home, and I didn’t know where to begin even. And Divine Providence – the rabbi who I’m still learning with called me and asked me if I wanted to learn. So, it came from my contact in Russia. I don’t know if I would have been so open or so ready or so vulnerable if I hadn’t gone through that experience any more than they would have if they hadn’t gone through that experience, many of them.

RH: How old were your children when this started [inaudible] ?

PC: Okay, that’s another story. My youngest one was six when I got involved in the movement –

RH: Well, I was –

PC: Or the religious part?

RH: I was thinking the religious part, but how were they raised, and how did this change – did it change how you were raising them?

PC: The religious part of it? Josh, the youngest one now, who was like six when I started the movement, was in college. I have to say, in order to answer the question, they had seen some kind of a progression over the years. Look, we had made our home kosher when – now Josh was probably, I would say, thirteen, fourteen, maybe younger even. It's been a long time since we had a kosher home. Our becoming quote-unquote "religious" was not something that happened, like, out of the blue. It was a natural progression. I mean, we had always had Friday night dinners at this house. I always lit candles. Our kids went to Jewish camps, and they learned the blessings after the meal, but it wasn't an observant home. My husband and I had decided, years before the final thing happened, we said we weren't going to be spending money anymore on the Sabbath. We weren't going to go to a movie on Friday night, we weren't going to do – and so our home, married life, a very small progression. But when we absolutely stopped driving and turning on lights, I think that it was a change for them. Our daughter was already married, and she's married twelve years. So, she wasn't observant, but in that year, in that one year where she started learning, she and her husband became observant. You would probably call her very observant. They now have an observant home, and she's got a lot of little kids, so they're raising – and they were in the parochial school. It's affected them. Did they think that we were like, "Here she goes again." The little one, "Ugh, here she goes again."

RH: Yes?

PC: Yeah. "Here she goes again."

RH: Tell me your children's names.

PC: Brooke is the one who's observant, Brooke Warso. Scott lives in Newton, Massachusetts, so I'll be going to see the Archives with his wife and three little children, and they have a kosher home. His wife makes challahs every Friday night. I can't say that they're living an observant life, but they certainly are living a traditional life. They've got their kids in a Reform school. The youngest one, our youngest one, Joshua, has two little girls, is married, lives in the city, and they have their little girl in a Jewish nursery school. They're young. I'm not sure. My daughter-in-law is, I think, really – it was a leap for them, that they came from what you would call non-practicing or Reform – I can't say, really, Reform. It was more not-practicing homes. I think it was very hard for them to be in a kosher home, and Friday nights – in the winter, it's four o'clock, where everything is off. But it's become home to them. We become family, and I think they love us, and we certainly love them. And the kids – we're very, very close to our grandchildren – we have a lot of grandchildren. The sun sets –

RH: How many children does Brooke have?

PC: She's going to have her seventh, God willing, in March. I think the kids really feel our love and our devotion, and I think that it's not so intimidating [to] them anymore. They've kind of gotten used to it. I cover my hair. I think that was kind of a freaky thing for them when that started. I think it's just like anything else, it's just part and parcel – we are who we are, and they love us, and thank God, we've been given a great family. So, I think it's fine. I think it's fine. Just like anything else, it's taken its time, but I think it's really a part of what you so deftly got to because if you live your life according to what you think – if you write down what you think, it's a moral compromise not to try to live the way you think. Now, I can't say I can do everything that I know I'm supposed to do. I'm not always – I don't always greet everyone with a smile. I can't say I'm anywhere near what I'm supposed to be. But I know where I'm supposed to be – where I think I'm

supposed to be, and I struggle to do it. I think there are a lot of people that probably think we are odd or peculiar or not typical. I think that is a function of the way the movement affected me. That's really, I think, the biggest effect. It's very interesting. A number of us [in] the leadership of the national organization became observant, independently of each other. A number of us. A number of us. Three of us have homes in Israel. Two of us go back and forth, even though we don't –

RH: Can you explain what observant means to you, I mean, in the sense –? I mean, I think you've been explaining that to me. So, maybe that's not a good question. But why do you think the shift – well, you've been explaining that, too – to observance, I don't know, instead of just education? Is it because these people struggled so much in Russia to do this? Or is there something else that comes from this – a feeding of your spiritual life?

PC: We get into the basis of Judaism when we talk about observance. Traditional Judaism, or classical Judaism, is based on what God gave us at Sinai, which is the Torah. It is what we see to be what God thinks of man – not our view of what God is, but what God's view of what man is and how God wants us to live. For a Jew, it's very specific. It's from the moment you wake up, and it's not divided into what's spiritual and what's not spiritual. It governs every aspect of your life. The biggest – business, honesty and ethics in business, and how you live your life. I can't say that I was looking for anything spiritual. I think I had more than I could handle with the whole issue of the Jewish movement and a higher calling and kind doing what you're supposed to be doing. I don't think it was that. I think it was sitting down and reading – starting to learn. I remember reading – the rabbi that I learned with is really an educated man and a very, very good teacher. What I mean by that – it's not that he just has the material that he can pass over, and I've been learning with him for twelve years and [inaudible] through all these classes, so I see him do this all the time. He's able to take the material and give it to each student in the way that they could hear it or how the student needs it – wants it.

It's not that he changes the material, but he knows what you need. He knows what you're ready for. One of the first things he did was he gave me the Chumash, the Torah, five books with commentaries based on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, who lived in Germany. He must have died about 1870, 1890. He was university-educated, represented the parliament, whatever country it was at that time, from Frankfurt-on-Main – he was just brilliant. He wrote a commentary – the Reform movement was flourishing at that time, as you probably know, and he wrote a commentary really for the educated Reform community. I got maybe into three chapters into Bereshit, into Genesis, and I decided I was just going to stay home and read this commentary. I think I got three chapters in, and I said, "I don't know if this is true or not true. I just know this is the way we're supposed to be living. This is the way we have to live." So, that's how the observance started. And my husband and I decided right at the beginning of this – I mean, as I said, it was part of a continuum. The truth of the matter is, the only thing left for us to do that we hadn't done was to leave the lights – not play around with electricity, not touch the electricity, and not drive. I mean, we weren't doing anything anyway – not answer the phone. It's been a great gift to us. It's been a great gift. I don't know how I lived without it.

RH: So this move – your husband traveled the journey with you. Any balking from him?

PC: I would say there was some resistance, not in terms of what we were doing but in terms of how fast we were going at the end, the very end. I mean, as I said, over the years – when I first was married, I was lighting candles. Then the white tablecloth, and then we bought the challah. So over the years, it was very slow, slow, slow progression, and then at the end, once we started studying, I said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do." And he felt it was a little too rapid. He felt it was rapid. But at that time, we were not so young. I mean, I was fifty. I felt we had to catch up fast. I wanted to start catching up. When neither of us read a word of – when I started Hirsch, reading this commentary, I looked up – he does a lot with etymology – a lot. It's translated very poorly. It's a terrible

translation with the longest German construction English sentences you've ever – sentence is three pages. [laughter] He's dealing with etymology, and I'm sitting there – and one chapter could be one hundred and fifty pages. He's just very comprehensive. I'm going to look up the first word. and I realize, "I don't know the alphabet. What are you going to look it up? How are you going to look up that word?" My husband was in the same boat. And now he reads Hebrew fluently. Now, he is in a completely different place than he was. We've grown so much. There's something else. You're touching all my passions, so it's just pouring out. I've always had a sense of the holiness of life. This isn't a dress rehearsal. I feel it with everything in my – and always did. That was the whole reason, what compelled me to this. I was compelled to do this. I didn't really want to spend every waking hour [laughter] involved in somebody else's life, but I couldn't not. It was almost like there was no choice. I would probably do it again, even though I would say I would do things different. I can hear how I'm reacting and feel how I'm reacting. I know this isn't the dress rehearsal, and I had a very strong sense of the fact when I was young, I didn't want to be at forty the same Pam Cohen I was at thirty. I didn't. I don't want to be the same. I think the need to grow and to, if you will – I don't want to see recreate yourself – but to have the freedom and the sense of self-honesty to know who you are and what you need to do, even though no one in your society is doing it is something that's extremely valuable to me and to Lenny. So, we've changed a lot in our family. I hope that in the future years, I'm going to be able to continue to do that. I'm afraid … There is one other little piece that I want to go back to, and that is – I was a very reluctant quote-unquote "leader." It's not just words. The only way I could accede to the kind of the pressure around me – and I had a lot of pressure to become the national president, a lot of pressure – here, in Chicago, but mostly in Russia. One of my contacts in Russia, a very close colleague, who was a very, very strong activist, got permission in 1986. He generated a lot of activity on behalf of activists to put pressure on me to become national president. Well, I wouldn't say no to them for anything. If they believed in me and trusted me – and I had no national president at the time. There was a lot of

problems with the national organization. There was a revolving door kind of thing with the executive director. We were all volunteers. The entire board was volunteers, chairing their own local organizations. Now you put them on a board, on a national organization, [laughter] and they're all leaders, they're all grassroots leaders, they all have their own [laughter] show at home, and whoa, how to bring – although all of us had the same – we all had totally the same view. You could ask somebody anywhere about Jackson-Vanik or this or any political thing, but it was just hard for everyone to coalesce, let alone to hire quote-unquote a "professional" – that person could never, ever, ever stay alive in an organization like that and didn't. I didn't want to do it. I hired somebody who was – I mean, it's a whole other tape and a whole other story about the man that I hired because he came from a history of grassroots movement. His parents had been fighting the establishment, and he's still a national executive at the Union of Councils. Really, there were just no option. You didn't really feel like there was the freedom to say no and to do some of the things that we had to do. I think that comes from that sense of if you believe something, you've got to do it, even though you're the only one doing it.

