Involvement in the Soviet Jewry Movement
A Personal Account, 1961-1978

Interviews with Louis Rosenblum by Daniel Rosenblum

Preface

In 1989, my son, Daniel, embarked on a family history project: a series of taped interviews with my wife, Evy, and me on life experiences and accomplishments. A decade and 40 hours of recorded interviews later, the project came to an end. The subject matter of the final 10 hours of interviews was my involvement in the Soviet Jewry movement.

Each interview session was recorded on cassette tape. Later, the tapes were transcribed to digital text files. The transcripts, however, required some editing. First, there was the occasional repetition of topic, inevitable in the course of 4-years of multiple interview sessions (1996-1999); these, I consolidated. Second, and most important, was the question of the reliability of my memory for dates and events from 20 or more years earlier. On carefully review, I found instances where my recollection may have been inaccurate, incomplete, or lacked a crucial nuance. In all such cases, I resolved the uncertainty by consulting a trove of primary records from the period of interest, which are archived at the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH. And, as appropriate, I corrected the text.

In conclusion, I wish to express my profound appreciation to Daniel for his ambitious project. His was the wit to conceive and the grit to complete.
״שמח אב בן חכם״, "A wise son gladdens a father", Proverbs 10:1.

Guide to the interlocutors:
Italic font = Daniel Rosenblum
Regular font = Louis Rosenblum

DR: Today is August 13, 1996 and we are continuing the Rosenblum oral history project. Today I am interviewing Louis Rosenblum, and we're going to continue to examine an important aspect of his life, which we haven't touched on in any detail up until now, and that is his involvement in the Soviet Jewry movement. I guess for as long as I can remember you were always involved, you were always active in Soviet Jewry. I was born in 1961, so by the time I was old enough where I still have memories, you were very involved. I always remember it as being a constant part of your life, a constant part of our lives, and something that you cared passionately about, devoted a lot of time and energy to. It was as much your job, as far as I saw, as your 9 to 5 job at NASA. Why don't you just explain a little bit about how you came to be involved?

LR: It began innocently enough in a discussion group. In 1961, several of us at Beth Israel-The West Temple organized a social action discussion group that met occasionally with the idea of informing ourselves on current Jewish issues. Herb Caron and Dan Litt were initiators. As you may recall, Herb is a clinical psychologist and at that time was at the VA hospital. As long as I've known Herb, he had a itch to influence events. Dan Litt who, then, was rabbi of our congregation, felt it important that we reach out, beyond the confines of Beth Israel, to the larger Jewish community. And, there were a few others: Don Bogart, Dave Gitlin, Bob Steinberg and myself. After about a year of reading and examination of several issues, we zeroed in on Soviet Jewry.

DR: If I understood you correctly, it sounds like the original intent was more to study issues and understand them, or was it also to take action on them? Was that considered part of the original idea?

LR: Certainly. Action was part of the idea. Action was to be the outcome of our deliberations. I should stress that the Holocaust figured prominently in our background studies. We returned to it again and again. We asked ourselves why was there so little response to the dire plight of Jews in Europe, not only from governments but from the Jewish community in the United States, as well. For me, the most striking piece on that subject was by Chaim Greenberg: a writer, a journalist, a scholar — a man of considerable talents. His angry, anguished essay, Bankrupt, published in the February 1943 issue of the Yiddishe Kemfer, castigated the contemporary American Jewish leadership for continuing their "normal behavior of in-fighting and advantage-seeking," one organization over the other, rather than unifying to create a political force that could have been instrumental in saving more European Jews from the Nazis.

From the Holocaust studies we turn to the question is there, nowadays, a major Jewish population under threat? This was 1963, and that question led us quickly to the plight of Soviet Jews. Here was a population of Jews, estimated to be about 3 million, well over a quarter of world Jewry, whose survival appeared to be in jeopardy. Anti-Semitism was widespread in the Soviet Union, much of it orchestrated by the government. Moreover, Jewish cultural and religious expression was suppressed. The future for Soviet Jews appeared grim. It seemed to us that denied the opportunity for cultural expression they might well disappear as a distinct people, in a generation or two; or worst, a campaign of anti-Semitic pogroms and mass resettlement to camps in Siberia would result in

their physical destruction, in a relatively short time.

DR: What were your sources of information then? How did you know it was a problem?

LR: There were a number of articles and books that had been published by academics and by visitors to the Soviet Union. All in all, there was a respectable body of contemporary personal accounts and reports by experts. Among these were books by Israeli diplomats who had spent considerable time in the Soviet Union. You'll recall that in 1948 the Soviet Union had voted in the UN in favor of recognition of the State of Israel and had established diplomatic relations. From that time, there were Israeli diplomatic representatives in Moscow until the infamous "Doctors' Plot", in 1953, when Stalin expelled the Israelis. After Stalin's death, political relations with Israel resumed. So, Israeli observers were in an almost continuous position to assess the condition of Soviet Jews.

One important publication that documented Soviet anti-Semitic activity comes to mind. It was a 1964 report by the International Commission of Jurists that examined economic crimes in the Soviet Union, for the period 1961 through the middle of 1964. Economic crimes, in the USSR, in that period, included theft and embezzlement of state and public property, trade in foreign currency and gold, giving and taking of bribes, and operating a private enterprise. For such offenses, special decrees provided a maximum imprisonment of up to 15 years or death by shooting — a capital sentence! The economic crime trials were conducted as 'show trials,' with attendant public propaganda campaigns. The report covers one or more show trials held in Moscow, Frunze, Riga, Kishinev, Odessa, Chernovtsy, Khmelnitski, Kiev, and trials in Tashkent and Byelorussia. In carefully measured words, the report

concluded that — and I quote from the report: "the number of Jews receiving death sentences and severe terms of imprisonment is greatly disproportionate to their numbers as a minority group…It is a tragedy for the Soviet Jewish people that they have been made the scapegoat for the transgression of those whose guilt it would be dangerous to make public."

Then, there were other anti-Semitic campaigns. Egregious government publications depicted Jews, as had the Nazis. In many instances the authorities merely lifted and recycled Anti-Semitic cartoons from Hitler's Germany and the captions were altered to suit Soviet purposes. The books and newspapers from Soviet publishing houses regularly characterized Jews as alien and inimical to Soviet society. Here was a government blatantly peddling rank hatred. And, if that were not enough, Soviet Jews suffered in everyday life the nasty effects of popular anti-Semitism: hatred rooted in Russian history.

To top it all, there was cultural deprivation. From Stalin's time on, the Jews were essentially denied access to Jewish culture, including religious expression. Jewish theaters, publications, newspapers were forbidden. And, the Jewish intelligentsia — a large and talented group of individuals — were effectively wiped out, overnight, executed or imprisoned by Stalin. In areas of large Jewish concentration, many synagogues had been forcibly close down and the remaining few were under the effective control by State vetted officials. Minyanim, private prayer meetings in homes, were banned. No Hebrew bibles or prayer books had been allowed published, since 1917.

Before we move on, I should mention two additional sources of information on the situation of Soviet Jewry. One was Moshe Decter, who headed the Minorities Research Institute, a one-man

operation in New York City that did research and prepared articles and arranged public forums of experts and distinguished individuals to examine the Soviet Jewry issue. For example, Moshe organized a mock trial where charges were brought against the Soviet Union. Individuals from academia and government acted as the attorneys together with others who acted as witnesses. He also organized a Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews, in New York in October 1963, which issued a 7-point appeal to the conscience of the Soviet leader. Both events received good news coverage because of the prominent people involved.

The other source was Maurice Samuel. Now if you recall, Maurice Samuel was a writer, scholar, translator and lecturer. He was a person for whom I had high regard. I'd read many of his books. Mom and I had heard him lecture any number of times at the Hillel at Ohio State University, as well as other places. I forget now who it was, whether Herb or Dan, who suggested we visit him in New York. Arrangements were made and off we went. At that time Samuel was in the midst of writing a book on the Beilis blood libel trial in Russia that took place in 1913. While in his apartment, I was struck by the entire wall of shelves in the living room filled with photocopies of the original Russian transcripts of the Beilis trial. He told us that he knew no Russian to start with; but set himself to learn the language, in order to tackle the primary documents.

We described what we were doing and asked for his assessment of the Soviet Jewish situation. He confirmed all that we had concluded ourselves. The situation was dire and, as far as he knew, there was very little being done; but there must be, if Jews were to survive as Jews in the Soviet Union. I remember one parting piece of advice. It stuck with me. And it proved important in my later organizing efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews. He said, "If you want to work on this problem, you must burn with a cool enthusiasm." By that he

meant that the problem would not be resolved quickly or easily. Burn, but burn coolly.

DR: If you burn hot, you're going to burn out.

LR: Right. You'll end up a cinder. He understood the situation very well, the magnitude of the difficulties.

DR: Today is September 21, 1996, and we are continuing with the Rosenblum oral history project with Lou Rosenblum. When we last talked, it was just a month or two ago, and we were talking about the Soviet Jewry movement and your early involvement in it. Why don't we pick right up from where we left off? You had just described your visit with Maurice Samuel in New York. I gather that in the Cleveland area specifically you were seeing what was going on, in what way you could get the community there involved.

LR: Yes, our earliest interest focused on the Cleveland Jewish Federation and its Community Relations Committee. We made an effort to contact Federation and find out what they knew of the issue, whether it had been discussed internally, had directives come down from national organizations concerning Soviet Jewry; and, had programs been contemplated, or committees set up to address the Soviet Jewry issue? We were surprised to learn that nothing of substance was planned, neither the distribution of information to the community, or the establishment of a special subcommittee to investigate issues related to Soviet Jewry and make recommendations to the Federation. In short, it was not on the Federation's radar screen. We — and when I say we, it was mainly at that time Herb Caron who was carrying the ball — appealed to them to take a stand, at least to set up a committee that would look into the issue and then, if some action was decided on, it could

be carried out within the structure of the Federation.

The Federation — the executive leadership of the Federation, that is — did take this under advisement; and a Subcommittee on Soviet Jewry under the Community Relations Committee was set up. They appointed a chairperson for that subcommittee, one of their lay volunteers. Such an appointment typically was someone active in Federation, which usually meant active in fund-raising. Then, a member of the Federation staff, who handled most of the work of the committee, would be assigned to support the chairperson. For meetings, the staffer would arrange and clear dates. The staffer would set up the agenda, do most of the organizational work, any research that was needed, and so on. In this instance, it turned out to be somewhat of a token committee. We found out in short order that the person appointed as chairman was persuaded that Soviet Jewry was not an especially important issue.

DR: How did he communicate to you the fact that he didn't think it was a problem?

LR: At the first meeting he announced himself as having that position. So here was the chairman of the subcommittee with a lack of conviction that it had much value. To us, it appeared to be a ploy to placate a bunch of *nudniks*. We didn't feel that the Federation was taking the issue or us seriously. Now it was true that we were coming from left field, from nowhere, as far as they were concerned. We had little standing in the community. We certainly weren't big donors. We were people with small reputations. Herb worked at the VA Hospital as a psychologist. Dan Litt was a rabbi of a small congregation on the West Side of Cleveland, and I was just one of many scientists at the NASA laboratory. We really didn't expect they were going to roll over for us, but we thought they would at least be honest, and we would have a level playing field.

DR: How long did it take you to conclude that this was useless? Just one meeting of the committee?

LR: A few meetings, I suppose. We saw that little practical value was forthcoming. For example, the sub-committee did agree to establish a speakers' bureau. However, when push came to shove, it was the efforts of Don Bogart and Dave Gitlin of Beth Israel that produced a slide lecture on Soviet Jewry and then arranged for speakers — all from Beth Israel — to give presentations to various organizations in the Cleveland area. We concluded that, if there were to be serious action, it would have to come from us.

DR: This was in 1963, I gather.

LR: Yes, it was in '63, and in the latter part of that year. In fact in October, we formally organized the Cleveland Committee on Soviet Anti-Semitism. Herb and Dan were instrumental in lining up a number of people for the board of directors. As honorary chairman they enlisted Ralph Locher, the Mayor of Cleveland. Other members were Msgr. Cahill, President of St. Johns College, Bruce Whittemore, director of the Cleveland Area Church Federation, and Leo Jackson, a prominent Black and a member of the Cleveland City Council. We had, on paper, a very impressive organization, which helped us go out and stir up things a bit. When you have the support of prominent people in the community, you're taken more seriously.

DR: Did you have any prominent Jews on the board?

LR: Yes, Rabbi Phil Horowitz. He, at that time, was associate rabbi at Fairmont Temple and a staunch supporter. Herb took on the job

of executive secretary to the board. Now, with a letterhead and an honorary board, the Committee was off and running. In November, we distributed our first publication, 'Soviet Terror Against Jews: How Cleveland Initiated An Interfaith Protest', containing a description of the Soviet Jewish problem, how we were working to address the problem, and an 'Appeal to Conscience to Soviet Leaders' that we requested the reader sign and return to us. And, about the same time we placed a large ad in the Cleveland newspapers with the 'Appeal to Conscience' as a clip-out return coupon for an endorsement signature. In April 1964, a second publication, 'To the Leaders of the Soviet Union', was distributed containing a letter to Khrushchev and the names and addresses of over 600 signers of the Appeal to Conscience.

All this brought us attention from the press and from people all over: not only from Cleveland, but elsewhere in the States. As we gained visibility, our mailing list grew. People who heard of us wanted to receive our periodic mailings. Within two years we had a significant national list and over time it expanded to a list of international correspondents. Looking back, it seems to me somewhat bizarre, that our small group was in contact with people in New York, Los Angeles, Podunk and wherever, who were seeking information, advice and to exchange experiences with kindred souls. We had no office. We would meet periodically in Herb's house, for want of a better place.