RH: You sound like Jeremiah, the reluctant prophet. [laughter]

PC: Well, I didn't go that far. [laughter] I wouldn't go that far.

RH: No, but there is this sense of prophecy. I think I tell my students that the community makes a prophet. They're not self-appointed. [laughter] I try to explain the difference between a televangelist –

PC: Right. [laughter]

RH: – which they don't get – [laughter] who named themselves. It's wonderful that you were shaped by this community for leadership.

PC: I was, I was. I didn't feel –

RH: You are telling me that. [laughter]

PC: I didn't think that they were shaping me for leadership, but the way I could get away with doing what I did was I really felt that I was such a willing mouthpiece for them. I really felt that I was representing them. I want to tell you a story. I really don't like speaking in front of people. I really don't. I have never, ever, ever given an impromptu speech that I haven't worked on every word of. I won't do it. I used to have to testify at Congressional hearings. Now that's like probably one of the scariest things you've ever done in your life, if you don't like speaking. They're up there, and there's microphones, and it's very official, and you submit a testimony, and then you do a brief oral testimony. There's press there, and there's people behind you. You're testifying against quote-unquote "really important people," or there's like various witnesses or various people who are bringing testimony, and I don't like anything impromptu. But this sense of what you're doing and who you're representing – not the leadership but their voices can make you do what you never in your life think you can do because you feel them on your shoulders. I was testifying for my organization in front of – I think it was the House Committee on Grain. The Congressman was from Kansas, I forgot – I even forgot his name. I had given my oral summary. Then you read it. That's not a problem. There were no questions, and I was very happy. They went on to take testimony from someone whose name I will not mention, but he was a corporate head of an extremely large international soybean – soy company, who was from Illinois. Very, very influential person. It was testimony over Soviet trade, obviously, and grain, and I think it was Jackson-Vanik. He was explaining why it was difficult to have legislation that was "passed," quote-unquote – legislation, quote-unquote, by the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Government implemented by the new Duma. It was under Gorbachev. He was explaining how slow everything is in the Soviet Union and how hard it is to get anything done in the Soviet Union. He explained to this congressman who was sitting up there how this congressman should certainly understand the process of being in Congress, how slow and inefficient a Congress can be. The fact that he criticized, or compared, the duma of

the Soviet Union to the United States Congress – two hundred years of democracy, formed by our founding fathers, with the highest ideas in government! He's comparing it to the Soviet Duma. I totally lost it, and in the middle of a congressional hearing, broke from protocol, and I – who don't like announcing a meeting in front of five women – raised my hand and got recognition. The congressman said, "We recognize Mrs. Cohen. It seems to me" – he's very nice – "she has a comment about your testimony." I said, "I take exception as an American citizen, having nothing to do with Soviet Jewry. I take very strong exception of anyone comparing the United States Congress to the Soviet Duma." I mean, when you have that on your back, when you feel the responsibility to the people who are being victimized by that totalitarian government, and someone's trying to whitewash and apologize why they can't get things done there, it's amazing –

RH: What you can do.

PC: – what you can do.

RH: You have to cut right through.

PC: You have to cut through, even though you just burn.

RH: So all those voices, they're compelled [inaudible].

PC: It was that – the compulsion of the voices. That's really what did it.

RH: And so you were national president for ten years?

PC: Ten years. I tried to get out two years earlier, I really felt that it was time for a change, but my board really felt that it was a time of so much flux in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev had gone out, [Boris] Yeltsin had come in, there was a moment, this flash – there was a great flash of excitement. At that point, no one knew what was going to happen. I mean, there was so much instability, and yet there was hope. They felt that

they didn't want to change the leadership here in the face of so much change there. There was, thank God, a flood of – at the end, people could leave. Emigration was underway, and there were all kinds of problems with immigration, and then it became very bureaucratic because the United States had changed their immigration policies. Earlier, the United States was based on family reunification, but it was based on a refugee status, based on a refugee system, and then it strictly became family reunification, and they had to prove they were refugees, and it was being done by another organization, HIAS, and every Soviet Jew had to be able to prove that he was in fact in danger, and they had to do that in the embassies and the embassy in Moscow. Then, there was a problem at the end with HIAS, and HIAS was –

RH: What is HIAS?

PC: It was the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society that was processing or helping the government decide and process the papers after people had gotten permission to leave and had gotten their status. It became very, very bureaucratic. Our organization was called in to help with some of that bureaucracy in Moscow. There was such tremendous change in our focus, in many respects, that the organization really didn't want to change presidents until we kind of readjusted and got things settled and saw what was happening. It demanded a new kind of leadership. It demanded people who were advocates with different specialties. At that particular time, there were just new needs – as the Soviet Union crumbled, there were no social structures set up, and there were across the board millions of people in need of help and financial help and food and medical help. I mean, there was just no infrastructure. There was at that time no voluntary organizations, there was never a voluntary – they were all illegal. Anybody who was doing anything – the whole system in the Jewish world, in the dissident world, was set up by Jews and dissidents, and they were all out now. So, everything had to be recreated.

RH: So was that part of your job – was recreating or creating an infrastructure?

PC: I was part of the transition. I saw myself mostly as transitional. We had, under Yeltsin – under Gorbachev even – set up these organizations in Moscow. We called them bureaus. It was also the consequence of the way we worked with Soviet Jews. For example, in very, very dark years – like around the time of Afghanistan, because that's where all the communication channels closed – we were building our lists, our Refusenik lists, for the State Department, here in the West, in America. So, what I mean by that is that the United States government or the Congress was bringing evidence of Soviet non-compliance to family reunification, to the Soviet officials, in every bilateral agreement – in every bilateral meeting, they did that. We needed to have pure, accurate, perfect lists of those people who were refused, why they were refused, when they were refused, when their invitation from Israel was – when they reapplied. We needed full documentation on everything that we presented the Congress, State Department, White House, National Security – everything. Those lists were built, originally, in the States. We got the information, we checked the information [and] we pooled the information. Different councils, the national president, wherever the office was, put the list together, and it was submitted as a national list. When I went to Russia the first time, after that long period of time in 1987, Reagan had his first summit in Moscow with Gorbachev. I went in with my national director for the first time in ten years. I didn't apply earlier because I had been written up in Soviet press as a Zionist instigator and anti-Soviet, and the people I was working with in Leningrad and Moscow were also being watched very carefully. I felt it would be the kiss of death to walk into their apartments. After they left, they were given permission to leave under the rubric of – because Reagan had a very strong human rights – had a very strong platform, and under the auspices of – or not the official auspices, but we consulted with the head of the State Department, Sandy Vershbow, who's now the American Ambassador to Moscow, and he said, "You and Micah apply. We'll try to see if we can get you into Moscow with us." Well, we applied. My visa was rejected immediately. My new executive director was accepted. He was working for Elie

Wiesel at the National Holocaust Council and came to work for us. The Soviets didn't know who he was. He was accepted, and about two weeks after he got his visa, they re-cancelled his visa. They figured out who he was. So, we decided we would go to – I'm telling you this. It's an interesting story. We decided we would go to Helsinki at the time the president did because he was making his human rights speech in Helsinki. Even though we couldn't get in, we would go to Helsinki. We didn't take anything with us. We just went, and we had a lot of press conferences and were very successful in Helsinki. Then, Micah got a phone call from the State Department – Colin Powell, who was national security advisor at the time, raised our visa issue with Reagan, who raised it with the Soviets – or Colin Powell raised it with the Soviets, and in Helsinki, we got visas.

RH: My word.