DR: Did your letterhead give an address?

LR: Yes, it gave Herb's address on Evergreen Drive in Parma — hardly the navel of the world. But, we were committed to doing what we could. We felt driven, because the more we talked to others, within and outside of Cleveland, the more we realized how

little was being done.

DR: I wanted to ask one thing to clarify your thoughts at that time, as best you can remember them. As I understand what you're saying then, the focus in this initial period of your concern was on the anti-Semitism being conducted as part of Soviet government policy, or just the general conditions, and the treatment of Jews, not for example emigration. Emigration had not entered as an issue at this point.

LR: Right. At the beginning, emigration had not entered as a central issue.

DR: We're just talking about the plight of Jews living in the Soviet Union and the fact that they were threatened with either extinction or persecution.

LR: Let me try to elaborate a bit on our understanding and perspective at that time. Our principal focus was Soviet anti-Semitism. We did recognize that there were other evils facing the Jews in the Soviet Union. Among these was cultural deprivation. In other words, Jews could not culturally retain their identity as Jews. Hebrew was forbidden as a language. As for Yiddish, it could be found only in government-controlled publications. The abundant pre- and early-Soviet Yiddish publications, on every conceivable subject, weren't available in libraries or obtainable in bookstores. Religious practice was actively discouraged. Jews faced a quota system in schools of higher education. And, the possibility of reuniting with family members who had emigrated decades before was, for all intents and purposes, denied. But, we felt that, given the present government-inspired anti-Semitism, deterioration of economic conditions in the USSR might well lead to a tragic fate for Soviet Jewry. And, in view of Soviet history, replete with accounts

of mass purges and labor camps, such a possibility was not a wild jump of imagination.

DR: So you formed a Committee on Soviet Anti-Semitism in late '63. Then at some point in 1964 there was another sort of watershed event in the formation of the Soviet Jewry movement. A conference was held in Washington. Do you want to give the background to that?

LR: There was among the national Jewish organizations some ferment over the question of what could be done, or should be done, for Soviet Jews.

DR: And the ferment wasn't just coming from you in Cleveland?

LR: That's right. It had begun quietly — in the sense that the general Jewish public didn't know of it. In September 1963, Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, after reading accounts about Soviet Jewry, invited Senators Ribicoff and Javits to meet with him to discuss what might be done. This was followed by a meeting with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and, subsequently, with President Kennedy at the end of October. Goldberg reported that the President had considerable prior knowledge of the issue of Soviet Jewry. Kennedy suggested, as a first step, that Goldberg and the senators meet with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. Kennedy personally arranged for the meeting. As one might expect, Dobrynin denied any problem existed for Jews in the Soviet Union. Then in November, at Goldberg's suggestion, a meeting to discuss the matter of Soviet Jewry was held with representatives of leading American Jewish organizations. He informed them his concerns and filled them in on his earlier meetings with the President and others. Goldberg presented his conclusion that silence in the matter of

Soviet Jewry was not desirable; on the contrary, responsible action was very much in order.

Apparently, Goldberg's meeting with the Jewish establishment reinforced their resolve to get going on Soviet Jewry. A few weeks earlier, prodded by Rabbi Uri Miller and Rabbi Abraham Heschel, they had met and agreed to bring together resources for public action and education. This led to convening an ad hoc conference on Soviet Jewry in April 1964. The establishment's difficulties in getting moving had to do mainly with organizational prerogatives and jealousies. Remember, we have three independent Jewish defense organizations in the United States: the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Each may have seen the Soviet Jewry issue as a potential opportunity to expand its agenda, its fund raising and its importance. On the other hand, each was already heavily committed to other issues — at that time the major issue being the fight for black civil rights. Furthermore, they had never been able cooperate by agreeing to parcel out responsibility and eliminate replication of effort. A defense organization that didn't want to take on an issue also was loath to see another defense organization jump in and take the lead.

The Zionists organizations wanted more done to push Soviet Jewry issue, since their hope was that eventually Jews might be allowed to leave the Soviet Union for Israel. That would further their agenda. But, in general, they seemed to be waiting for others to take the lead. Among the religious organizations, Agudas Israel and the Lubavitcher Hasidic movement were deeply concerned about Soviet Jews but were adamant in holding to the *shtadlonus* approach — quiet diplomacy.

Then there was the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, which was the umbrella organization created to support the local community relations councils found in major cities in the

United States. The local Community Relations Council (CRC) in earlier times was an independent community organizations. Eventually most of these councils were subsumed within the local Jewish Community Federation, as happened in Cleveland. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council had an interest in the Soviet Jewry issue because they saw themselves as having a role, particularly at the community level. But, the Jewish defense organizations viewed such a role as poaching in their domain.

So here we have national organizations that knew of the plight of Soviet Jews, but each having their own parochial concerns and interests to maintain. Well, the upshot was they couldn't come to any agreement. When you can't come to agreement, what do you do? You do nothing. And, that was about the situation when we entered on the scene.

DR: A stalemate.

LR: A stalemate. But, then there appeared a hope of movement. An ad hoc conference was called for April of 1964. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council was appointed to organize the conference. They requested the major Jewish organizations to appoint delegates to attend what was titled an American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry.

We learned of the Conference and believed it could be a golden opportunity. First, to learn more: there were plans to have major speakers, experts on the issue, as well as political figures. Then, we could meet others with an interest in Soviet Jewry. Perhaps people we hadn't learned of? At that time there was no communication between interest groups on Soviet Jewry. There was no such a network. We applied through the Union of American Hebrew

Congregations to be among the delegates from Cleveland. Well, that was no big deal because there weren't people beating on their door saying, "You've got to put us on the list." So we came as official delegates of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The Conference was held in Washington, D.C. People came from all over, representing every Jewish organization. I don't recall the exact number, but there about 500. The meeting was carefully orchestrated and laid out. The agenda and all were mailed to participants weeks ahead. Included was a list of resolutions for national follow-up to be voted on at the close of the meeting. There were the expected resolutions on programs and actions, such as a national day of prayer. However, what caught our eye was the final resolution, number 14. It stated that after adjournment of the Conference, the presidents of the national Jewish organizations would meet to consider how to implement plans set out by the Conference.

DR: Today is September 21, 1996, and I'm continuing to interview Lou Rosenblum about the Soviet Jewry movement. Why don't you just continue from where we left off? You were talking about this American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry.

LR: I was talking about the resolutions. Resolution 14 looked to us like a continuing cop-out. We fully expected there would be no action by the presidents of the national Jewish organizations to create a national organization to lead the fight for Soviet Jews. So, well before we left Cleveland, we drafted a new resolution to create a national Soviet Jewry organization, which would continue the work of the Conference. Then we wrote or phoned people we knew were concerned about Soviet Jewry, or had a strong interest in Jewish affairs and were planning to attend the Conference. We

communicated to all our trepidations about a lack of follow-on to the conference, asked their support and sent them a copy of our draft resolution.

On the opening day of the Conference, even before we arrived at the hotel where the conference was held, we got an indication of the opposition to what we had planned. On our way from the airport we shared a taxi with Rabbi Balfour Brickner. At that time he headed up the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's Social Action Center in Washington.

DR: He met you at the airport?

LR: I'm not certain on that point. Herb or Dan may have written to him that we were coming. Or, he might have been returning from an out-of-town trip. It's not important. We were all together — Herb, Dan, Rabbi Brickner and myself — in the taxi, riding from the National Airport to the conference hotel, in downtown Washington. After the usual amenities, Brickner mentioned that he'd seen a copy of our proposed resolution. And he added, "Do you think it wise?" After a bit of back and forth discussion, he came to the point, "Look, I may personally think what you're doing is right, but this is going to cause too many problems for UAHC organizationally." And, he asked us to cool it.

DR: And you were supposed to be their Union of American Hebrew Congregations delegates from Cleveland?

LR: Yes. He was giving us the official line. In my mind I was looking at this guy and thinking, Ha, 'Mister Social Action' and that's how you behave!

At the hotel the three of us we quickly separated to engage other

delegates. We tried to explain the needs as we saw them — the need to jump-starting local activities in support of Soviet Jews and the need to create a national organization to support and coordinate local efforts. Our lobbying, I believe, was quite persuasive. To make a long story short, after all the official resolutions were passed, we offered our resolution from the floor. There was a vigorous attempt by the chairman to quash the resolution as not admissible. There was shouting and noise from the floor— "Is this a democratic meeting? What are you trying to pull off?" Finally the chair agreed to entertain our resolution. The resolution was seconded and passed by an overwhelming vote.

DR: Was this a voice vote, people who—

LR: Yes. It was a voice vote, and it was mind-blowing. There were hundreds of people shouting, yes! Following the vote, we felt elated, because we had beat the system, or so we thought. On the floor there was general commotion. The chairman of the conference was Isaiah Minkoff, the professional head of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, an old-line communal worker with a solid reputation. He was up in age — must have been in his 60s, or older. He was fuming. Gaveling the meeting to order, Minkoff pronounced his judgment, "This is perverse. A bunch of Bundists have come here and overturned the Conference." Bundists? I didn't even know what a Bundist was in those days. I wondered, "What the hell is he talking about?" Later, after I educated myself on Russian-Jewish history, I realized he was of an age to have participated, as a young man in Russia, in fights between the Zionists and the Bundists. His anger may have cause an old epithet to surface.

DR: Just to make sure I understand, there was a resolution saying that this conference should be transformed into an ongoing

organization.

LR: Yes, our resolution was in the end folded into resolution 14 which then read, "Immediately upon the adjournment of this Conference, the Presidents of the co-sponsoring national Jewish organizations will meet for the purpose of considering how best to assure that the plans set out herein will be systematically implemented. It is our further proposal that the Presidents develop the means of continuing this Conference on an ongoing basis, adequately staffed and financed, to coordinate and implement the resolutions of this Conference."

DR: And so as a result of this resolution, they created the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry.

LR: Yes, the AJCSJ was to be an ongoing entity. We spent time, off and on, over the next six years trying to make the Conference into an effect organization — without success. It was like pounding sand. That story, I'll get to later on.

DR: So during this period you were beginning to realize that you couldn't count on the organized Jewish community, the established Jewish community, to do everything that you wanted to do, to carry forward the objectives that you started to see were necessary to deal with this issue. Because as I understand it, you didn't initially see yourselves as creating a national movement in any way. You wanted to raise consciousness about the problem and maybe prod the established Jewish community into action. But you were obviously, after the experience of this conference, beginning to see that that wasn't going to happen so easily. You may not have given up on it entirely, but it wasn't going to happen so easily. So you were starting to think about your own actions maybe

in a longer time frame, and set goals and objectives for yourselves.

LR: Yes. Let me emphasis that, at first, we did not give up on the organized Jewish community. I've gone back through my files of correspondence and found abundant correspondence with people in the organized Jewish community, at all levels. The content covered everything from general to highly specific issues and ideas, showing my attempts to stimulate, to goad, to encourage them into doing more on Soviet Jewry, within their realm of responsibility. For example, I kept after Julius Schatz, the head of the cultural department of the American Jewish Congress, to prepare materials and programs for use in schools and summer camps for educating Jewish youngsters about Soviet Jewry. (Mind you, he had earlier arranged for the production of such material and programs on the subject of Israel and the Israelis.) But, nothing ever came of it. At national and regional establishment conferences others and I persistently expressed our specific concerns and encouraged greater effort. If I look back over that period — I'm talking about from 1964 to 1968 — and ask, was much gained? I would have to say it was not commensurate with our exertions.

During these years my hope that the establishment could be moved to take a more vigorous line of action on Soviet Jewry faded. I came to recognize that, if they would not, we in the grass roots would have to lead, as best we could. If so we would have to focus on a few essentials. High on the list was the need to find and establish a relationship with individuals, beyond Cleveland, who were, or aspired to be, activists for Soviet Jewry in their community.

DR: Building up a network.

LR: Exactly. Establishing a network of like-minded people. People who saw an imperative need to work on the issue and were willing

to devote significant effort to it. In Cleveland, all of us were volunteers, working on the Soviet Jewry issue part time, and I expected that I would find the like elsewhere in the U.S. As a matter of fact, over the years, I did come across many such individuals and we were able build and maintain an effective network.

However, in the early days, equally important and more immediate was the need to publicize the Soviet Jewry issue. Although I pushed on the establishment people to do more on this score, I moved out on my own to produce educational materials and develop techniques to make the public aware the plight of Soviet Jews. I'll tell you more about this later on.

And, for the long run, a plan was needed for the end game — the most effective way to deal with the Soviet Jewry problem to arrive at the desired outcome. Let me talk about this now because my thinking began quite early. I consolidated my thoughts on strategy in a letter I wrote May 17, 1965, to Dr. Louis Nemzer, professor of history at Ohio State University. I became acquainted with Nemzer when I was asked to speak at an event in Columbus. He was a Jew actively involved, not only at the university, but also in the Columbus community. I wrote to share with him of my ideas. Let me quote briefly a passage from my letter: "We in Cleveland are operating on the premise that vital to the solution of this problem is, first, that the United States government be on record as condemning Soviet anti-Semitic practices, and that second, the U.S. government be prepared, at the appropriate time, to exact concessions from the Soviet leaders involving their cessation of anti-Jewish policies."

I go on to say that, to bring this about public opinion must first be

developed on the issue so that political pressure can be brought on our government to speak out and act.

I didn't believe the Soviet Union would be impressed to alter their policies by hundreds, or even thousands, of Americans demonstrating for human rights. It has been famously reported that on hearing that the Pope had denounced him, Stalin mockingly inquired, "And how many legions does the Pope have?" I believed it would take time to build significant public awareness and pressure on our government. But, in the long run, it would be most effective means of moving our government to act. And, action by the U.S. could not be ignored by the Soviets.

DR: So this was the long-term strategy, you might say, that you had formulated, the ultimate goal, working backwards from how can you actually help alleviate the situation. The only way to do it is to get the Soviet government to change its policies, and the only way to do that is for the U.S. government to bring pressure on them. The only way that the U.S. government will bring pressure on them is if we can bring political pressure domestically to bear on the U.S. government. So all the other things that we associate, and I associate, with the Soviet Jewry movement, in terms of helping Soviet Jews themselves by publicizing their case or by giving them aid and comfort in some way, or the kind of what you refer to as more the grassroots human rights pressures of writing letters directly to Soviet officials from just citizens, those kinds of campaigns, those were all means to the ultimate end. Those developed as mechanisms to get to this final goal.

LR: It important to recognize that these were not only means to an end. These activities were, in themselves, of value when they were carried out. They gave an important boost to the morale of Soviet Jews, particularly the activists. It showed them they were not

alone. It also boosted the morale of people in this country who worked on the issue. I quickly realized that it was vital to keep up the spirit of those working day by day in the movement. They had to feel that what they were doing was productive and that there were small victories and successes along the way.

DR: What, if any, sources of inspiration did you have from other social movements? I'm wondering whether, in terms of the tactics you adopted, not so much the long-term strategy. I'm thinking in terms of how you set things up, how you organized. Did you have models in, say, the civil rights movement or other causes?

LR: Yes, we did. You mentioned the civil rights movement. Also there were the protests over the war in Vietnam. And, there were student movements in colleges across the country — a great upheaval, dissatisfaction with the educational system and resentment toward authority. The tactics used by these movements were demonstrations, confrontations, street theater, sit-ins, teach-ins. These same techniques we and others associated with the Soviet Jewry movement adopted at one time or another.

DR: Why don't you talk a little bit about some of your early organizing activities, what you did locally in Cleveland, in particular? How you built the organization?

LR: The organization, as I indicated before, started off as a letterhead-organization riding on the credibility provided by prominent board members who lent us their names. But it was not an organization with a significant membership. There were a handful of members from Beth Israel and a few from the East Side, friends of Dan and Herb. It was evident we had to increase our membership and our range of activities, if we be an effective force

in the community. About January 1965, we changed our name to Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism (CCSA). I suppose, at the time, 'committee' had a less permanent sound to us than 'council'. I temporarily assumed the role of executive manager and recruited Abe Silverstein (Associate Director of the NACA Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory) as chairman of our board. And, in a very short order, thanks to a single event, we markedly increase our membership.

That event was a community rally jointly sponsored by the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland and the Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism. We had been *noudging* the Federation that we needed an event to bring to the attention of people in the Greater Cleveland area what was happening to Jews in the Soviet Union. They finally agreed. The Federation provided financing and they and we provided the organizing and the arrangements for speakers. The Federation engaged Heights High School auditorium, a large auditorium, centrally located in an area of major Jewish settlement — a great choice. And, the rally, billed as "A Community-wide Rally to Protest Soviet Anti-Semitism" was held March 7, 1965.

It turned out that the attendance was overwhelming — a crowd of 2200. They couldn't all find seating in the 2000-seat auditorium. The overflow moved into the hallways of the building. Loud speakers were quickly placed in the hallways. This outpouring of interest was a revelation to us. It showed that concern for Soviet Jews was latent among ordinary American Jews — there was a desire to learn what was happening to fellow Jews in the Soviet Union.

The program went very well. We had a number of speakers. As the principal speaker we invited George Lieberman, a New York rabbi

who was quite knowledgeable about Soviet Jewry. Prominent Protestant and Catholic religious leaders provided expression of concern. And, a number of political figures — local, county and state…

DR: Congressmen?

LR: No congressman. There was Ohio State Senator Keating and several local politicos.

For the CCSA, the immediate outcome was great. We come out of the event with over 500 new members! All because, beforehand, we took the brilliant step — brilliant, in retrospect — of printing up CCSA membership applications and inserting them in the program booklet given to each attendee.

DR: People sent the applications in?

LR: Yep, they sure did — 500 plus dues-paying new members. So for us it was a first major step in educating the Cleveland Jewish community about Soviet Jewry; and, a step in informing the community that there was an organization dedicated to working on the problem. For us it was a success. We acquired a constituency, enough money to operate with so we didn't have to spend time *schnorring*. It wasn't a great sum but, since all of us were volunteers, it took care of basic needs for materials and supplies. It was a great encouragement. We felt we could now parlay this success into even larger ones. Perhaps, if we hadn't had such an early success, we might have become discouraged. Whether terminally discouraged or not, I don't know, but I think it would have been very hard to continue for long without a large number of supporters in the community. And, of course, the membership grew

over time.

DR: What other organizing activities did you undertake then? Once you had gotten a better membership base, you moved on to specific programs, specific educational efforts.

LR: It gave us the opportunity to carryout larger action programs. For example, we had wanted to engage the several Soviet cultural groups that visited Cleveland each year, such as ballet companies, orchestras, soloists and lecturers. We planned to use their presence as an opportunity to request that they take back to their government our petition of concern for the plight of Jews in the USSR. We saw such encounters as having two major effects. First, we knew that if we met with individuals from the cultural group, a report of the meeting would certainly get back to the Soviet government. Why? Because accompanying each and every Soviet group was one or more KGB watchdogs. The 'chaperone's' job was to keep tabs on the group, prevent defection and ideological contamination. Our message and actions were certain to be in the KGBnik's report to his superiors. Second, the news report on the confrontation in the local papers and on radio news would provide more exposure to the Soviet Jewry issue.

DR: Did you ever get negative feedback from people here in the community about some of those things? For example, did you ever get people saying, "Why are you picking on these poor dancers? They're not responsible."

LR: It's a good question. We explained that our intent was not to single out the cultural group for condemnation or to embarrass its members. Our message was for their government. Then, for the political savvy questioner, we explained that the reality was that the Soviet groups were in this country as part of a bilateral cultural exchange program — a program that had been carefully negotiated

between their government and the government of the U.S., for political purposes. So, for better or worse, the members of the cultural group were, indeed, representatives of their government. And, therefore, we believed it appropriate to ask them to take our message back to their government — a message in the form of a written petition to the leaders of the Soviet Union. It was hardly an henious request.

DR: Did you have pickets? Would you go outside with signs?

LR: No, We didn't want to picket the theater or lecture hall, since our target was not the cultural group but their government. What we did do was pass out to attendees, as they entered the hall from the street, a little printed piece that looked like a program for the event. Inside this 'program', we gave a brief summary of the plight of Soviet Jews and a copy of the petition to the Soviet government that we would present to the Soviet cultural group that evening. Of course, we notified the press ahead of time that we were going to be there and that we would present a petition to the group to take back to their government. At the beginning, such actions were not common in Cleveland, so we did get good attention from the press. As the Black civil rights movement grew and student ferment blossomed in the colleges, protest of all sorts became more general.

DR: Anti-war.

LR: As I recall, anti-war protest and all the rest peaked in the late '60s and early '70s. When we started in '64, protests were still new enough to the Cleveland community that they did get attention in the press. We got good press and supportive editorials. So we were able to make progress on one of our important objectives. For these events, we usually tried to involve a large number of people,

members and non-members. There usually was a delegation of maybe six or seven that went in to see the performers backstage or where ever the opportunity presented itself. Then there were people who would pass out the 'programs'. We tried to cover every Soviet cultural event that came to town. We did covered, I think, most of them. And in many cases the Federation joined with us and, eventually, did it by themselves. This was a success of another kind — bringing the Federation into a greater level of involvement.

DR: You must have already been doing direct lobbying of people in Congress or local political officials, or at least contacting them and trying to educate them, because the fact that they came to that rally you had, that event in March of '65 and so on, indicates that there was already some kind of a political education effort going on.

LR: Well, there was some. We did contact local Congressmen such as, James Stanton and Charles Vanik about Soviet Jewry and our CCSA stationery listed Vanik as a member of our Board. But, political we didn't work much beyond the Cleveland area at that point in time, because we lacked an extensive national reach; that came later.

DR: So your effort was more on raising general public awareness and getting stories in the media and so on. Were you doing anything educationally, trying to get things into the religious schools and synagogues?

LR: Yes. In fact, I concentrated a good deal of effort in producing Soviet Jewry material, educational and action-oriented, for use by communities small and large. I created the handbook that you, Daniel, were involved with (sound of booklet being pulled out). You

were one of the people who helped assembled the pages of this book. I don't know if you remember.

DR: I have a vague memory of that.

LR: You were fairly young at the time.

DR: This is a collection of essays, articles—

LR: And then pieces that I wrote on action programs — how to go about it, which ones we found to be successful, and general encouragement to get moving.

DR: It looks like what I'm holding here is the third edition of the handbook. It came out in 1970. But the first edition came out in 1965.

LR: Yes. In its early form it was about half that size — about 40 pages. It grew with time, because we — in Cleveland and Soviet Jewry groups elsewhere — learned more about how to carry out effective action projects.

DR: So we have, for example, right near the front here, Passover Poster Project, and you give a specific example of a protest poster that was made by a Soviet Jewry group in San Francisco, in the Bay Area. Then the next one is a protest seal that was a way of "providing the man in the street with a tangible means of expressing his concern for Soviet Jewry." So you're giving people specific suggestions of how to use...

LR: Exactly. I felt that anything short of the concrete suggestions wasn't going to grab people. It had to be something they would feel

was helpful and doable.

DR: And we have here "suggested prayers for incorporation in an appropriate prayer service," prayers that deal specifically with the issues faced by Soviet Jews.

LR: That was directed to rabbis or leaders of a congregation who wished to have a Soviet Jewry Awareness Day and build a service around it.

DR: And then there's a whole section on a teacher's guide, a teaching unit on Soviet Jewry, how to integrate this into a course of study. So it touches on all aspects.

LR: Yes. I realized that any such handbook would have to include all those aspects, if it was to be useful to a broad spectrum of interests. I'm pleased to say that the handbook was purchased by many individuals, organizations and libraries throughout the country. For the third edition, the Cleveland Federation provided us with a special grant to enable us to send free copies to all of the Hillel Foundations on campuses throughout the United States and Canada.

Before we leave this subject, let me read to you part of the introduction that I wrote for the handbook. It appeared in all three editions —1965, 1966 and 1970. I think it captures my convictions and mindset, at that time, better than any memory I might dredge up.

"We are well aware of the irrational, vicious, and pervasive nature of anti-Semitism. The horror of six million Jews murdered by the Nazis still burns in our memory. We remember, too, that world response (including Jewish response) was feeble and disorganized.

"Today in the Soviet Union, anti-Semitism is deliberately cultivated

as a instrument of state policy. The situation of the Soviet Jew is desperate. He is allowed neither to live as a Jew nor leave; he is made the scapegoat for Soviet economic failure. To ameliorate this situation, world concern must be focused on the plight of the Soviet Jew and continuing protests made to the leaders of the USSR. It is our responsibility to redeem the captive. We dare not fail again."

DR: What were some of the other things that you did to publicize the issue during these early years? I remember you made a movie which Miriam [Daniel's sister] had a cameo appearance in as part of a typical Soviet Jewish family. She played the part of the daughter. That was another technique for educating people.

LR: Yes. I started on it in '66. At that time there were only a couple of motion picture films available that dealt with the issue of Soviet Jewry. And, for the most part, they were a bit dated and somewhat stilted.

DR: Who had done those films.

LR: The Chautauqua Society of the UAHC produced one. Edward G. Robinson was cast in the role of prosecuting attorney in a trial scenario with the Soviet Union as the defendant, in absentia. The witnesses for the prosecution were two-dozen prominent individuals testifying on deprivations suffered by Soviet Jews. However, important aspects of the overall problem were missing. And, 24 talking heads in 29 minutes was a bit much.

DR: So you were looking for something…

LR: Something that could be understood by both young and old. And could be used as a springboard, perhaps for an evening

discussion, or just stand on its own as a comprehensive presentation of the plight of Soviet Jewry.

DR: So did you yourself actually help put this film together?

LR: Well, it was my idea to make a film. And naturally, when it's your idea you know you have to take care of all the preliminaries, if you want to get it off the ground (laughter). I found individuals who could take over the several aspects of filmmaking — very capable individuals. First, we required a camera crew and access to the appropriate equipment and laboratory facilities. I was acquainted with the fellow who headed up the motion picture work at the NASA Laboratory in Cleveland: Art Laufman. Art was someone I had worked with before at NASA in making a couple of films related my scientific work. Also, he was a member of our Beth Israel congregation, who had always been willing to volunteer his services. So, I asked him to help out with my filming project. I mentioned it might mean traveling to another city for the filming. Fine, he could do that. Also, he knew where to rent the necessary professional motion picture equipment, as well everything else we would need. He said he could get one or two fellows who worked in his section at NASA to assist, if we paid for their time. With Art on board, I asked Mort Epstein to be artistic director for the movie, to give it substance and spirit in an aesthetically pleasing way. I knew Mort could pull it off. He has a superb talent for getting across a message and a great sense of image and design. He readily agreed. And, I took on the job of producer.