PC: And we went [with] no, no advance notice. I had one telephone number, and I had just hired Micah – he was new, and we went to – the deal was the Soviets said, we could go, but we couldn't go with the President, by the way. When he was going to Moscow – we could go to Leningrad when he was in Moscow. When he left Moscow, we could go. So, I was happy with that. We went to Leningrad and we were there for two weeks. I made one phone call. This is ten years, and there I was known. It was an unbelievable experience. The activists had set up meetings for us for two weeks day and night, in two cities. It was a scientific seminar, the legal seminar, the scientific symposium. They had a women's group, the peace group, the U.S. Group to Establish Trust, the women's movement – every movement you could think of – sub-movements of the movement. Everyone had their specialty – those were teaching Hebrew, those were teaching religion. They flew in from every city – from the Baltics, from Odessa, from Siberia. Everyone came with what they wanted from us – the names, what they wanted us to do with Israel, with the invitations, how many people were accepted from – what kind of books they wanted, what kind of aid they wanted. I mean, it was – we met literally hundreds if not thousands of people. The reason I'm telling you that – how did we get to

this? – because at that meeting, we met the person who was leading the Refusenik – the reunification movement in Leningrad and the one in Moscow. Micah and I decided that it was ridiculous for us to be building the lists, the Refusenik lists. They should be built in the Soviet Union. And one man, Edward Markov, was responsible for Leningrad and all the cities that fed into Leningrad, and Mika Chlenov, a scientist who was running the scientific movement, was responsible for all the Refusenik lists in Moscow and the cities under Moscow. They would do the checking, and it would be their – you only have people who wanted to be on the lists. You had to have one name on the list that wasn't there or didn't have to leave, you compromised the whole list. So, there was tremendous accountability. So we had them [make] the lists, and that's how we operated, as real partners. So, as soon as we could, we established these – what we called them –we couldn't call them Soviet Jewish Immigration bureaus – we called them human rights bureaus. American-Soviet Human Rights Bureaus. They were done quote-unquote "openly." I mean, they weren't done privately in people's houses. We set a precedent for that because in 1991, we had an open meeting of Jews and Jewish Refuseniks. Instead of meeting –all those tourists that we sent up until then were briefed. What did that mean? You had a checkbook, or something of yours personally that you coded the telephone numbers and the names of people into your personal records so that when you were picked up and going into the country at customs, they could not find a name on you. Everything was done so that you couldn't compromise anyone. You knew what to say. All the meetings were done very carefully; the Soviets knew you were doing it, but we were playing a game that the Soviets let you play as long as your tourists played by the rules. We knew the rules. They weren't official, but we knew how to protect the tourists, we knew how to protect the Refusenik, and it worked for as many years as we were doing it – twenty, thirty years. We wanted to push the envelope because Reagan had agreed to an official Soviet human rights conference under the Helsinki Accords. He agreed to it with sixty-five nations, and we were very opposed to it, and we felt it was going to be a sham, and everyone was going to be [under] house arrest, and we were

going to prove it. This, of course, was done very cleverly. We decided we were going to host a human rights conference ourselves, a Soviet Jewry movement, unofficially, and it was going to be done openly, just like – and we were going to test it. If they arrested people, put them under house arrest, if they let people get visas, if they let the Soviet unofficial press cover it, if they played by the rules, we then could go to Reagan and say, "All right, you can have your human rights conference." If not, we had great leverage on the Soviets to let us hold this conference. Every step that you could push them was a step you could push them. So, we brought seventy people from five countries, including two people from this Israel, this "fascist state" that they were so afraid of. We brought seventy people, and they were greeted – I mean, up until now, for all the history of the Soviet Union, even if you were to read old, old texts on visitors going to Russia under the czars, they also did the same thing to sneak through customs. This was not just seventy, eighty years, ninety years. This was the history of Russia. We were going to break for it. They weren't going to sneak in and go to people's houses. We were going to have them met by official buses at the airport. We were going to hold this like it was a conference in Washington. It was going to be open, and we were holding their feet to the fire. We had several problems with the Soviets. They called Micah in the minute before he got on the plane and said, "You can't have this meeting." We went to the Danish ambassador in Moscow and asked him what to do, and he advised us, and we went ahead with it, and all our people came in, and we held the meeting. As a result of that, we wanted to have these human rights bureaus, so we opened human rights bureaus – U.S. human rights bureaus – Moscow, Leningrad, Kazakhstan, Riga, Vilnius, Kiev. They were like the transition that you're talking about. They provided channels for monitoring antisemitism, and they were channels for funding some of our humanitarian projects. So, that's when I left.

RH: Are you talking about this in kind of contra-distinction, maybe, to some other organizations that were not grassroots, that didn't work with people? When you talk about bureaucracy, like the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society? They weren't really coming with

the mission of what the people needed?

PC: Yeah. Can you hold that for one minute?

RH: Sure.

PC: One second. I may need to take a little break.

[Recording paused.]

RH: Okay. Let me see the tape.

PC: I want to just tell you something. If you don't ask that question, you'll never get a sense of what –

[END OF TRACK 2]

RH: Sounds like we're going. Well, so, you've alluded to some challenges within the Jewish community, and also some frustrations I'm getting from the sense of paternalism or a sense of "we know what's best for these people" instead of working in solidarity with these people.

PC: You hit on the reason – you hit on the essence of why grassroots versus what we call establishment. I think it is essential for rescue to understand what that difference is. I think that is the central question and the central issue, and I think it's extremely relevant today, and I think it always will be. Look, since 1948, thank God, we have the Jewish state of Israel, which puts a new – I would say a new element into global Jewish affairs. You have a state that is trying to survive. If you remember, the Soviets were the first to recognize the Jewish state. The Soviets United Nations vote was the first vote, yes. The Soviets saw Israel, which was socialist at the time, as a potential client state, and they broke relations early on. The Soviets and the Israelis did not have diplomatic relations until really very, just recently, until very modern times. So, there was a state of non-

relations between the Soviets and the Israeli government. The Israeli government is trying to survive in a world surrounded by Soviet client-states. So Israel's foreign policy became one which was forged primarily by its own need to survive. Therefore anything that we saw which will unfold, we never saw it as a question of compromise, that anything should compromise Israel's government. Israel we saw as a sovereign, national entity with the right to survival, with very few international friends, and with a great Soviet empire to its north, and it had the right, first, its own national survival, in terms of foreign policy issues. We saw that. We also believed that in the Diaspora outside of Israel Jews have to be responsible for each other, and we could not give it to the Foreign Ministry of Israel to both protect its national self-interest and to defend six million Jews, four million Jews, three million Jews – whatever the number in the Soviet Union. We felt that if there was ever a point – we would never want Israel to come to a point where it would have to sacrifice one for the other. We felt that if we were strong enough, it wouldn't have to.

RH: And when you say "we," you mean your organization?

PC: I mean the Union. I mean the Union of Councils. The grassroots movement. There was a grassroots movement in England and one in France. And in New York there was Students' Struggle for Soviet Jewry, which was a very – they organized very much on the universities, with young people, but we were all totally together. I mean, it was a family. It wasn't just an organization; it was a family. We all had the same view: no compromise on Israel's foreign policy, and we're not compromising Soviet Jews. The Israeli government, however, had a lot of issues with Soviet Jewry, okay? There were a lot of issues, which I can't go into right now. First of all, many of them were from the former Soviet Union. [Menachem] Begin was a prisoner himself. They believed, ostensibly, that – I think that either they believed or the Soviets convinced them or – I'm not even sure how to find the words to explain it, but that this international Zionist conspiracy that the Soviets believed in was emanating from Zion, from Israel, and either Israel didn't want to be responsible for it, or they wanted to alleviate themselves from the Soviet accusation

that there was this conspiracy. So, they created their own organization, basically – the Israeli government. I would say it was encouraged. I don't know if they actually created it, but they encouraged the development of an organization which basically deferred to the interest of Israel on the issue, only of Soviet Jewry. Soviet Jewry organization. But there was a lot of consultation between the Israeli government and this organization. That was the main consultative relationship, was the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and the Israeli Foreign Ministry set up an organization to handle Soviet Jewry under its rubric under its own – and they consulted with the American Jewish leadership here. Now, that's very fundamentally different than consulting with the Jews who are being deported or arrested.

RH: My guess is they weren't consulting with you either – because the Union was not part of the American Jewish leadership, or was it?