So with the team lined up, I looked around for a personality to take a lead role and who also might help with the script. The person who I thought would be ideal for the job was Elie Wiesel. I knew Elie from an earlier involvement of mine having to do with broadcasting Yiddish language programs into the Soviet Union from pirate stations outside the Soviet Union. I had asked Elie to support us in

that particular effort by lending his name to the project, which he did. Elie had recently visited the Soviet Union, and had profound personal encounters with Soviet Jews, which he described in his book, 'The Jews of Silence'. I thought he would be an excellent person to be our lead.

DR: Incidentally, to interrupt for a minute, where were these pirate stations broadcasting Yiddish going to be located, or did that actually happen?

LR: (Laughs) We identified a few such stations. That is another whole different subject. Don't divert me…. Oh, well, the fellow who conceived and developed that project was a guy by the name of Ron Blum who worked for Voice of America in Washington, D.C. But, that's whole other story.

Back to the movie. I contacted Elie and spoke to him about our movie project and gave him the general outline of what we had in mind. And, asked if he would do two things: one, write the script and then act as narrator throughout, or introduce whatever scenes called for in the script. He indicated he was interested, but he wanted to talk it over. So, Mort and I flew to New York and met with him. And, to make a long story short, he insisted on conditions that, to us, seem unfeasible for filming. He felt that anything he took part in had to be "authentic." And if we, for example, were to present images of present day Soviet Jews, they had to be actual Soviet Jews in the Soviet Union. We saw no way that we could pull off getting all the camera and sound equipment and a filming and a directing crew into the USSR and do filming at several locations, all undetected by the KGB. In 1967, no way!!

DR: Plus you didn't have the resources.

LR: And we certainly didn't have the resources either. We returned

home and regrouped. I reviewed my catalog of prominent figures on the American Jewish scene who had a good understanding of the Soviet Jewry issue. And, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel topped the list. He had been very outspoken on the Soviet Jewry issue. In fact, he incurred the wrath of his colleagues because he was insistent that they must to do more, act more and that Soviet Jewry should be the number one priority of American Jews. He used very strong language — ”We cannot stand by the blood of our brothers.” This was in 1963. Years earlier, I had read his book, ‘The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man’, in which he wrote movingly of Eastern European Jewry and the beauty and glory of its culture. I felt he had the qualities we needed; but, I had no idea how receptive he would be. I gave him a call and was please to learn that he was definitely interested. Soon after, Mort and I paid him a visit in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, where he taught, to discuss the movie and scout out a filming site. On our arrival at the Seminary, he took us directly to his office. This was the office that, during our initial phone conversation, he and I thought might serve for the filming. But his office was absolutely…

DR: A shambles?

LR: No, not a shambles. It was a tiny office. There were bookshelves up to the ceiling on 3 sides. And, his desk, facing the back wall, occupied most of the remaining floor space. There was no way to do the filming there. You couldn’t fit a camera, tripod and cameraman inside. One camera could look in from the hallway through the narrow doorway, but there was no place for a second camera we had planned on. It was unworkable. So, we trotted downstairs and spoke to the chancellor, Rabbi Greenberg. He occupied a large executive office and readily agreed to let us use it for the project. We had our filming site.

On March 10, 1968, Mort, Art, Cliff (cameraman), and I flew to New

York. Art brought along a sound recorder, microphones and a couple of 11-inch cans of color film. The rest of the stuff we picked up in Manhattan. As I recall, we rented two Professional 35 mm cameras; each one in a bulky soundproof enclosure; two heavy tripods and two steel dollies. We needed two cabs to haul us and the paraphernalia. It was a *shlepp*. When the equipment was in place in Rabbi Greenberg's office, Rabbi Heschel joined us. He seated himself behind the desk; Art and Cliff checked out sound levels and cameras. When all was ready for filming, I explained that I had a number of prepared questions for him. The questions were lead-ins to topics I hoped to work into the movie. For the filming, his answer to each question would represent one 'take' or sequence. What followed was impressive and charming. He'd start: "Lou, read me a question" And, I did so. He, then, put his forehead on the desk and remained still for several minutes. Rising up his head leisurely, he looked directly into the camera to his front and said, "ready." The cameras rolled, and he delivered for two minutes, or so, a well worded, concise response to the question — an absolute gem. And so we ran through my entire list of questions with hardly a need to repeat a take. He was that good. The filming went off very well. Our whole operation was accomplished in less than one day: part of a morning and an afternoon.

DR: Now of course you didn't use all this in the film?

LR: No, of course not. We wanted to keep the movie to 25 minutes overall; also, there were sections, other than Rabbi Heschel's, to be included. We felt that too much talk by one individual, no matter how animated and cogent his remarks, was inadvisable. The rest of the film was put together in bits and pieces, edited in an artistic fashion by Mort. He used a lot of visuals, still images that I rounded up for him. For example, I had at home a book photos taken by

Roman Vishniak in Eastern Europe, shortly before the Holocaust — very compelling images of Jews and their communities. From this book, Mort found several he thought he could use. I telephoned Vishniak cold; described our film project, who we were and what we wanted from him. With no hesitation, he suggested that I pay him a visit. A few weeks later I did. When I arrived the door of his Manhattan apartment, he greeted me effusively. His Russian wife, a mothering woman, invited me to join them for lunch. Afterwards, Roman toured me through the apartment. He took great pride in his extensive collection of Asiatic objects — beautiful miniatures and handsome sculptures. Then, almost as an afterthought, he turned to the reason for my visit. I showed him the list of photos Mort had drawn up. "Yes, yes, these I will make for you," he said. And, he was good to his word. A few weeks later, I received the requested photos, made from his original negatives.

Other visual material, I found in old art books. Also, there were photos I had obtained from Israeli sources — photos of the aftermath of pogroms from around the turn of the 19th century and photos of synagogue and Jewish cemetery desecrations in the Soviet period. Then came the process of integrating it all. I composed a script that presented a concise historical flow covering the period from the last Tzars up through the present day Soviet commissars. Dorothy Silver volunteered to do the narration. (Dorothy and her husband, Reuben, are distinguished Cleveland actors.) Lastly, Mort married the images and the narration dramatically. We titled the film Before Our Eyes — "before our eyes a people and a culture are being made to vanish" (an observation made by Rabbi Heschel in the film).

DR: So it had still images associated with it.

LR: Yes, it ended up a production that was part live film footage — Rabbi Heschel's section — and part footage created from still images in the studio. Mort employed, then, the technique that in recent times was used by Ken Burns for his documentaries. By slowly zooming in on or panning across a photograph with the movie camera, the film produced gives the viewer a sense of movement.

Now, for money to cover the cost of the production, we turned to the Cleveland Jewish Federation.

DR: That's interesting. How did you manage to do that?

LR: Well, that was one of the fruits of an agreement we worked out with the Federation in 1966. Already, by '66, we had established a significant presence in the community; we had generated a good deal of activity and press. So we were not altogether surprised when, in May, Sid Vincent, the executive director of Federation, contact us about meeting to chew over our roles in the community. Abe Silverstein and I met with Sid and his staff. And, out of that meeting came a draft of a three-point agreement, which we concluded the next month. I'll quote from the final agreement: "1. The JCF recognizes both the urgency of the problems of Soviet Jewry and the value of helping the work of the CCSA; 2. CCSA is concerned with a single problem and its work is of both local and national scope. The JCF through its Community Relations Committee has had, and will continue to have, programs in this area. Techniques appropriate to the CCSA are not necessarily so for the JCF. Our aim should be to preserve autonomy and full freedom of responsible action for both organizations, while achieving maximum cooperation; 3. It is suggested that the JCF undertake to support specific projects of the CCSA."

As for funding from the Federation, they were open to our requests,

with the proviso that any funds granted be for specific projects and not for operating purposes. This suited us. We had a number of projects we wished to mount, including the movie project, but lacked the money. As it worked out, beginning in 1966 and continuing through 1968, we submitted to the Federation, annually, a short list of projects and associated budgets. The records show that from 1966 through 1968 we received a total of ten thousand dollars for approved projects. For us, at that time, it gave a substantial boost to our efforts. And, because we operated on a shoestring, with volunteer help, we were able to leverage the Federation's contribution.

Both organizations were well served in this agreement, which I believe was the first of its kind anywhere. And, over the following years, cooperation in projects and events was the rule rather than the exception. I might add, it was also an explicit acknowledgement of the national scope and reach of our efforts, by an establishment organization.

DR: Now you also sold some materials to raise money, too — protest seals and buttons.

LR: Yes. In early 1967, I asked Mort to design a seal — similar in size to a postage stamp — that would convey the plight of Soviet Jews. It took Mort only a short while to come up with a bag-up design. We located a company that specialized in printing seals and off we went. Over the years, the seals proved of value in two ways. First, purchasers used the seals, which carried the message: "Protest the Oppression of Soviet Jewry," on their mailings. And, second, the seals were a good source of income for grass-root Soviet Jewry organizations. The protest seals were immensely popular. Our records show that from 1967 through 1978, we sold

415 thousand sheets, 50 seals to a sheet. Soviet Jewry groups in the U.S. and Canada purchased them from us in bulk. Our best customer was the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry in New York, Jacob Birnbaum's and Glen Richter's organization. They bought caseloads. An organization, to which we sold seals at a little over our cost, would then sell a sheet of seals for 50 cents or a dollar.

A year before, Mort designed for us a pin-on button. It carried the image of a shofar and the message, in Hebrew or English: "I am my brothers keeper" — Cain's famous response, 'am I my brother's keeper?' turned on its head. This too proved a popular item.

DR: And you also sold this handbook that we were looking at before. You would charge for that to raise funds.

LR: Yes. The price was $2.50 a copy — not a great sum. But more times than not we sold it for considerably less. Our intent was to get the book in the hands of those who might benefit from it. In later years, several folks imparted to me accounts of the handbook's value to them in getting started and moving out.

DR: Was money something that you were constantly concerned about or devoting attention to, or did you not have to because you were so dependent on volunteer help? You were operating on a shoestring as you put it. Was it something that occupied a lot of your time worrying about where is the money going to come from?

LR: I would say that it did, because, after a while, I was the principle person involved with the day-to-day operation of the CCSA. Dan Litt had to withdraw in the mid-60s because of marital difficulties that ended in divorce. It was a very unfortunate time for him. And, subsequently, he changed careers. He stopped working

as a rabbi and returned to school for a graduate degree in psychology. Herb had increased commitments at the VA Hospital, and also he may not have had a great interest in the kind of organizational and administrative work I was doing. He tended to be more idea centered. He hung in for a few more years, but was no longer involved in the day-to-day decisions. So it fell to me. Not that I was carrying the whole load alone. There were several other people. There was, Lenore Singer who became my office manager. Without her I could not have done most of the things I did do. She took care of it all the necessary tasks that make for an efficient organization: taking the phone calls, doing the typing, the mimeographing, the mailings, filling the orders for the materials we created — materials that we sold to individuals and to other community organizations throughout the country — and so very much more. Without her, what we accomplished could not have been done. I was occupied with the correspondence, making contacts, writing and preparing new material and working out new projects. Lenore put in 5 days a week, 9 to 5, and, when needed, worked on weekends as well. And she did this dependably, from 1966 through 1978. Also, there was Henry Slone, who was our treasurer. He kept the books and kept everything right and tight.

And others from Beth Israel, like your mother, who took on projects like booking and scheduling our Soviet Jewry Freedom Caravan. The Caravan presented daylong programs at 40 Jewish youth camps during the summer of 1971. And, there were scores of Beth Israelites, young and old, who, year after year, helped get out mass mailings, package greeting cards, and more. Then there were East-siders like Marv and Ieda Warshay, Goldie and Ann Robinson, Maish and Carol Mandel, and many others, who took responsibility for specific projects. And, there were countless others that could be depended on to help with any job. Year after year, we received

wonderful support from the people throughout the Cleveland community.

DR: And all volunteers.

LR: Yep, all volunteers! There wasn't a paid person in the lot.

Let me mention at this point the role of Spotlight. That was Herb's baby. It was our newsletter. The first issue came out in 1965 and it was published sporadically through 1969. (In that period there was no other newsletter on Soviet Jewry.) Herb was the editor and the creator of Spotlight. It was successful because Herb is a fine writer, with good style, and he also drew the cartoons and line art that embellished each issue — a wonderful talent. I contributed an editorial or two, and I also took care of the page on action programs and another page listing items that were available through the CCSA. By 1969, Spotlight had a distribution of over 18 thousand copies.

DR: It didn't just go to members of CCSA?

LR: Right. It went to individuals and organizations across the country. In fact, our biggest circulation was outside of Cleveland. What I worked to establish was central distribution centers in other communities. I located people willing to deliver Spotlight to local Jewish institutions: synagogues and secular Jewish organizations. With that arrangement, our circulation swelled.

Each issue of Spotlight carried lists of items that could be ordered from the CCSA: reprints of articles on Soviet Jewry; protest seals, buttons and the handbook; and the movie, 'Before Our Eyes'. Copies of the movie we rented or sold outright. By far, most

organizations chose to rent. But we did sell several copies. The Jewish community in South Africa bought, I believe, a half dozen. And, there were copies sold to organizations in Canada and England.

Our growing visibility, due to the wide spread distribution of Spotlight and the publicity that our action programs produced, had an important fall out — activist-minded people in other communities found us. These were individuals who passionately wanted to get their community focused on the Soviet Jewry issue. Such people I would encourage and nourish with materials and guidance. Often, because of travel I did as part of my job at NASA, I was able to meet, face to face, with many of these individuals. Usually, when planning a trip, I would try to have the business portion start on a Monday or end on a Friday. That way I would have a weekend free to meet with nascent local leaders.

DR: Today is September 22, 1996, and I'm continuing to interview Lou Rosenblum. We talked about some of your efforts to form a grassroots movement in Cleveland, and you mentioned there was a particular event, this rally in early 1965, where you expanded your membership tremendously. In the subsequent years, why don't we just touch briefly on some of the other significant milestone events, public events that took place that indicated what was happening in the movement that you were trying to create. There was something that you began talking about called the Day of Dedication forSoviet Jewry, December of 1966. What was that about?

LR: This was an effort to move outside of the Cleveland area, to organize a major protest activity for Soviet Jews, over a multi-state region. What prompted this plan was a singular protest event in New York City, originated by Congregation Zichron Ephraim, located

across the street from the Soviet Mission to the United Nations. The congregation, under the leadership of Rabbi Schneier, decided to erect a plaque outside of their building facing the Soviet Mission. Inscribed on the plaque the first line read, "Hear the cry of the oppressed," (from the Book of Psalms) and beneath that "The Jewish Community in the Soviet Union." Before unveiling the plaque, hundreds of people met in the synagogue for a protest meeting addressed by Senator Robert Kennedy, Mayor Wagner of New York and other notables. It was a major event and attracted lots of media attention.

In our region, we obviously couldn't replicate the placement of a protest message opposite a Soviet building. But the idea of holding a protest meeting in a synagogue tied in with the dedication of a replica the Zichron Ephraim plaque was something worth doing on a regional scale. I discussed the idea with Rabbi Chuck Mintz, who at that time was the regional director of the Ohio Valley Region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and he thought it was great. With his blessing, I undertook to contact all of the Reform congregations in the region. I believe that the region takes in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, and…

DR: West Virginia.

LR: Yes, West Virginia. It was a large group of states with a significant number of congregations — about 75. I sent mailings to all of the congregations apprising them of the project and enclosed a letter from Chuck Mintz endorsing the project. We made it easy for the congregations to participate. We provided suggested sermons, sample press releases, and educational items. And we also arranged to supply a bronze plaque, at cost. If you go into Beth Israel temple today, you'll see one such plaque mounted over the door leading into the main sanctuary. Fourteen congregations

opted to participate.

DR: You also did something that you called leadership training during this period. I assume this was training for people to be able to do their own community-based projects on Soviet Jewry. Who participated in that? Was that more than just Cleveland?

LR: Well, it was held in Cleveland, but invitations went out to a much larger mailing that covered cities in Ohio — Cincinnati, Columbus and so on — as well as several nearby states. The Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland cosponsored the events with us. There were two of these events. The first was in August 1966. We invited as the major speaker, David Weiss, who had recently visited the Soviet Union. He was an immunologist from Berkeley, California who I got to know on one of my West Coast visits. I was extremely impressed by the man. He was an astute observer and had written a very fine article about his trip. He turned out to be an exceptionally persuasive speaker, presenting the urgency of action. His lecture was followed by workshops on specific types of action appropriate to communities, appropriate for individuals and so on. About 50 people attended, mainly from the Cleveland area.

In early 1970 we held a two-day Midwest Regional Conference on Soviet Jewry. Again cosponsored with the Federation and, in addition, we had the sponsorship of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry — a grudging sponsorship. Because, to shun the event, with our Federation cosponsoring, would have made them looked bad. Also, by 1970, our activities and that of other grass-root councils had received a lot of attention. By then we — the grass-root councils — were collectively the de facto Soviet Jewry movement in the United States. Although, we hadn't finalized, as yet, our informal association into what was to be Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, we — each of us in our community and

region — was recognized as the source of information, assistance and action on the Soviet Jewry issue. The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, on the other hand, was not an address to go for help. Nevertheless, the American Jewish Conference's half time and sole staff person, Abe Bayer, attended. And with Abe came one of Nehemia Levanon's minions, Yoram Dinstein. [Nehemia Levanon was head of the Israeli *Lishkat HaKesher* Liaison Office (aka *Nativ* Path), the clandestine agency for Soviet Jewish affairs that reported directly to the Prime Minister.]

Our regional conference drew in people from Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

DR: And again you held workshops.

LR: Yes. But to start with, we had two speakers. Dr. Maurice Friedberg of Indiana University and Zev Yaroslavsky. Zev, a college student at the time, was an excellent speaker. He had been recently to the Soviet Union and not only spoke about his encounters with Soviet Jews but also about the activities of his Los Angeles area student group for Soviet Jews and activities of other student groups in the U.S. The Conference concluded with 4 workshops: Herb Caron's on CCSA's projects; Don Bogart's on mass participation projects; Zev Yaroslavsky's on youth organization; and your truly's on tourist briefing and political action.

DR: Now another area of activity that you started getting into in those early years that you haven't mentioned up until now is letter writing campaigns to Soviet officials on behalf of prisoners of conscience. That was something that began in this period. The first question is how did you identify the prisoners of consciences that you would write on behalf of? How did you get the information about them? And then, how did you actually carry out the campaign to publicize it?

LR: The prisoner of conscience program started in the latter part of 1969. We received information from two sources: from news accounts, which were fairly sparse, and from a contact in Israel, Anne Shenkar. Anne was working with the Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, organized by Soviet Jews recently arrived in Israel. Members of the Action Committee were troubled that little of the news of threats faced by Soviet Jews, was made public. The responsibility for collecting and releasing such information rested in the governmental organ, *Lishkat HaKesher*. The Action Committee, to correct what they called censorship, collected information independently from sources in the USSR and were eager to have it distributed in the West.

DR: Anne Shenkar was the main source for a lot of this information on prisoners?

LR: Yes. She, as a representative of the Action Committee, was our main source. The information was detailed on what was happening to those in prison camps or charged with offenses that could —and often did — lead to long years in a prison camp.

DR: Where did you come up with the phrase "prisoner of conscience?"

LR: That was not a phrase that we in the Soviet Jewry movement invented. As I recollect, Amnesty International coined the term in the early 60s. Later, Soviet Jews would adopt the Hebrew, *asirei tzion*, prisoners of Zion, for Jews imprisoned for desiring to immigrate to Israel.

DR: So you collected information about these people through

networks and so on, partly coming from Israel and people who had come there from the Soviet Union. And then you presumably identified particular cases that were especially dire.

LR: The information we received contained the prisoner's camp address and, in some cases, the particular section of the camp. And often the associated details would include the phone number of the commandant of the prison. With the address we could start a letter writing campaign that might provide hope to the prisoners that the outside world knew about them. We realized that few, if any, of the letters would get through, but we calculated that even if not one letter got through, the letters would find their way into official files in the Soviet Union and possibly give the government pause because of public concern in the West.

DR: So who was actually writing the letters? You would get people who were members of CCSA?

LR: Yes, and others. I would prepare a one or two page flyer for which I composed a short piece about the prisoner —his or her background, charges, trial, sentence, and present situation. Then I included a suggested action that the recipient of the flyer could take. Basically, the message was: Okay, you now know about this persons plight. Here's what you can do to help. In most cases, I was able to include a photo of the prisoner on the flyer. Lenore mailed these to those on our major lists: CCSA members and activists and contacts throughout the U.S., several hundred people in all.

DR: One thing that strikes me is that type of action was not very common at that time, or maybe I'm wrong. The idea of a public letter writing campaign to officials of a foreign government

protesting their treatment of their citizens, which now has become pretty commonplace through organizations like Amnesty International and others. My impression is that maybe in the mid and late '60s this was still a relatively new form of action.

LR: Well, I believe that Amnesty International first made use of this idea in 1966. You will recall that in the 60s a dissident movement developed within the Soviet Union. The Kremlin tried to check this development through selected show trials and imprisonment in the Gulag or confinement in a psychiatric facility of several of the prominent dissidents. Amnesty International responded by encouraging extensive public letter writing in behalf of the dissidents.

DR: You've alluded to some things in this period where your activities in Cleveland intersected with what was happening nationally, and also some of your efforts to broaden the scope of what you were doing somewhat beyond Cleveland. At what point did you and others realize that it was time to create a national organization? What were the events that led up to the decision to have a "Union of Councils"?

LR: To put you in the big picture, let me return to the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ) meeting of 1964, which I discussed earlier. When we left the conference, we had high hopes. We had pushed through, with almost unanimous support, a resolution that, we thought, would lead to adequate funds and staff for a national organization: an organization that would be a force for promoting Soviet Jewry activities throughout the U.S.; an organization that would provide the guidance and leadership that was needed. Well, very soon we found that that was not the intent of those in charge: the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the Conference of Presidents of Jewish Organizations. What they did do was continue the AJCSJ as an

ongoing entity; but without funding. Then, for staff they assigned a National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council employee, Al Chernin, part time, as the AJCSJ's one and only staff member. In short, it was a sham. They had taken a page out of Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin's playbook.

Then, biennially, the AJCSJ arranged a national meeting: 1966 and 1968. People from everywhere were invited to attend. And, as with the first time, invitations were not necessarily given to people working on Soviet Jewry, but to whomever the local chapters of one of the several major Jewish organizations chose to invite. Then the same routine would roll out as before — a replay of the 1964 conference. There would be the usual set of feel-good resolutions. Then, each time we proposed a resolution calling for staff and funding, which spelled out a specific amount of money and a specific number staff. Each time our resolution passed by a substantial majority. And, each time the resolution, subsequently, was ignored: no budget and no staff, other than a half-time person, was provided. After the '68 biennial, I think most people who were seriously committed to helping Soviet Jews realized that there was no hope of making the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry a viable entity.

DR: What was this part-time guy doing, if anything? Al Chernin.

LR: Al Chernin was *the* part-time staff person, up to 1970. Then Abe Bayer was assigned as *the* part-time staff person. The part-timer arranged occasionally to provide, what might be called, a national presence, by organizing representation to the U.S. government concerning Soviet Jewry. For example, presidents of major Jewish organizations would be asked to meet with a Congressman or someone in the Administration. The part-timer did encourage communities to hold a day of prayer, rallies and events.

The part-timer did organize a few national rallies. These efforts were produced sporadically and lacked follow up. Most important, it was impossible the part-timer to provide timely response to fast breaking actions by Soviet authorities that threatened Soviet Jews, such as the Leningrad trials in late 1970.

Rather than trying to recall more from memory, let me look for an article I wrote about the Conference. Let's take a break and I'll ferret it out.

DR: Today is September 22, 1996, and I'm continuing to interview Lou Rosenblum.

LR: This is from an article I wrote that appeared in *Focus on Soviet Jewry*, May/June 1971, titled *The Sin of Indifference: Years of Neglect*. I had this to say: "To mount a credible national Soviet Jewry effort would take on the order of a half a million dollars a year — or so thought the majority of the delegates in a 1968 biennial meeting of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry. This amount would provide a full-time staff including public relations and community development, money for a newsletter, journal and resource materials, so sorely needed. Five hundred thousand dollars — only about 1/2% of the money collected annually by the American Jewish Welfare Fund Appeal. Is it not strange that the nominal leaders of the richest Jewish community in history have not been able to find resources adequate to fund, on a regular basis, an effort to aid three million of their people in the Soviet Union?" I was pretty steamed and had been for years. I was indignant over the neglect and indifference and cover up by the national organizations.

This exasperation of mine — and others — fueled the ultimate formation of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. Our first

tentative move in that direction came in April 1968. I wrote to a number of my friends and colleagues who I knew would be attending the Conference biennial in New York. I suggested that it would be opportune for us to meet for a discussion on the future of the Soviet Jewry movement. I not only invited grass-root leaders, like myself, but some who I knew were part of the establishment, such as Moshe Decter and Meir Rosenne, Israeli Counselor in New York [also, a *Lishkat HaKesher* representative]. It was an 'open' meeting. I wanted word of what we were discussing to get back to the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry and the rest of the establishment. I wanted to …

DR: Fire a shot across the bow.

LR: Fire a shot across their bow, as you say, to let them know that we were actively considering an alternative to their organization. The others at our meeting were, for the most part, people who I worked with in the past: like Irene Eber and Zev Yaroslavsky, from California; Jacob Birnbaum, from New York; Joe Yanich, from Miami, Florida. Incidentally, Joe headed up the American Jewish Congress office in Miami and organized the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry. He was that rare organization man: independent-minded. He did all in his power to bring Soviet Jewry to the attention of the entire Miami-area community. Several times he was called on the carpet by his New York bosses for going beyond AJ Congress directives; he persevered, nevertheless
— a man of great integrity.

I laid out the situation as I saw it: "Our need is to alert Americans to the plight of Soviet Jewry and concomitantly seek ways to pressure the Soviet Union to cease from its anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish policies. Over the last 4 years, the establishment's instrument of choice for this job has been the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry. In the view of many of us, however,

the AJCSJ is a seriously deficient entity, for lack of funding and staff. Our confidence in the determination of Jewish Establishment to mount a credible national effort in behalf of Soviet Jewry has been eroded. I suggest it is time to think about alternatives to the AJCSJ."

A month later, May 11th, I arranged another meeting to which a smaller group was invited — mainly those who would later to be part of the Union of Councils. At that meeting we discussed practical matters relating to purpose, structure and composition of a national Soviet Jewry organization. I volunteered to be head of a "committee of correspondence" — shades of the American Revolution (laughs). We would continue to develop our ideas and, when the time was right, we could move on the matter. I would say that was the beginning. The seed was planted. The soil was fertile. And, two years later, we formed the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

DR: You mentioned the people who you met with to discuss the idea of forming your own organization in 1968, at the time of that American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry. And at other times, you've mentioned people in other parts of the country that played a role in some events. You mentioned Zev Yaroslavsky, for example. I'm wondering, of the many people you encountered during those years, not just before 1970, but throughout the period you were involved, which of them really stick out in your mind as having made an impression on you, that you formed some bond with them that you really treasured.