PC: No, we were not part of the American Jewish leadership. We were prevented from being part of that leadership. But the issue wasn't so much that we were prevented from a consultative relationship with the establishment. The problem was that we disagreed with their approach. There was a fundamental difference in approach because theirs was one in which they didn't want to be too upfront. They didn't want to be too perceived as being too much of a carrot. They didn't want to be the stick in the carrot and stick – they wanted to be the carrot. Their approach was more, "We'll help the Soviet government. We'll give them Jackson-Vanik. You give them Jackson-Vanik, then they'll be fine. Let's not stand in the way of this. We'll meet with their people. We'll talk to their leaders. We'll consult with the Soviets." A totally different approach, and the Refuseniks hated it. They hated it. They hated it, because they were left out of the consultation. And we took – I took, personally – and my predecessors, the previous presidents before me – all the presidents that I know took a very high road. We would never, ever go public about the fact that this establishment was basically conferring too much with Israel's Foreign Ministry. We didn't want to do anything to jeopardize Israel, and we felt

that – and we wouldn't. We just wouldn't. We felt we took the high road. But if I tell you there was a war to get the Refuseniks – they wouldn't give us the Refusenik list. I mean, the Israeli government could get the Refusenik lists. We had to get our own. We got them from Russia. They saw us as a tremendous threat – a tremendous threat – and we were. And we were. Because while the establishment, which really wanted to control the Soviet Jewry issue, the issue became out of their control. We wrested it from them. They could never really count on – I mean, they used to say that we weren't responsible, we weren't accountable. We didn't have any of the characteristics that they believed qualified us for leadership. So, they pushed us out. They just pushed us out of – I tell you, I could tell you stories after stories. I'll give you an example. The Jewish Agency for the State of Israel was one of the major departments that dealt with immigration. It was what was open; it was known as the Jewish Agency for Israel. They would have periodic consultations, and every president of every major Jewish organization in the free world would go from Australia and from France and from everywhere. There were two searing examples that I'll give you, which will clarify what our role was. Maybe in 1987 one of the big Jewish leaders – he's very prominent today, also – went to the Soviet Union, and he was – I think it was obvious he was briefed. He was given a mission by the Israeli government, and the mission touched on something that we were very much against. Just like we were always supportive of Jackson-Vanik, we never approved of direct flights. Okay? Now what does that mean? The history of the movement, in the Soviet Jewry movement, Jews left the Soviet Union until, I think it was maybe in the late '70s, early '80s – maybe '86. I'm not exactly sure I remember my dates. They left the Soviet Union, and they were able to get to Vienna, and the big immigration station was in Vienna. In Vienna, this Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society would bring them to the United States if they wanted to go to the United States. The Israeli government, the Jewish Agency, would help them go to Israel if they wanted to go to Israel. Those people who came to the United States were known as "drop-outs." They dropped out. Now, the whole immigration system was built on a demand of the Soviet Union that they get an

invitation from Israel even if they didn't have family. Remember, the Soviets agreed to family reunification. So how many people had families out of the Soviet Union? And they had to have direct, first-degree family. So, the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency, had to create first-degree families for anyone who wanted to leave. They had to make it up – they had to get family, and invitations had to go, and they had to go a specific way; they had to go through the mail, and they were in Hebrew. Everyone who left, until very recently, had to leave on an invitation from a family in Israel. Now, most of the immigration in the early '70s, people went to Israel. That's where they went. After '79, somewhere around after '79, maybe in '78, when there was a large immigration in '78, there were less identified Jews, less Zionist Jews, and more started dropping out. The Israeli government hated it. They hated it. I understand it. I sympathize with them. My answer was, "Create a movement. Help us create a movement inside the Soviet Union. Send information. Talk about absorption. Talk about what you're going to do for them. Help us teach Hebrew. Help us send books. Help us build a movement." Instead, they desisted – they did not do that adequately, and more and more Jews started "dropping out." What they wanted to do to stop it was to create direct flights – Moscow, Tel-Aviv. We were opposed to that because you're dealing with the Soviet Union. The more doors of exit you have, the safer it is for people. Our lesson was the Holocaust. The doors to the United States were closed. All the doors were closed. I wasn't, as an American Jew, going to close the door or a flight. "You want emigration?," we said to Israel, "Build a movement." To the American Jews, the big leaders who wanted to close the doors to America, "You believe in direct flights? You get on one of those flights. Go to Israel. Don't tell some poor Jew who doesn't know anything about Israel and [inaudible] that he should go to Israel. Go. Leave. Take us."

RH: [laughter] Take a trip!

PC: "Take a trip. Move. We'll follow you. Lead by your feet. Don't close the door." So Micah and I published – and it was impossible for a grassroots org – never happened

ever before and ever since – an op-ed piece on the Op-Ed page of the New York Times. Big one with a picture. So this important Jew went to Moscow and made an agreement with the Soviets about direct flights with the Soviet Union. They agreed to direct flights – not how many Jews were leaving, but where the flight would go to. Micah and I wrote this article, it was published, we sabotaged their agreement, and we went to a meeting of the World Presidium on Soviet Jewry led by the Jewish Agency in London. We were ready to talk to the establishment about what we saw as the program of Soviet Jews. They tore up their three-day agenda. Every Jewish leader ranted and raved about this editorial. When we finally, after three days – I mean, they just tore up their agenda. We had an agenda from Soviet Jews about what they wanted us to bring up at the Presidium about cultural genocide, about immigration, about this, about that. All they did was talk about what we did and how we betrayed the Jewish people and how irresponsible we were. Finally, when we did, after three days, get up to speak, everybody walked out. I'm talking about a very important meeting. Several years later, there was also a meeting of the Presidium; this is the Presidium of the world's Jewish organizations. This is led by the Jewish Agency of the State of Israel. This isn't a small country that doesn't – this is Israel. The night before the meeting, Yuli Kosharovsky, who was head of the movement, dictated a seventeen-page letter in Russian to me in Israel on a phone call that I paid for [laughter], and we had to get privately translated because it was their message to the world's Presidium. What they spoke about was developing an approach which was not paternalistic and not patronizing. They were used to the way we worked and this was a very big condemnation of the establishment, and whatever it was, they wanted it published, and we were the only people in Israel as guests who published it. We were very much outside of the establishment and never approved – one of the things that I inherited as the National President was a seat, which I never really wanted in the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. It's the Council of all the presidents. I never felt that that was our role. I think it's very important when you are involved in rescue, it's very important – it's not a bad thing to have an organization that's

outside the establishment. It's not a bad thing to have someone who's seen as a little bit more out there. If you're legitimate, if the establishment is legitimate, it makes them appear more legitimate to the Soviets. If we're seen as too radical, the Soviets will maybe negotiate with you. Our role is very important. It was a very vital role. I'm not crazy because I know you can't affect the establishment. There were many people in my twenty-five or thirty years who said to me, "You've absolutely right. The Chicago Action's way, the Union way, is the right way. It's the moral way, it's the high way, but I'm going to represent you. I'm going to change the establishment." You can't. You cannot.

RH: So, you're skeptical of those who say, "I'm going to work from the inside."

PC: You can't. I mean, you can't. You're not strong enough. You can't. Ultimately, I pulled the Union out of the Conference of Presidents. When the Conference of Presidents met with President Karimov and were holding a luncheon to honor – or a dinner or a reception to honor the president of Uzbekistan, who was an unbelievable repressor of human rights – I just don't believe the Jewish people can do that because it's politically expedient. Yes, it's in the interest of the State of Israel to do that. Yes, it is a nation. I mean, Bush has to meet with presidents; you have to meet with presidents. That's fine. I don't have to do it as a Jewish organization, and I don't have to be under their rubric. So, I pulled us out, and we're still out. I thought it was a great thing. I was very happy to win that moral victory. I wanted out. It was a protest vote. There's a whole history of those kind of stories.

RH: You also mentioned earlier about the country club and people meeting the KGB in one of the organizations you told me about earlier. Let's see if I can find it here. I'm afraid that I don't – I think it was when we were talking about the physicists and everything, and someone had come in, and there were a number of leaders – I assumed you meant Jewish leaders here, who were meeting with people from the Soviet Union who you felt they shouldn't be meeting with.

PC: Look, the Chautauqua Society was an unbelievable platform for the Soviet government. I mean, if you read now some of the KGB defectors –

RH: You mean the American –

PC: American Chautauqua Society had a meeting at Syracuse, and it was International Women's Day, I think, and the women dissidents and Refuseniks were trying to get message to protest the Soviet participation, and the people who were participating and trying to get the Chautauqua Society to bring their petitions. What Jews and dissidents did was to dictate appeals, thousands – and I'm not exaggerating; I can show you upstairs – thousands of appeals on my telephone in the kitchen and my telephone in the office and Lynn Singer and Glen, and all of us, appeals to the chief prosecutor, appeals to the American government, appeals to the Chautauqua Society, appeals to the American Medical Association, the Law Association – every single – women's movement. Everyone who could be a platform and anyone who had an interface with the Soviet Union, appealing to them. I remember the meeting at the Chautauqua Society, we could not get anyone to answer our calls, to participate, to present an appeal to the Soviets who were going to be there – to do anything. Later, if you read some of the books by the Soviet defectors – KGB defectors – they talk about how they had plants, how they tried to influence American media, American think-tanks, American organizations, any people-to-people organizations, the sister cities organizations, the women's organizations – anyone anywhere they were meeting with them. Americans loved it! I mean, I remember meeting a guy who was working with us, he was a top – he's not alive anymore – with a top firm in Chicago – top. He was so proud to be meeting this Soviet prosecutor. I don't think it was –

RH: Prosecutor.