LR: There were a number of people. I'll mention just a few. Let me start with Irene Eber and Zev Yaroslavsky. I met them both about the same time. It came about this way. Henry Slone [the CCSA treasurer and a colleague at NASA] told me of a Rocketdyne

engineer he met whose wife, Irene Eber, had been working on the Soviet Jewry issue, in the Los Angeles area. So, on one of my trips for NASA to California, in 1966, I looked her up. She is a remarkable woman, in more ways than one. In 1932, Irene and her family were expelled from Germany as Jews of Polish origin. Then, ten years later, in Nazi-occupied Poland, the family was incarcerated in the Debica ghetto. Irene, then 12 years old, escaped and survived in hiding until the end of the war. She later immigrated to the U.S. When I met her, in ’66, she had a doctorate in Sinology and was teaching at Pomona College. Irene was a pioneer activist for Soviet Jews in the LA area. Her selflessness, enthusiasm and dedication were inspiring. It so happened that one of the volunteers working with Irene was Zev. He was about 17, then. He seemed to me much older because of his manifest intellect, manner of speaking, and self-assurance. I took an instant liking to him. In 1969, he organized the California Students for Soviet Jews, and soon gained a wide reputation as a thoughtful, political-savvy activist.

Si Frumkin I met a couple of years later, also in California. He was born in Lithuania. He and his father ended up in Dachau where his father perished. He was 14 when the camp was liberated and he spent the next several years in Europe, England and South America and finally moved to the U.S. At the time that I first met him, he had a flourishing drapery business in Los Angeles. Along the way, he acquired an MA degree in history. Si is one of a kind: direct, imaginative and articulate; audacious and understands clearly how to use his boldness to achieve his goal without being abusive or a nuisance.

DR: It wasn’t boldness for its own sake. It had a defined end.

LR: Yes, it had a defined end. Zev and Si got together, I believe, in the ’69 or ’70 period and from then on they were like Mutt and Jeff.

Whenever you thought of one, you thought of the other. Between the two of them, they accomplished outstanding things in the Southern California area, making their community aware, deeply aware, of the Soviet Jewish problem and providing clever and surprising ways of addressing the issue. Their style was what I would call *California*: spacious, vivid, and dramatic. It was great. Si and Zev were pillars of our Soviet Jewry movement and invaluable colleagues and warm friends.

Another person who I remember with considerable fondness and regard was Irene Manekowsky from Washington, D.C. Irene was a member of the Washington Committee for Soviet Jewry when I first met her in 1969. She took over the leadership of the committee in the mid-'70s and things really moved in Washington — a vital center, because of our need to play a direct role on the political scene. She was extremely capable, and when she finally did assume a position of leadership, it changed the whole dynamics of the Washington Committee. Prior to that, the leadership fell to a fellow by the name of Moshe Brodetsky. A sweet guy, who, in his earlier days, fought with the Irgun in Palestine. Unfortunately he lacked balance in his approach to what needed to be done. What he did do was great. For instance, he organized the noon vigil that gathered every weekday across the street from the Soviet Embassy. But the valuable political work that needed doing in Washington, seemed to be off his map. He was a loner and seldom consulted with other members of the committee. They deferred to him, not wanting to hurt his feelings. Moshe was a bit of a character. I recall a trip to Washington to meet with several Washington Committee people. Moshe asked me to drop by his office at HUD [Housing and Urban Development], beforehand. You've probably been in the HUD building.

DR: Well, I've been in similar government buildings.

LR: Doors and doors, all blank doors, down long, endless corridors. Finally, I found the room, opened the door, and what a sight. Desks and chairs had been pushed to the walls and there, in the midst of the room, were a dozen men, or more, each with *tallit* and *tefilin, davaning.* Would you believe it, Moshe ran a daily *minyan* in his office. In HUD? (Laughter). Moshe made *aliyah* sometime in the late '70s

In Florida, I already mentioned Joe Yanich who was the head of the American Jewish Congress office in Miami. He was a prince, a real *mensch.* And he did a lot of wonderful stuff down in Florida. And, it turned out that the man who I worked closely with, in the late '60s and early '70s, at the Cleveland Jewish Community Federation, Ed Rosenthal…

DR: In Cleveland.

LR: Yes. Ed left Cleveland in 1976 and took on a position with the Miami Federation. He got to know Joe Yanich and they became instant friends, as like-minded people will. Ed Rosenthal was a kind and helpful person. He had a bright and independent mind. I've always cherished my friendship with him. Another good friend in Florida was Bob Wolf, who took over the leadership of the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry, in early 1973.

DR: What about Hal Light? That name sticks in my mind for some reason. What was his role?

LR: Hal Light was the head of the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jews. He died in September 1974. Hal was a rather intense person, a retired businessman with roots in the established Jewish community. Our ties date back to December 1967 when Hal

contacted me, on the advise of David Weiss, from Berkeley. In his letter he requested help with the organization of an ad hoc Soviet Jewry committee he had pulled together in San Francisco, six months earlier. In January, I was in the Bay Area on NASA business and arranged to meet with Hal and his group. I shared with them our experiences, encouraged them, and provided them with materials. Just a month later, Hal launched the Bay Area Council. Over time, it proved to be among the stronger and more effective grass root councils.

My personal relationship with Hal was in the main amiable. I enjoyed the hospitality of Hal's and his wife, Selma's, home on my many visit to San Francisco area, in the late 60s and early 70s. During the first four years of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, when I was chairman and Hal was vice-chairman. I believe we had, by and large, a good working relationship. But there were a few rocky patches. Two of these stemmed from Hal's ties to the Zionist Revisionist and others on the right end of the spectrum of Jewish organization.

. On one occasion these connections caused a bit of unpleasantness for me and, at another time, lead to grief for a UCSJ project. The first incident involved the founder and chairman of the Jewish Defense League, Rabbi Meir Kahane.

DR: Talk about right wing.

LR: And a bit of a head case. My encounter with him was in 1971. Here's how it happened. That year, the Union of Councils' annual meeting was set for September, in Philadelphia. A month or two before, Hal and I were in New York on Union of Councils business. For lunch, Hal suggested we join his friend, Morris Bronfman, a manufacturer of women's lingerie, who was chairman of the International League for Repatriation of Russian Jews (a Zionist

Revisionist organization). Hal said it might be a good idea to invite Bronfman to attend the upcoming Union of Councils meeting. I said, fine by me, it fits with our interest in building relations with others groups in the Soviet Jewry movement. During lunch, we invited Bronfman to attend our coming meeting. And, about then Hal dropped a bomb. How about also inviting Meir Kahane? I all but choked. "Hal, we have enough problems as it is", I said. "Kahane method of operation is thuggish and counterproductive: the JDL's bombings and shootings, have turned Soviet officials into victims and the spotlight away from the treatment of Soviet Jews". End of that little colloquy.

Now, come September, in Philadelphia, we were preparing at the hotel for the general meeting. A few of us on the executive committee were huddled in a planning meeting in one of the side rooms. A knock on the door and in walks Meir Kahane. Invited by whom? Okay. So he was there. I greeted him and asked why he had come. What followed was a bizarre and unsettling performance. With no preliminaries, he launched into a extended monologue: *he*, Meir Kahane, was prepared to allow us to continue using our name, *he* would not insist that we adopt the name of *his* organization, but, *he would insist* that we follow *his directives*, *he* would send orders of what we should do and how we should do it; and since — as he had been informed — we were fed up with the establishment, we should welcome this opportunity he was offering. He held forth in that vein for some time, with much repetition. Like a clip right out of a second rate Hollywood gangster film, here was an offer we couldn't refuse. Well, I listened — heard him out patiently — and said, we'll think about it. And he left.

Then there was second situation
that I attribute to Hal: a project that his gratuitous intervention caused us to abort. In 1972, the Union of Councils decided we

needed someone in England who could brief and debrief American college student traveling to the Soviet Union. In those days there was loads of student travel during the summer. And, many students found it less expensive, over all, to travel to England and, from there, take a cut-rate flight to a European destination. We thought that if we could hire, for the summer, a student knowledgeable about Soviet Jewry, he or she could brief travelers on what to expect and provide names and addresses of Soviet Jews to visit. Then, on returning, the travelers would report on their experiences. We believed that this project, which we named 'Have Guts Will Travel,' would help keep us current on what was going on with the Soviet Jewish activists and at the same time provide students face-to-face experience with Soviet Jews.

Our California councils recommended Doug Kahn, a college graduate, for the job. He had worked with Soviet Jewry committees in California and was knowledgeable about the issue. I provided him with funds to cover his travel, housing expenses, and food, and he set himself up in a flat in London. Students coming from the States, and planning to go to the USSR via London, were directed to Doug's flat.

DR: How did you find out, by the way, about people traveling? Did they come to you because they had heard of the Union of Councils? In other words, like students or something. How would you have found out?

LR: Oh, we knew about individual student travel from our several Councils. We had solicited this information from the councils earlier in the year. It also helped that, a few of the councils were mainly composed of students. For example, the Toronto Student Council for Soviet Jews and the Montreal Student Struggle for Soviet Jews were campus based organizations. Additionally, our office, over the

years, had built up contacts with unaffiliated student groups on various campuses.

Before traveling to England, Doug met with me in Cleveland and we spent time going over his operation. Now, a short while after Doug had settled in London, I heard from Hal. He said he had been in London, that he had seen Doug and introduced him to some of his friends. At the time, I thought that that was very fatherly of him to make Doug feel at ease by introducing him to local friends.

Then, weeks pass without a peep from Doug. Finally, on August 17th, comes a telephone call from Doug — a frantic call. He said he's in a terrible situation. He doesn't know what to do about it. At that point he's interrupted. Someone get on and says, "We're trying to help Doug here. He's been cooperating. But, we are not sure he understands what's going on." End of call. It was cryptic and weird. From Doug's tone, it was obvious that he was agitated and frightened. I quickly phoned Colin Schindler, the only person I knew at that time, in London, with contacts in the community. Colin had been editor of a Soviet Jewry bulletin. He was a person with a good reputation and who I had corresponded with. I said, "Look, I'm here in Cleveland worried sick about Doug Kahn. There seems something sinister going on in London that Doug is caught up in. Would you please check it out?" He said he would.

The next day Colin called back to report that Doug had become entangled with members of the London Jewish Defense League. That immediately reminded me of Hal and the Kahane business, and of Hal's call to me earlier that summer about introducing Doug to 'friends' in London. It was clear that Doug had been co-opted by crazies and the student project was down the drain. I called Doug and said, "You're in over your head. Just get out. I want you to

shut down and return home." He pulled out and returned to the States.

I chose not to confront Hal on either of these incidents. Knowing his temperament, and reaction to criticism, I felt it prudent to avoid a rift in the union. My role in the Union of Councils was to act as coordinator, encourager and, on occasion, peacemaker. I had no authority to sanction any council or take any leader to the woodshed.

DR: And the Union was set up as a rather decentralized organization, right?

LR: When we decided to launch the Union of Councils, I sent to each of the councils a letter in which I defined our new organization as a confederation. I did that deliberately, because I was aware that the head each council was invariably a strong minded individual and that each council had its own style of operation. I felt we could only endure if we respected each other, worked together in those areas we agreed upon, and did not seek to mandate uniform response.

DR: Are there any other people — I mentioned Hal Light — but is there anyone else from other cities or other councils that you really had a lot of contact with and a long relationship with?

LR: Yes. There was Lil Hoffman from Denver, who was the chairperson of the Colorado Committee of Concern for Soviet Jewry. A wonderful, determined woman who I had contact with over the years, mostly by correspondence, but every now and then with a visit. There was Abie Ingber, who headed up the Montreal Student Struggle for Soviet Jews. He was a college student when I first met

him in ‘69. Abbie was — and is — a gregarious, thoughtful, creative guy. After college he went to Hebrew Union College and eventually ended up as the Hillel Rabbi at the University of Cincinnati. So Mom and I was able to spend time with Abbie whenever we drove down to Cincinnati to visit your sister Miriam and Sheldon [Benjamin] at the University.

There were others, not members of the Union of Councils, that I respected highly and with whom I had many opportunities to develop a fruitful relationship. There was Jacob Birnbaum and Glen Richter of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry in New York City, who I came to know quite early on — in 1964. They were the mainstay of the movement in the Greater New York City area: admirable and dedicated guys. And then, there were Marsha Yugend, Judy Silverman and Rabbi Moshe Sacks of the Minnesota Action Committee for Soviet Jews. That group eschewed joining the Union of Councils for practical reasons. Since the Minneapolis Jewish Community Federation directly funded them, it was impolitic to join the Union of Councils. The MJC Federation people had no concerns about our legitimacy or responsibility — quite to the contrary. It had to do with not wishing to be expose to grief from their national office, if the Action Committee would formally affiliated with us. I had excellent personal relations with them. In fact, I was invited a couple of times to Minneapolis to meet with the Federation and Action Committee people to discuss programming and tactics. And, through the 70’s the Action Committee actively participated in several Union of Councils programs. For example, they assumed complete responsibility for creating and maintaining the database for the Union of Councils’ financial aid project for Jews in the Soviet Union.

DR: Today is August 13, 1997. We’re in South Lake Tahoe, California, and I’m continuing to interview Louis Rosenblum about the Soviet Jewry movement and his involvement in it. We led up to

the point of the formation of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews which was the culmination of efforts that had begun seven or eight years before. Could you just briefly talk about what it was that led you to form this national organization? What led up to it?

LR: I had mentioned previously that, in May 1968, a group of us who had been working on the Soviet Jewry issue met privately. We discussed the present state of affairs and the future of the Soviet Jewry movement and concluded that a new organization was needed. Afterwards we kept in communication with one another on the matter. And, by 1970 the situation had…

DR: Ripened.

LR: Ripened. Thank you. That was the word I was looking for. The situation had ripened to the point where there was no question that this was what we could and should do. There were six organizations that were ready for the plunge. There was Joe Yanich with the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry. There was Zev Yaroslavsky and Si Frumkin in Southern California. Zev headed up the California Students for Soviet Jews and Si the Southern California Council for Soviet Jews. There was the Washington Committee for Soviet Jewry, Hal Light's Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry, and myself with the Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism. I was asked to write the statement defining the nature of our organization and send out an announcement of its inauguration. The kickoff for the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews was to be April 6, 1970. In my letter I tried to define what I thought was our purpose, our *raison d'être*.

DR: Sort of a mission statement.

LR: A mission statement, if you will. Let me read you briefly from a copy: "As agreed by all, we" — meaning, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews — "shall continue to supplement and complement the work of the AJCSJ and act as 'loyal opposition' to spur the national Jewish organizations to greater activity. We shall act independently and when necessary to bring about greater public awareness of, and activity for Soviet Jews. We shall avoid guiding our policy or actions by the political exigencies of either the governments of Israel or the U.S." We wished to maintain independence from governmental pressure — mainly from the Israeli government. (I'll get into that at a later time. It's too important a subject to discussing 'standing on one foot.') We didn't want to be tied to anybody else's wagon. Not that we knew it all. Certainly, we still had a lot to learn. However, each of the councils had been operating for a several years. We had confidence that comes with experience.

DR: So this happened early 1970, you issued this letter.

LR: It was April 6, 1970, the date we agreed upon.

DR: And then what you had was this initial group of six or so councils, and then you grew from there.

LR: Right, very rapidly. I recently went back and looked at the records and I see that a year later, in April 1971, we had grown from six to ten councils. And in the next year, by the end of '72, we reached 16, and then by 1973 we topped out for a while at 18. That was fairly rapid growth, and we had good coverage too, in terms of regional distribution. Additionally, we picked up allies, who, for their own reasons did not want to formally affiliate with us, but did work closely with us on particular projects: for example, the Minnesota council, which I mentioned earlier, and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry.

DR: Now was there an immediate election or selection of a chairman or a board? Who was the leadership?

LR: That came a little fitfully, slowly over first several months. I was reluctant to take on the leadership. It would be a national responsibility, in addition to my being chairman of the CCSA in Cleveland. Besides, I felt I had not been putting enough time into my NASA job. I could get by, but I wasn't satisfied. I wasn't— how shall I say — doing my professional best. So I didn't want to take on another load. Several people were suggested to head up the Union of Councils. It turned out none of them wanted to take on the job. Most didn't feel they had enough experience. It ended up by default that I—

DR: It came to you.

LR: It came to me, and I reluctantly said okay. And, I served up to the fall of 1973.

DR: But the fact that you became chairman was the result of sort of just an informal consensus?

LR: That's right.

DR: There wasn't a vote or something?

LR: No. It devolved to me.

DR: Were there other officers or other positions created?

LR: Yes. That came a little later in the first year, as we added

councils. Hal Light was asked to be a vice-chairman and so was Si Frumkin. Zev Yaroslavsky and Abie Ingber, among others, were asked to be on a steering committee. It wasn't until September of 1971 that we held the first of our annual meetings, approved a constitution, and held an election of officers and members of the steering committee.

DR: Am I right that the actual content of what you did didn't change that much? Maybe you had already been playing a role as a kind of mentor to the other groups, and so in terms of the day-today responsibilities you continued doing what you had been doing.

LR: Exactly, except the pace picked up because I now had the responsibility for keeping things moving, and also acting as a mediator and a sounding board. My phone traffic went up considerably.

DR: It's August 12, 1997. This is South Lake Tahoe, California . We were talking about the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews and its formation. Tell me briefly what it was that made the council a council. In other words, how did you collaborate among the councils and what was your financial connection one to another?

LR: Collaboration among the councils and our intimate bonding resulted primarily from projects that we mounted collectively. An extremely helpful spin off of many of the projects was that they generating revenue for individual councils and for the Union. If we initiated a nationwide project — and I'll describe some of these to you in a minute — we agreed that a certain percentage of what each of the councils would realize from the project would go toward financing the Union of Councils for commonly agreed upon

purposes, for example, political activities.

DR: What were some examples of the projects that you worked on together?

LR: One of the earliest, and I think the most successful in several ways, was the greeting card project. We created the project in Cleveland in 1970, early in that year, with Passover cards that we packaged in sets of five cards and envelopes along with the names and addresses of five Soviet Jews. The card packet also included general information about the problems facing Soviet Jews and a note encouraging the purchaser to add a message of their own.

DR: Something personalized.

LR: Right, exactly. But, I'm ahead of myself. Let me backtrack and tell you how we managed to put the project together. It wasn't easy and wasn't without opposition. You see, there was an establishment "approved" card project already in the works. Their project had been suggested by *Lishkat HaKesher* and taken up by the American Conference on Soviet Jewry and the American Jewish Congress. Simply, American Jews were encouraged to send holiday greeting cards to synagogues in the USSR. One only has to know the basics about a police state to realize it would be a rather futile exercise. In the USSR, the head of each of the few remaining synagogues and its rabbi (if any) were appointed by and subservient to the Soviet authorities. Cards might arrive at a synagogue; but would any of the Jews attending that synagogue ever learn of them?

In any event, there was a new reality unfolding in the USSR that demanded a new focus. The euphoria over Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War emboldened a number of Soviet Jews — Jews wanting to emigrate to Israel — to openly pursue an activist line.

This was risky behavior. And, they, in particular, needed our support.

My idea was to send cards directly to those Jews who had publicly signaled their desire to emigrate to Israel. By early 1970, we had a list of names and addresses of 72 Soviet Jews from Moscow, Leningrad and several other cities, who had petitioned their government for permission to leave for Israel. Many had also sent similar appeals the U.N. General Assembly and other international bodies. Audaciously, each person had signed the appeal with his or her name and address. I checked with our friends in Israel about using this information for a greeting card project.

DR: This was with Ann Shenkar?

LR: Ann Shenkar and the Action Committee of Newcomers. They said that those who had signed the petitions would welcome communications from Americans. Further, I was assured that a large volume of cards would help insure the recipient's safety, since the authorities are more reluctant to persecute those known in the West. For completeness, I sought the advice of academic Soviet scholars, like Maurice Friedberg.

My next move was to discuss the Passover card project with the Cleveland Jewish Federation; it would be helpful, have them directly involved. So I broached to Ed Rosenthal the idea of the Federation joining with us on this project. Ed liked the idea and in short order he set up a meeting with his boss Sid Vincent. I explained to them my reservations on the value of the American Conference on Soviet Jewry's card project. I shared with them the nature of my card project and my sources of information. The upshot was that Sid gave a thumbs-up to partnering with us on the project.

Now, there was the matter of getting the cards produced. Ed arranged for a luncheon meeting with Irving Stone, a Federation trustee and chairman of the American Greeting Card Company. I described the project to Irving over the salad and by the main course he was in. He offered to have his calligrapher layout our text message, provide the art work for the front of the card, do the printing and folding and only charge us only for his outside costs — paper and envelopes. Later, Ed and I agreed on a Russian and Yiddish text that read "Happy Passover" followed by "The Jews of the USA to the Jews of the USSR: We have not forgotten you." Finally, there was the packaging: 5 cards and envelopes in a clear plastic pouch, together with mailing instructions and 5 names and addresses of Soviet Jews from our list of 72 names.

In the weeks before Passover, a total of about 10,000 cards were sold in the Cleveland area by the CCSA and the Federation and in other places around the country by local Soviet Jewry groups. A month later, we began hearing from people who had purchased the cards. Bingo! Contact! They were delighted and thrilled. They had received a response from a Soviet Jew to whom they had mailed a greeting card. It was clear that, for them, Soviet Jewry was no longer an abstraction. It became personal and immediate — embodied in the individual or family who replied to their card. What an eye-opener for me. This one-on-one method offered a powerful way to engage individuals in the cause for Soviet Jews. It suggested a range of new opportunities.

Before I forget — that summer, 13 of the families on our mailing list received exit visa for Israel. Did the cards help them? Perhaps. But it certainly didn't harm.

The next occasion for a repeat card project was in the fall, for *Rosh*

Hashanah. I asked the American Greeting Card Co. run off another batch of cards for us. These had 5 different cover designs, each imprinted inside with the same message, " A Good New Year" in Russian, English, Georgian, German, French and Hebrew. By then we had a larger list of Soviet Jews, 196, as I recollect. We asked the kids and adults at Beth Israel to volunteer to assemble the packets. You probably remember that.

DR: Yes, I remember doing that, and there's a picture of me in the newspaper, Reuben and I, stuffing the plastic envelopes.

LR: Right. The Cleveland Jewish News reporter came to the temple to interview and take pictures. Now, significantly, all member councils of the Union of Council adopted the project. The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and several other unaffiliated local groups also joined in on the project. It really took off. There must have been, I estimate, 15,000 packets of cards sold. We don't know, of course, how many of those sold were sent. But presumably a good many were. And, again responses from Soviet Jews were substantial.

By the way, we printed an informational insert for the card packet, titled "Rosh Hashanah People-to-People Project." So this project was the first in a series of projects bearing that designation…

DR: So you had a series of other people-to-people things?

LR: I'll come back to that shortly. First let me quickly wind up the greeting card project. During the next two years, Si Frumkin took on the design, printing and distribution of the cards for the Union of Councils. All in all, I would estimate that the number of packets of cards sold, from 1970 through 1972, was over 150 thousand. And,

in that period, our list of Soviet Jewish recipients grew to several hundred — a reflection of the increasing number of Soviet Jews applying to leave.

An associated benefit of the project — and a welcome one — was that the sale of these cards produced income for all our member councils. A packet of 5 cards would be sold for one dollar. Production costs were usually under 20 cents. Whoever produced the cards, whether it was Cleveland or Los Angeles, would sell them at cost to a member council. As a result this income went toward helping the local council run its office, buy equipment, cover mailings, the telephone bill and lots more. Before this, people involved in the operation of a council often would dip into their own pockets to cover expenses or seek a sugar daddy. Now, rather than *shnoren* funds, there was more time for Soviet Jewry activities.

DR: Which also allowed you to maintain your independence.

LR: Exactly, which was precious to us.

DR: Now you also at this time were making telephone calls, or you began making direct calls to people in the Soviet Union.

LR: Yes, that started in 1971. A year later, we made it one of our people-to-people projects and our office began extensive distribution of telephone numbers. The information came from Ann Shenkar and the Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union. The lists provided names and telephone numbers, and languages that members of the family could speak. There were people on the list, I remember, who spoke English and others spoke one or more of the European languages. They were…

DR: French or German.

LR: Yes, right. There was even a person who spoke Farsi. Lenore sent these lists to the Union of Council member councils and to our special mailing list, a list I built up over the years of people who I deemed to be activists.

DR: Initially when you started making the calls, the calls were not blocked or interrupted by the Soviet authorities.

LR: There were no significant difficulties.

DR: Maybe because they didn't know what was going on?

LR: I suspect the Soviet authorities were slow in recognizing what was happening because, after all, it did build up slowly. It was a new idea. Not everybody picked up on it immediately, but it grew in popularity. After a while, if the Soviets were monitoring the traffic, they would have seen a rise in personal telephone calls. would estimate that, by the end of 1971, there were about one hundred calls made each week. And, by 1973, the calls probably reached one thousand a week, from the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. Now the interesting thing is that we didn't tell people how they should organize their phone calls. We left it to their discretion. Some people invited friends to their home, placed a call and took turns speaking. Or, they might rig the phone to an amplifier and speaker. (At that time, speaker phones didn't exist but with a little ingenuity and a few electronic parts…)

DR: I seem to recall having one of those calls made at Beth Israel hooked up to a speaker with a large group of people there.

LR: Yes, right. That was an approach that most groups and

synagogues chose. They might have a meeting of one sort or another, perhaps a Soviet Jewry rally, or a general meeting, and they would use that opportunity to make a phone call and bring those present into contact with a real, live Soviet Jew. And it became the rage. Often, if an organization recorded the calls, our office was sent a transcript. There are 4 one-inch-thick files of such transcripts in the several CCSA records archived at the Western Reserve Historical Society Jewish Archives in Cleveland, OH.

DR: And did you ask for the transcripts or did people just voluntarily send them?

LR: In the cover letter we sent out with the lists, we asked to hear of successes, problems encountered, newsworthy information received, and so on. And people responded.

DR: So that was a big success.

LR: It was a huge success.

DR: Now you had a few other of these people-to-people type of programs that you may just want to touch on briefly — prisoners of conscience, adopt a family. Prisoners of conscience, I remember there being these medallions that people would buy that had the name of the prisoner of conscience. This obviously involved people who had been jailed for their activities.