PC: – Alexander] Rekunkov, but it might have been. It was the top judicial body in the Soviet Union – they who were prosecuting innocent people. They're prosecuting

innocent people in show trials, and they couldn't help the seduction. It's a seduction. They couldn't control themselves. They had this important Soviet guy – he was coming to their office. He was coming for dinner. They were going to take him to the Standard Club. They couldn't resist it. It's so seductive. It's so seductive, and that's what we were up against.

RH: How did it feel to have the heads of all these Jewish organizations say you're a traitor to Israel?

PC: I don't know if they said I was a traitor openly, but they were very close. They were very close.

RH: At some point, you were surprised? By then you already had –

PC: It was horrifying. You know what? I'm sure I repressed it. I'm sure. I mean, I was reluctant in my job. I was not a confident quote-unquote "leader." I never felt like I had the qualities or the qualifications that rescue or representation – I wasn't a lawyer. I mean, I had to learn everything the hard way. So, now you're in a room with 150 of the self-appointed very, very important people – one man ultimately became the United States Ambassador of Human Rights to Geneva. He's no longer alive. I mean, I couldn't walk into a room without him just – smoke would come out of his ears. He hated me. He hated me, hated me, and made no bones about it. They were all very prominent. They were all important.

RH: [inaudible] [laughter]

PC: They all had degrees and titles, and they were very successful in business. If someone were to say, you know, "Give me your CV or your resume" – I was a mom. I was a housewife. When I wasn't doing this, I was doing carpools and going to the dentist's office.

RH: So, did you feel like at times they were patting you on the head and saying, “You just don’t understand geopolitics?”

PC: Oh, all the time.

RH: So, was part of it – I mean, the way it displayed itself, certainly it was your cause that was the cause of conflict, but it got played out occasionally as a gender thing – the housewife?

PC: It didn’t because I never – first of all, I have to tell you, I never felt it was a woman thing, maybe because the Conference of Presidents ultimately was run by a woman. I never felt it was a woman thing; I felt it was much more that I wasn’t a professional. I wasn’t a lawyer. I wasn’t a lawyer. I didn’t take my PhD in Soviet Studies at Princeton.

RH: International Diplomacy at Columbia. [laughter] Okay.

PC: Yeah. And I was taking on those people. I felt that was a tremendous, tremendous – I mean, I can feel that. That was very difficult.

RH: At the time, did it enrage you? Or did it –?

PC: Yeah. There was no one to tell. Who could I tell? I couldn’t tell the people in the Soviet Union. I couldn’t tell them. They knew. Ultimately, they knew because they heard it about us. They heard that we – I went to Russia then with Reagan in ’86 – not with Reagan, but when I got the visa. And then I went back, I think in ’87, and then I was back in ’88, at least once, and then – I mean, I was going at least once a year, after ’86. I could tell that I was trusted. I could tell that – they would say things to me. The leadership would say, “Oh, we were told that we shouldn’t work with you because you work for dissidents.” One of the controversies between the establishment – big controversy, between the Israeli government – there were a lot of them: direct flights, Jackson-Vanik. But there were basic controversies. One controversy was the Israeli

government and the establishment believed, “Only immigration. Only Jewish immigration, that’s all we’re fighting for. We’re not trying to change the system, we’re trying to depart from the system. We want to get our people out, we don’t want our people tied in with the whole dissident issue.” Well, most of us came from the school that said, “There are very few Jews in the world left. There are very few fighting. There are even less fighting in the Jewish movement, in the immigration movement. We have to fight for our own, but we’re not going to do this without a reference, without the context of the broader movement,” especially when you have someone like Sharansky who was a part of the Helsinki monitoring committee, who was Sakharov’s spokesman, who was so close to [Yuri] Orlov and [Yelena] Bonner and all these larger-than-life dissidents who were fighting. Sharansky, who brought up the issue of the German nationals, you know, so when we brought up our list of complaints to the State Department or the Helsinki Commission, it was Jewish immigration, but it had to be also – we referenced the fact that there were Pentecostals for years in the basement of the American embassy, because they weren’t given visas and they couldn’t get out without being arrested, and that they were living in the basement of the American embassy. Or the German nationals who couldn’t repatriate to Germany. Or when we talked about Hebrew language, we also could’ve talked about the Crimean Tatars. I mean, the point is – so they said, you know, when somebody was arrested, I mean, there were cases of women who were arrested – great human rights activists that were arrested – we used their cases. We talked about their cases. Then, of course, the establishment would go into Moscow and say, “You can’t meet with her, Pam. You can’t have anything to do with this organization; they work for dissidents.” So, I mean, there were all kinds of issues that separated us. Did it enrage us? Yeah. Yeah. It was one of the worst experiences I’ve ever had, that London meeting. I have done everything I can to block it out of my mind. But I’m telling you, you ever talk to my director – three days of an agenda? 150 people, leaders from all over, completely blocked it out – I mean, everyone just spoke about the undermining of the agreement for direct flights? Never, never, never, never, never – and

that we didn't consult – that was their big issue, that we don't have a consultative relationship with them. That we could never consult with them. I mean, there was no –

RH: There was no basis for a consulting –

PC: No basis at all. We blew the agreement, by the way. The Soviets blew the agreement. I don't know whether they felt that they'd never get the support of everyone or whether it was the Israelis that blew it, but the direct flights never –

RH: Never really materialized?

PC: – never materialized. Right after our – maybe that was why they were so angry. After that, the President of the Conference of Presidents – very, very important man, invited me – I think it was – I don't know if that was the order, but I'll skip that story. To finish the story, I called the President of the Conference of Presidents, who convened this meeting in London. He said to me – I'll never forget this – he said, "If you ever ruin my relationship with the Secretary of State, I'll break you." I'm not using names. I called him, and I was really shaken. I'll tell you, I picked up the phone, and I called and said, "I want a meeting." I flew to New York, and I called a meeting. He brought his executive director. He was also the president of the establishment Soviet Jewry organization. We met with him in his big, very fancy New York law firm, in the boardroom. I'm telling you, I don't know where I got it – it was like the time that I had to speak out at my testimony – I sat down, and I don't know where I got this – I put everything down. I said, "All right. I want to start the meeting." I convened this meeting – I was in such control. The president who hated me said, "What right do you have not to consult on such a thing and go public? What responsible Jewish organization goes public in the New York Times before you consult with other organizations that are doing it?" The truth of the matter is I had written him several times. I had complained about their position several times. I looked at his executive director, and I said, "Did you get those letters? You never saw my letters to you that you never answered?" His director fumbled, and the President of

the Conference of Presidents looked at his director and said, “Did she write me letters?” I thought he was going to lose his job because he never passed – he was the fall guy. But I said, “You realize what we objected” – he said, “We were absolutely within the right of calling for direct flights.” I said, “What about the number of people who will be on the flights? Who’s going to get permission? The question is what’s the percentages?” He said, “Well, the Soviets assured us that they would give a percentage of permission to people who had applied – everyone who applied, they would give permission to, and we’ll put them on these direct flights.” I looked at him, and I said, “Do you understand what you did?” He’s like the most important person on this issue, publicly. I said, “Don’t you understand what you agreed to? The question isn’t who’s applying. The Soviets aren’t letting people apply.” For two years, there had been a whole group of people called “waitniks.” They wouldn’t allow people to apply. They didn’t qualify to apply for permission. So the Soviets could give everybody they wanted permission to apply. They still were amassing tens of thousands of people who couldn’t even apply, who were called “waitniks.” He turned this color. He turned this color. He was totally had. But he was a lawyer. This is his avocation. He did this. He was a spokesman. They called him. He had the presence. He wasn’t running a country. The Israelis didn’t have diplomatic relations; they needed some very important person to go and feel something out at the Kremlin. Who are they going to call? So, they call some very prominent who meets with [George] Shultz all the time and loves Shultz, and he goes in, and he just screws up. Oh, you go crazy.

RH: Yeah. Did that just end the meeting?

PC: I walked out, but I want to tell you something. I hate to tell you this, but I think that was, in my life, in terms of little, private victories, that was such a private victory for me because it was like this little mouse that was walking into really the lion’s den, and king of the lion, and very quietly, I said, “Don’t you see what you agreed to?” I mean, he was just – there was nothing he could say in any point of his rationalization for what he was

trying to accomplish. It was good. My director walked out, and he is an attorney. He walked out, and I think he put his arms around me, and he said something like, “See? You didn’t have to be an attorney to get him.” [laughter] So, for me, it wasn’t about the women’s thing, but it was really, I think, the sense of inferiority in not feeling professional. Being a volunteer.

RH: Do you consider yourself a Zionist?

PC: Boy, is that a loaded question.

RH: I know.

PC: You’re so good. You are so good. I don’t know what that word – I think I would say I’m a religious Zionist. I believe that the land of Israel was given to the Jewish people for the purpose of the dissemination of God’s will. I don’t believe we’re a country like Czechoslovakia or Hungary or Kazakhstan or the United States.

RH: So a sense of chosenness.

PC: I think that we have a very big role to play in the world. It isn’t a sense of superiority. I think I see the world in terms of very unique roles. I am very, very confident, and I don’t have an issue being a woman. I love being a woman. I think women are – I don’t even know what the word – just magnificent creatures, magnificent works of God’s creation. I don’t like when women want to become men. I think women have – I think that we are created uniquely. As women, we have a profound contribution to give to the world. I feel that way about all of God’s creation, so I feel that everyone – a giraffe is magnificent as a giraffe; it shouldn’t try to make a contribution as a zebra. So, I feel that every nation of the world has its own unique contributions to give to the world, but the mistake is that we try to be like Kraft cheese: we all want to be overly processed. I have one more story about this because I think this really ties it together. I had a very profound – I don’t even know what to say, but I had an experience. We had heard in the ‘80s that there were

pogroms in Central Asia. This was still – it probably was Gorbachev – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan.. Actually, it was Kazakhstan. We went to the Israelis, because at that time – we went to some Soviet Jews. We really didn't know people in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It was a very, very repressive part of the Soviet Empire, and people are very reluctant to speak over the phones even inside the Soviet Union. So, we sent reliable people from Russia – paid for them – who were in Russia already, and they went down to Kazakhstan. They came back and reported; it was a pogrom. It was government – this is what a pogrom is. It was government-inspired, and people were being murdered. We knew that. We were told by the Israeli government, who had their contacts, that it was because people were leaving. Immigration had started, and people were immigrating, and they were selling – at that time, you could start trying to take money out of the country, or sell things and take out of the country – and they were victims of theft. It wasn't because they were Jewish; it was because they were leaving. Okay, I didn't buy that. So we went to the American government, and they went to the Israeli government, and the Israeli government said, "It's not a pogrom." And we called – about that time, we were calling for an evacuation of the Soviet Union – Jewish evacuation. We wanted to bring everyone out as quickly. The doors had started to open. There was a lot of antisemitism. The Israelis weren't sending [inaudible] which was another battle throughout the forty-year history or thirty-year history. Immigration was dependent on [inaudible], these invitations. Unless they had the visa invitations, they couldn't apply. They weren't sending them fast enough, they weren't putting out planes fast enough at that time to leave. It was a whole story. To make a long story short, we decided we were going to go into a fact-finding trip. So, we went, my national director, and at that time, my international director, because one of the activists came out, and we brought him to Chicago. He started running these bureaus that I told you about. He ran them. He was like our secretary of state. We picked up our Moscow bureau director, and they set up meetings for us, and we went all through Central Asia to do fact-finding trips. We found out that there were – I never saw such fear in my life. And that's in '78 in Kharkov that I'd

seen such fear. So people would set up meetings for us, and I would ask the person, “Is there anything you want us not to discuss publicly?” “Do not discuss antisemitism. Don’t bring it up.” When I spoke at the meeting of a local town, whoever was there, this person distanced himself, stood outside, didn’t want to be a part – just very frightened. There were two boys in prison under trial in Almaty from Tashkent, and we were picked up from the airport by basically KGB. They were Jewish KGB; it was like cooperating with the authorities. I saw proof of it. They taped us, and one guy brought it back to Moscow. It was very confusing, and it wasn’t so clear in these towns about who was what and what was – but they gave us a job. They said, “Come back,” those people, “and run a human rights meeting.” Not a Jewish meeting. “Run a human rights meeting and run it in Bishkek, Kirghizia. It’ll be very good for the Jews. There’s no concept of human rights here. The right to leave can be brought up in the context of all the other human rights issues. It’ll be very good, and it’ll be very good that American Jews are coordinating it.” At the time – I don’t remember his name – there was a new president of Kirghizia. And somebody arranged – I think it was our office in Moscow – arranged that the actual president of Kirghizia would be the co-host with the Union of Councils for this human rights conference. This is ’92, ’93. Several Jews were in prison [inaudible]. We were working with the non-Jewish dissident movement in those countries, and one man by the name of Abdumanov Pulatov was our coordinator for this human rights meeting. He was from Tashkent. He was, I think, Muslim. We were going to hold this meeting, and of course, we let all the American government – the State Department and everybody was happy with the meeting – they set up – Abdumanov and our Moscow bureau and the activists in the various far Soviet republics, [inaudible] republics, set up this symposium. You have to understand, there was this time, which I probably should tell you about, because right when Yeltsin stood on the car and Gorbachev was out, there was a moment of euphoria that I have never experienced. I was there two weeks after the revolt, and I was in the White House – this White House, this Soviet Russian White House. There were kids running these offices that looked – now, listen, I don’t believe in

Soviet double-speak. There were kids that looked like they had just come out of American schools. They were kids who had been in – they were young idealists who had a very Western frame of mind and who were running these new representative offices like you never saw in Russia. I mean, you felt like you were way in Capitol Hill. I mean, it was unbelievable. It lasted, I think, six weeks after the Vilnius – I mean, I remember when they sent the troops into Vilnius, we had e-mail, and the kids at the university were emailing out that the troops were coming. We were getting the stuff from the e-mail, and there were these real democrats, leading – and it was like this breath – one minute was there, and the next time I was there in Russia, it was gone. There was nowhere to be found. It was like a dream. But it was at that moment that we set up this meeting. Because we couldn't see what was coming. We wanted to fan the flames of what was coming. So, we set up this meeting, and we went to Kirgizia, which was a nightmare. Oh, and there were women. There was a woman, a Muslim woman, who was suddenly on the Supreme Court. There were like three women in the room, that's for sure. And I had already become Torah-observant or was on my way. I was the opening speech. I spoke to people about being a woman, about being a Jew, and what is a Jew doing here and a Jewish woman doing here fighting for the rights of Muslims to believe what they want to believe. That's what I really, at the heart, believe. I'm not a Muslim. I don't accept or believe that the Muslim religion is true. I believe in truth. But I will fight for everything for that Muslim to believe what he believes as long as he's not killing somebody. That is what – and I say our view of the world because that was what I got from the Russian movement. That's what I got from the dissident movement: that Israel should be existing because of what we, as Jews, understand Israel is supposed to be. It's supposed to be Israel; it's not supposed to be Italy. We have a glorious Italy. I love Italy. But we need everyone to fill its role. So, as I'm a Zionist – if that means the Jews should – I believe that Israel can be Israel as long as it's true to what Israel needs to be. Israel needs to rest on Torah, on what God gave us. So, if that makes me a Zionist – I mean, I'm in love with Israel. I also – that's a story – wanted to raise the kids there, and

my husband has a business here, and this apartment is kind of a consolation prize for not living there. But we go whenever we can, and I feel like I'm home. I'm very centrist in Israel. Here I'm a total extremist, knock the wall, crazy fanatic. But there I'm just like a normal person.

RH: Is Israel what it's supposed to be?

PC: Not yet. In my view, not yet. According to those books, not yet. According to Torah, not yet. Not yet. I have a whole issue of disappointment with how American Jews have dealt with the whole Israel thing in the last five years, since this latest intifada, because I think that as a part of the movement, I thought that the prototype that we created in the Soviet Jewry movement was such a success. I mean, the establishment now takes credit for everything that the Union did. The Union's grassroots approach was, I think, truly understood as that's the best way. People have to be close. We have to be together. We have to be tied. We have to be united. We don't have to agree on everything, but we have to talk. Not our leaders, but us. Just us. When the murders – when this intifada started, the Israelis felt very isolated. Jews stopped coming. The consultation became – not exclusively, but a lot of American Jews started consulting with the Palestinians and with the local press, which is very, very pro-Palestinian. The consultation stopped, and I experienced the same frustration with people who are living in Israel that I did with the Refuseniks. They feel that American Jews are talking to their government, and they're talking to every other government, and they're talking to all the leadership, but they're not talking to them. I feel the same sense – I see the same sense of isolation.

RH: What kind of conversations would you like to have with the Israelis?

PC: With the Israelis? I'd like American Jews – I'd like us to go to talk to the eight, nine thousand Jews who are living in this area in Sinai that is about to be transferred. I'd like them to hear – just listen to them. Just listen. Hear what they have to say. Their

government doesn't listen to them. Listen to them. Just factor it in. I think it's painful to be written out of a script, and they've been written out. Listen to what people have to say. We don't any more than the establishment listened to the Refuseniks. Well, isn't that the point? Wasn't that a whole point of what we were fighting for? People wanted their voices to be heard. They didn't want us to come up with a solution that they weren't part of. So if the solution – I have this very terrible feeling. The world would not tolerate the transfer of one Palestinian Arab out of any parcel of land that Israel has control over. But we, with absolute impunity, find no problem in transferring eight thousand families. If we're going to be complicit in that, that's fine. We can come to that conclusion. But that's the conclusion. The process is what we're forgetting. The process is consulting person to person. The process is to be able to pick up the phone and call. Look, you know, we fought for the right for someone to be able to pick up the phone and call a Refusenik's wife when her husband was arrested, to call and write letters. What about when something like, I don't know, thousands of people have been murdered? Who picks up the phone and calls, you know, somebody who lost her husband and kid going to school on a bus? They're victims. They're victims of what? Their government calls them "victims of peace." But there's no peace. Even if that's what your feeling is, that's not the process. The process is to reach out and talk to the people, and not the governments and the organizations and the important people that think that they have all the solutions. Go to the hospitals. Talk to the people. Go to where they live. Go see what they call behind-the – go. I have a very good friend that conducts a tour called "Places in the News." Go see the places that are called "beyond the Green Line." They're closer than Skokie to Deerfield, and they're bigger than Highland Park. And they've been in existence for thirty years. I'm just saying, without getting into all the political aspects, I'm heartbroken that the methodology of consultation, the methodology of person-to-person contact, the methodology of – you can't really look to our – you have to look to just the victim. The victim. Talk to the victims.

RH: I'm kind of curious – I'm going to push this a little here. In your work with immigration, do you think that some of the problems today come from maybe the cynical way that Jews were immigrated by Israel into settlements on the borders? No?

PC: What do you think –?

RH: I'm just asking a question –

PC: Go on. Go, go, go, go.

RH: [laughter] When you call "drop-outs" people who wanted to make a choice to go to another place.

PC: Right, to the United States.

RH: So then you've got the Israeli government wanting these Russian Jews to have a direct flight into Israel.

PC: Right.

RH: Was there some cynicism when this was happening of how they wanted to use the Russian Jews?

PC: Cynicism from our point of view?

RH: No, from the Israeli government's point of view.

PC: Oh, that they were being–

RH: That they were going to use the immigrants – I mean, I was wondering if – because a lot of those are Russian people in those settlements, aren't they?

PC: Right. So, this is such an important point. You're great. You're great. If you know the history of Israel and the Soviet Union, the Israelis – the accusation from the point of the Soviet Jews was they never really wanted immigration.

RH: That the –

PC: Israeli government.

RH: – Israelis never wanted to immigrate Russians?

PC: Not really. That was one of their points of view. There has always been an accusation that the Israeli government really didn't want to put that many people from Russia into Israel. The idea about putting Russians into the settlements cannot be further from the truth. It's the spin people put on it. The process was that the Israeli government – when Jews came years ago, originally, would go into absorption centers. Those absorption centers were in, you know, areas all over – Jerusalem, wherever you could put thousands and thousands of people. Jews then could decide where they wanted to live. No one was put – none of my friends, none of the people that I ever met were put anywhere that they didn't want to go... I can't say that about the Ethiopian Jews. That I don't know. I don't know – but they were in the south near Be'er Sheva, and I don't think that was quote-unquote "settlements." But you have to think about it. If you think about it a little bit, Soviet Jews suffered under Communism. They hate socialism. They hated the whole social-political sphere of the Left, and they were very critical of the Israeli government left-wing in making too many accommodations to the Soviets on their behalf – quote-unquote "on their behalf." They were very critical of Golda Meir. They were very critical of the left-wing governments. There are some very indicting works that have been done. Most of the Soviet Jews that I know are very – except one or two. I do know some very left-wing. I do. But the majority of the activists that came out, by the time they came out, were very, very nationalistic and very proud. They fought for being – many of them were trying to take on Israeli citizenship even in Russia, by the way. They

tried to get rid of their Soviet citizenship, renounce their Soviet citizenship, and then get the Israelis to take on – and even to be a foreign national. They wanted to be treated as foreign nationals in Russia. They're very proud, very – this was what they – so, wherever they went, they saw it as their own determination, that that's where they were going to go, first of all. So, the cynicism of accusing the government comes from the very, very left-wing propaganda. You don't really find that in Israel. Yes, there are people who are in Judea and Samaria, but they're there because that's where they want to be.

RH: Want to be. Do you have friends who are being displaced again? Do you know people in some of the settlements?

PC: I do. I do. But I've talked to people. I've talked to people, or heard them, in the area of Sinai that is going. I don't have any friends there. But they feel tremendously abandoned, they feel very misunderstood. They feel – many of the areas are – it would be kind of like us saying, "Okay, we're going to give up Kansas. We're going to give Kansas to wherever it came from." It's a breadbasket. All their farmers, produce, all the vegetables, the lettuce – and they went there primarily on their own, not because they were sent there, but they went there voluntarily. They created a community there, and it's a very educated community. It's a very English-speaking community, by the way. There are a lot of former Americans living there. They see themselves as the first line of defense. I can't tell you how history is going to play out. I have no way of predicting. But we, as American Jews, have, in a way that I've never seen in my life, cut ourselves off from the people there, primarily out of fear. We don't go because we're afraid of being blown up. We don't go to the places that – I can't imagine Christians or Muslims not going to. I mean, for Jews not to go to Hebron, where the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham and Isaac – we who were brought up in the Refusenik movement believe that you create history, you create facts on the ground. If you think that this is important to you, you go there. The world sees that there are busloads of people going, they pay attention: "Well, maybe you care about it." But if you don't care about it, you abandon it.

So we've already abandoned the burial place of Joseph. And it was destroyed. I've seen the history of what happens when this land isn't given to us. I go there all the time, nearly twice a year. If I thought that it was weird in Tashkent and those places, I could never imagine how surreal the world is. You take a plane into Israel and you go to any city and there are, right in the heart of downtown Jerusalem, there are people in keffiyehs shopping, they're going into the stores, they're parking their cars, they're working as the attendants, they're working in the hospitals. You go into a hospital; there are more Arabs than you can ever imagine in the hospitals. They want to go into those hospitals. Even one of the people that blew themselves up recently – not that long ago – in Sinai, crossing the Sinai crossing, was a woman who convinced the army personnel that she was being treated in the hospital. They let her through, and she killed them. The biggest danger for us in Israel, when we're going, is God forbid going to someplace and making the wrong turn into an Arab town. You'll never come out alive.

RH: I can believe that.

PC: We saw it on television. Two boys. They threw them out a window. They were ripped apart in Ramallah. So we talk about – I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what the situation is. All I know – I mean, what I believe, is that – I personally believe that this evacuation is going to be extremely dangerous for the people who are in Ashkelon, which is right under Tel Aviv. I know that people in Jaffa got letters from the sheiks saying that this Yaffa is not Jewish; it's Arab. If you read the Arab press, if you read what they're saying, Israel doesn't have a right to exist. It isn't just a question of what's going on in Sinai. It's Afula, it's Jaffa – it's everything. Okay. If that's your point and you want to cease to exist. But we as Americans, do we have a right not to listen? Just listen. Just hear what they have to say. My point is, I keep thinking, we called them and said, "We're sorry. What can we do to help you when your husband was arrested?" Now people are being killed, and we don't call. We've become the scourge of Europe. I just saw Hotel Rwanda. Did you see that?

RH: No.

PC: A million people in Rwanda were killed, and Kofi Annan was screaming about Israel. I mean, a million people were slaughtered. But they're Blacks, who cares? African Blacks? The world was silent. Yet, somebody was defending themselves – they were putting a child as a human shield, and they got killed, and it was all over the UN [United Nations]. I mean, it's just an absurdity. I don't know. I'm sorry. These things are very much upfront in my mind. And I don't know where leadership is.

RH: Do you feel Jewish leadership [inaudible]?

PC: I don't know where any leadership is. I don't know where Jewish leadership is. I don't know where any leadership is. I mean, in those years, we had the Congress, and there were people who saw that the Soviet Union could possibly be a threat to the world order. I mean, we had a president that did. Today, there is – however you want to look at this Iraq situation – but today, the world doesn't have a clear sense of what's right and what's wrong. Everything has gotten – to me, it seems very, very blurred.

RH: This sense you said earlier of moral clarity?

PC: I don't think we have it. It used to be that – I always had to have my daily New York Times when I was doing this work. I remember we had to fight to make sure certain things got in the press. But Esther Fein wrote a very, very big article about antisemitism in the New York Times. There were articles. They did interview the dissidents. They did go to the press conferences. They did hear, without any editorializing, what a dissident in Russia had to say. They did hear them. There were Moscow desks that – there were many people who used their pouches to get information out for Sakharov. There were people that did it. You can't find that today. The Tribune this week – I don't understand where are the children's organizations. They allow kids fifteen years old to blow themselves up – where's the children's organizations? Where are the women's

organizations? Where is the American Psychiatric –? Why do they allow –? They're allowing a generation of children to kill themselves. Child suicide? Where is the world? I don't understand where the world is.

[END OF TRACK 3]

PC: – looked like he came off a golf course.

RH: Right.

PC: And he had one of these – I'd never seen it before – these little gadgets where kids play music, it's a little technical –

RH: Yeah, the iPod.

PC: He had an iPod. All the Israeli women at the store were looking at his iPod, and I've never seen it either. I was looking at it, and I was thinking – he wasn't so young. I mean, he wasn't a kid. He must have been in his fifties. I thought, "What is a 50-year-old person going to listen to an iPod? When do you have time?" Most of us are reading or writing – there's no time. You're listening to the news. So, I said to him, "When do you listen to this?" He said, "Oh, I just listened to it all the way back from Ramallah." Well, I don't know anybody – I'm telling you – who can emerge alive from Ramallah. So, I said to him – before I asked him that, I asked him if he's been there before, and he said, yes, he used to live – and he gave me the street where the American consulate was. He was vice-consul to the American consulate under Clinton. He had just come back from Ramallah. "What were you doing in Ramallah? How did you get to Ramallah?" He is one of these consultants for the Palestinian Authority. Well, there's a skew. There's just a skew. So, when I asked him some questions that were very relevant to what's happening today and about the American money that has never made it to the Palestinian people because it has been – and the money from the European Union that has never gotten down to the Palestinian people, he got very defensive, because he's

also part of that infrastructure. He's also part of the legal consultants. He's the guy who's giving the press conference. He's the guy who just came back. He's not an independent person who's doing what people did, monitoring on the ground. We don't have independent monitors. I don't think it's in American self-interest, and I don't think it's – I certainly don't think it's good for Israel. I don't think it's good for America, and I think that it's not good for the American people. I think that we've lost our ability to see what's really happening.

RH: So, what do you want to tell the next generation? What do they need to do?

PC: I think we need to do it ourselves. I think we need to be responsible for each other. I think we have to know what's happening, and I think we have to talk to people. We have to mostly listen to people. I think we have to – people went down to Selma because they wanted to hear and see and do and act in solidarity. I think we have to be able to listen to the world, to the victims. We have to be able to hear what victims are telling us. We have to be able to develop policy that defends the victims and not the paternalistic advisors and consultants that are being paid and the governments and the foreign ministries and the presidents of the influential organizations that are supposed to be defending them. I think that it has to be at the grassroots level. I think you have to talk to people on the street.

RH: Do you think human rights organizations can connect to one another? Is that [inaudible]?

PC: I think today – I think we used to be able to connect because there used to be a uniform definition of what human rights – the definition of human rights were personal human rights, individual human rights. Today, it has become an abused word. It means the rights of national minorities. That is an issue that was used, by the way, by Hitler. I'm very nervous about national minority rights. I wouldn't do anything – when I was making policy, Jews came to me and wanted me to help them with certain issues with

their governments because they were a Ukrainian national minority. I refused to do it. I'm not sure I can develop – I haven't gone there, I haven't yet figured out how you do that as national minorities. I think you have rights as citizens. As an individual citizen, you have a right to send your child to a private school, or you have a right to start a private school. I'm not too crazy about government protection of these – even as Jews, I'm not crazy about it, because even if you protect Jews as a national minority, it's a favor. The czars used it. Napoleon used it. Then it's a favor, and it's not a right. You have a right as a citizen. You have a right as an individual. Today, our human rights issues have gotten so twisted with the rights of national minorities that I don't know if we're speaking the same language anymore. It's what Hitler used. It's what he did with the Sudetenland. The national minorities, and he wants to unify – I'm very nervous about it, very uncomfortable. So, I'm not sure we can all meet together. It's become very political.

RH: What do you think you've handed to your grandchildren? I mean, what do you –? [laughter]

PC: Love.

RH: Love?

PC: Adoration. Just love.

RH: And your children? Do they have a role model in you?

PC: No, I have. I think what I hope I've given my grandchildren, to tell you the truth, is what I hope that somebody gave – my Bubbe gave me – my great-Bubbe gave me. I hope I gave them uncompromising love. But I also hope that I gave them something about who they are. Something that tells them how important they are, that they're not an accident, that they came with a very great sense of purpose, and that they're a part of

something that has to be handed down, that has to go from one generation, and that somehow I want to give them, whether you call it a survival mechanism, or if you call it an identity, I want to be able to give them so much of what is Torah, so that they will be able to pass that down to their grandchildren. I mean, our people have such a unique history, and I know that we concentrate so much on what people died for, but I really look at what people live for, the lives of people – what they lived for, what was important to them, the ethics.

RH: Can you encapsulate Torah for me when you say that?

PC: To me, it's our relationship with God and his expectations that we do what he wants us to do. We're not free to just kind of do what we want to do and see how it feels. We have to know what we're supposed to do. There is this sense of what you could do and what you might like to do, but you can't.

RH: Covenant?

PC: Covenant. Covenant. Covenant. Covenant.

RH: Maybe we should wrap up. I'm worried about a family member who's desperate [laughter] to be in touch.

PC: It's not. [inaudible] But you've had plenty of me.

RH: [laughter] This is a beautiful interview, and I thank you.

[Recording paused.]

PC: – being undressed in front of the entire world. I cannot stand to go into a store to see how women dress.

RH: I don't think that's the movement, though.

PC: No.

RH: I think that's the cooptation of the movement by capitalism. I think there's been an enormous – I mean, that's my thought. Do you think it's the movement?

PC: I don't know what it is. I'm not aware of what it is. I just think that it is – I just don't get it. I don't get it.

RH: I think it was Toni Morrison because a lot of my work is African-American, but she said, "We are infantilizing adults, and we're fetishizing children." That's what she said. "We are infantilizing adults and fetishizing children." I don't think that's the Left.

PC: I don't know what it is.

RH: I think they're as worried about it as the Right. [laughter]

PC: I don't know where it is. I don't know where it's coming from. All I know is that I worry about that.

RH: I think turning to our religious values is important, but I want to be careful about how we do it. I watch some Right movements do it by really reestablishing some very patriarchal systems, and I watch the human rights movement in a lot of countries try to say women who are trying to gain their human rights, that that's just some Western feminist thing. You must have run into that.

PC: Oh, that, all the time. All the time. That, all the time.

RH: [laughter] That could be another chapter we could talk about.

PC: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

RH: [laughter] Because I know you've seen that, and you've had to be in solidarity with Muslim women about that.

PC: Right, right. No, those ideals – I mean, those principles are things that I think –these are various principles that we were talking about – are, I think, inviolate, and I don't know how we get them. I don't know how our society co-opts them to –

RH: Well, it's to sell a product. [laughter]

PC: But where are the women? Where is the woman? I mean, this is what I was saying. I think women are so incredible. I don't understand how they don't get into their own sense that they're being sold. I don't understand it. Where is their integrity? Where is their own self –? Don't they see?

RH: Well, what happens with these – the biggest thing I tell kids, the way I bring home the Women's Movement, is I say, "In 1970, I couldn't have my own credit card without my husband's permission." [laughter] How do you bring it home when – one of our gifts to this generation is that your daughter doesn't have to fight in quite the same way.

PC: For sure. [inaudible] There's no question. But what it's done?

RH: Right. But the socializing into more and more and consumer, consumer. I do feel that there's a kind of way that citizenship is almost becoming consumerism.

PC: No, everything is. [inaudible]

RH: The country's in trouble. Let's go buy more. What? [laughter] I do believe grassroots movements are one of the ways out, and also religious movements. I want us to be careful about our religious movements trying to go back to a romantic time that never existed, which is a fundamentalist version of a religious movement.

PC: Now, I don't necessarily believe in – well, from my point of view, I don't believe it's a movement. I'm not involved in a movement to build a grassroots movement. What I am trying to do – personally, I don't believe in a movement anyway, but I personally, what I

try to do, and I'm not apologizing, I'm explaining – what we have done is set up like an educational system. We're not trying to change people [or] what they do, we're not trying to make people quote-unquote "religious." Our goal of our organization or our program here is to educate people, because they don't know anything. I mean, I didn't know anything. So ours is education.

RH: I didn't mean to imply that your education program was like that, at all.

PC: No. I also am very nervous about some of the ulterior motives of some of these groups. But on a personal – it's the personal issues – a person's right to believe something, a person's right to live the Constitution the way – I don't know – it was created. The magnificent freedoms this country affords and the right for people to be able to do what they need to do. But I'm very suspect of other people's rights being subverted in that way, which is, I think, what you're saying, and that scares me.

RH: I am concerned.

PC: That scares me.

RH: Right. [laughter]

PC: I don't know.

RH: I'm not a –

[END OF INTERVIEW]