LR: That's right. But, let me back up a bit, because the medallions came later. As I mention before, following the Six Day War, in 1967, there was a flowering of Jewish national feeling among Jews in the USSR. This soon led to a significant number of applications to leave for Israel. The Soviet government trotted out its usual tools of

intimidation and repression against 'enemies of the State'. So, concurrently there was a striking rise in the number of Jews sentenced to the Gulag. Rather than depending on my memory let me quote from a booklet I prepared in November 1971 on prisoners of conscience titled, *POTMA - Repression of Jews in the Soviet Union*. "The present wave of repression began with the arrest of Boris Kochubyevsky in Dec. 1968 and his trial in May 1969. Following this came the secret trial in Ryazan, Feb. 1970, and the infamous Leningrad hi-jacking trial of Dec. 1970, and the recent trials in Riga, Leningrad, Kishinev, Odessa, Sverdlovsk, Kharkov, and Chernovitz. In general, those arrested have been charged with 'political crimes' under RSFSR Criminal Code Statute 70 (anti-Soviet organization) and Statute 72 (anti-Soviet organization)… Sentences up to 15 years in *strict* or *special* regime labor camps were meted out."

In the booklet I listed 46 prisoners of conscience sentenced to prisons or labor camps between mid-1969 and mid-1971. The most publicized of the trials by the Western press was the Leningrad hi-jacking trial. Eleven people — 9 Jews and 2 Russians — were put on trial for planning to seize a 12-seat plane and escape the country. They were arrested on arriving at the airport; the KGB apparently had been monitoring their activities. They were charged with fleeing the country — a capital crime in the Soviet Union. Two were sentenced to death and the others given very long sentences in *special* regime labor camp — the worst of the worst. The strong outcry from the free world, at what was called 'juridical murder', caused the Soviets to back off a bit and commute the death sentences to 15 years in *special* regime camp.

Then there were others who were tried and sentenced for activities hardly worthy of notice anywhere but in the Soviet Union. For example, a Lithuanian Jew by the name of Simonas Girillus was

arrested in 1969 for possession of books for studying Hebrew and records of Hebrew songs. He was sentenced to 5 years *strict* regime in the Gulag.

DR: Isn't there one case of people unfurling a banner outside their balcony saying, "Let me go to Israel."

LR: Yes, certainly any public protest was forbidden. In instances of such protests, particularly in Moscow or Leningrad where reporters from the Western press could get about, the 'culprits' were often given a short sentence in the local drunk tank. Elsewhere, off limit to Westerners, the punishments were often draconian.

Getting back to our project. The *POTMA* booklet was meant to provide background for such a project. It gave details about the particular labor camp complex where most of the Jewish prisoners were held. For example, diet and work details, and personal information on each prisoners. One part of our project was aimed at encouraging individuals to send letters and cards to prisoners. Another part requested individuals and groups to send material help to prisoners in the form of food packages. Because of the semi-starvation labor camp diet, we felt it was important that an attempt be made to supplement their diet. We knew very well not all parcels would get through. But we had heard from the families of prisoners that some parcels they sent were delivered. So it was worth a try, especially with the number we believed would come from all over the States.

We ran a pilot test of the project in the Cleveland area, in late 1971. For that I prepared a detailed instruction guide: the way to ship parcels, list of permitted foods, names and addresses of prisoners, and name and address of each prisoner's relative. That

last item was important because, if the parcel could not be delivered to the prisoner, the Soviet parcel regulations allowed delivery to and alternate address. The project was picked up by other councils and continued as a nationwide program for the next few years. From the feed back (no pun intended), our efforts were helpful and appreciated. It also put a spotlight on the prisoners and their situation. There was coverage over the country; local newspapers were picking up on what hometown people were doing to help victims of Soviet repression.

Another part of the prisoners of conscience project, which I should not neglect to mention, is that we also suggested that financial help be sent to the families of the prisoners. Some of these families were destitute or experiencing hard times because the breadwinner of the family was absent. Once you get into a project of this nature, opportunities to help multiply. And, that means an opportunity for additional people-to-people activities.

DR: And that's where you started getting into things like the bracelets and the medallions and all these other ways of making people feel like they had a connection to the prisoners.

LR: Exactly. Si Frumkin came up with this idea and the design — a *Magen David* medallion, necklaces, each bearing the name of a different prisoner of conscience. And he found a company to fabricate them. It was a real hit. And, it also produced income for the councils because the medallions were produced fairly inexpensively and could be sold for a buck or a buck-and-a-half apiece. Later, Si had bracelets made in a similar design.

DR: One last aspect about prisoners of conscience before we leave this, I think you said that there were some non-Jewish prisoners

who were on your list.

LR: Yes. There were two from the Leningrad hi-jacking trial. One was Yuri Fedorov and the other Aleksey Murzhenko. For their own reasons, they too wanted to get out of the Soviet Union. In 1974 when I visited the Soviet Union, I met Fedorov's wife, Natasha, in Benjamin Levich's apartment and talked with her through a translator, she spoke only Russian. She was being helped by the Jewish activists in Moscow, but was quite worried about her husband. The Jewish prisoners on the whole had received a fair amount of attention by the Western press but her husband had not. This absence of notice disturbed Jewish activists in Moscow, as well. In my discussions with Vladimir Slepak and Victor Polsky *they* brought up the subject. They said that they learned that lists of prisoners in the U.S. omit Murzhenko and Fedorov. They said, omitting them is wrong, categorically, because they stood with our people. I told them that lists I prepare for the Union of Councils included Fedorov and Murzhenko's names, from the very beginning. They asked me to check into the matter, which I did when I returned home. I found that the lists circulated by both the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry did *not* include Fedorov and Murzhenko. And, guess who fed the AJCS and NCSJ the lists? None other than the Israeli *Lishkat HaKesher*.

You know, I don't think that I mentioned the National Conference on Soviet Jewry earlier. Let me remedy that. Here are the particulars in a nutshell. By late 1970, the harsh crackdowns by the Soviets on the nascent Jewish *aliyah* movement spotlighted the shortcomings of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry. It was a paper tiger, absolutely incapable of a rapid or effective response to a fast moving situation. At the same time, the American Jewish establishment and the Israeli *Lishkat HaKesher*

felt threatened by the rapid rise and growth of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. What to do? Well, in 1971, after much dickering back and forth by the establishment, the AJCSJ was left in place and a new organization, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, was set up — with funding from the Federations and with a limited mandate. The NCSJ was to be an East Coast-based operation whose function was to provide political liaison with the U.S. Administration and Congress and handle press releases. The NCSJ was *not* to contact or provide information to community groups; that function was the reserved for the AJCSJ. Jerry Goodman — then employed by the American Jewish Committee — was hired to be executive director of newly minted NCSJ.

DR: Today is August 14, 1997, and we're continuing to interview Louis Rosenblum about the Soviet Jewry movement and his involvement in it. We were talking about the various people-to-people programs, and I think another one of these programs that you mentioned to me in advance was called adopt-a-family. What was that about?

LR: We — the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews — initiated the Adopt-a-Family project, in 1971, when it became apparent that a number of Soviet Jews, who had applied to leave for Israel, were in urgent need of material assistance. What triggered this need? Well, it was a couple of things. First, a person applying for a visa invariably was dismissed from his or her job. Then, the vagaries of the approval process were such that it could take months and even years to receive permission, or categorically turned down. Most visa applicants lacked substantial savings and soon exhausted any reserves. Requests for help were relayed to us by tourists who had visited Jews in the Soviet Union, by our contacts in Israel, and by telephone from activists in the USSR.

At first the project centered on asking individuals or groups to send

packages of goods, such as clothing and blankets, to needy families in the USSR. The goods could then be sold in the gray market for rubles. At a later date, direct money transfers also were sent. We distributed names all over, trusting that a congregation, or a community, or an individual would adopt a needy Soviet Jewish family. And, we got an excellent response. At first, when our 'Need Help' list was small, there was no coordination. However, in time, we realized that the number of people needing assistance had grown to the point that it was imperative for us to closely coordinate requests and responses. So early in '73, the Minnesota-Dakotas Committee — which I remind you was not a member of the Union of Councils, but worked closely with us and was attune to our way of operating — volunteered to establish a computerized data bank for keeping track of those requiring assistance and the help given, and of donors and the amounts contributed.

Now, we had our end reasonably organized. At the other end, things were more difficult to manage. At our urging in the '73-'74 period, the Moscow refuseniks established a committee of 3 or 4 people — Dina Beilina and a few others — who would keep track of the aid arriving and provided us with feedback as to whether or not the intended recipient did in fact receive assistance. They also funneled to us requests for assistance. So, in that period, the operation was fairly well in hand, considering that there was a large physical separation and a hostile government between the donors and those receiving the aid.

Then, in 1975, the operation within the Soviet Union began to unravel. First, tensions always present among various factions of refuseniks in Moscow had escalated, exacerbated by the question of who makes decisions about need and who distributes the moneys. Then, there was the loose canon effect. American tourists began going to the Soviet Union in greater numbers than ever before and few, indeed, were aware of the Adopt-a-Family program. With great but uninformed compassion, many who met with Soviet Jews would give them money on the spot. As a result,

we began hearing from sources in the Soviet Union that amongst the refuseniks charges were leveled of favoritism and manipulation and allegations made of "Swiss bank accounts." Dina Beilina and her associates, who all along were running an enormous personal risk for what they were doing, now felt much more vulnerable. So, about June of 1975, they retired from the field. Another group — Ilya Essas and four other young men — took over. They were an unknown quantity to us. And, we soon discovered they were unacquainted with the procedures employed by Dina Beilina. By October 1975, Judy Silverman, who was in charge of the Data Bank, Stu Wurtman, who was then president of the UCSJ, and I decided we must share our concerns with the Soviet Jewish activists. Judy and I composed a letter, addressed to Essas and his associates and to key refuseniks, detailing at length the Adopt-a-Family program, the Data Bank, reviewing how the program had been coordinated up to date, and describing the complicating and confounding factors, as we saw them, both at our end and at theirs. We closed by asking for their comments and suggestions. I transmitted the letter Oct. 15th by special channels.

By early November 1975, however, the UCSJ and the Data Bank felt that action could be delayed no longer and agreed to a 6-month moratorium on money sent into the Soviet Union. Then on Dec. 26, I received a letter from Essas and his group and from Slepak, Lerner, Lutnz, Beilina, and Scharansky. The Essas group said their main activity had been controlling distribution of checks given to refuseniks by tourists, they knew nothing of the Adopt-a-Family program, and they have sent no request for funds to us. The Slepak and company letter said that for over 6 months they have had nothing to do with the distribution of financial aid to refuseniks. What's more, both letters highlighted a major new problem. The Soviet government had announced that starting Jan 1, 1976 the exchange rate for dollars to rubles — already artificially high — would increase approximately 6-fold. Sending dollars to the USSR would be throwing money down a rat hole. That, in effect, put to rest the Adopt-a-Family program. Slepak and his friends certainly

recognized this. In their letter they commented that it's sad but at least it will had one good consequence — one of the reasons for mutual aggravation would disappear. They were of course referring to the acrimony and accusations that had been roiling the refusenik community for months.

DR: I guess any time you have a program that involves material aid of some kind you're almost inevitably going to have controversy and conflict. It's different than something that involves giving moral support, sending cards, simple correspondence, publicity, etc. When you're getting into material items, it changes the nature of it.

LR: Yes, it does indeed. In retrospect, the whole idea of attempting this in an unstructured environment was probably foolhardy. After all, even in this country, where you have institutional structure in place, there are perennial concerns regarding accountability and assessment of need.

DR: So the impetus for Jackson-Vanik — we're still talking about 1972, right?

LR: Right, 1972. Vanik and Jackson introduced legislation with identical wording, on October 4th, 1972.

DR: And Senator Jackson and Congressman Vanik, or their staff, decided on their own to do that? Or was that something that an outside group came to them with?

LR: As a participant in many of the events that lead up to this legislation, I would say it was, mainly, in response to demands from outside parties: independent Soviet Jewry groups, like the Union of Councils and the Student Struggle; *and* major Jewish

establishment organizations, which previously were lukewarm or outright opposed to such action. Now, what triggered this about face by the establishment? I'm convinced it was the appearance, in September 1972, of a new player on the scene bearing a cogent report from the Soviet Jewish leadership. The messenger was Leonard Schroeter, a 47 year-old Seattle lawyer. Schroeter, on leave from his practice since 1970, worked as Principal Assistant to the Attorney General of Israel on matters concerning the arrest and discrimination of Soviet Jews. My acquaintance with Len dates back five months earlier, in April, when, on Ann Shenkar's advice, he wrote to me. He said he was working on a book about Soviet Jewry and wished to visit the Soviet Union. Could I help him to get a visa and book on a tour, since it was unwise to attempt these arrangements from Israel? It was all but impossible to make these arrangements in Cleveland. So, I turned the matter over to Sam Halperin. And, thanks to Sam's excellent contacts in Washington, all the necessary was taken care of. Len made his visit to the USSR at the end of August. He returned to the States in time attend the annual meeting the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. Our meeting that year was in Washington, D.C., over the
Labor Day weekend.

While at the meeting, Len completed his trip write-up, *Report from Jewish Leadership in the Soviet Union*, and we arranged to have several hundred copies run off and distributed. That was just the start of the flurry of events that preceded the introduction of the Jackson-Vanik legislation on October 4th. Rather than me rambling on with all the details, I'll give you a taste of the excitement of that time by reading an excerpt from a summary report I sent to the UCSJ member councils, Oct. 9, 1972. I quote:

> "The past five weeks have been filled with activity, often frantic, centered about efforts to persuade the Soviets to withdraw the *ransom*. As you know, a measure of success has been achieved in this endeavor. Let me review, briefly, some of the salient events and contributing factors. First, the most important single factor, in

my estimation, in galvanizing action in the Jewish community and impressing the issue on government leaders was Len Schroeter's "Report from Jewish Leadership in the Soviet Union." Other important factors were: 1) the activities of the UCSJ Washington office (Karen Kravette) in working with the President's office and Congress; 2). Action Central — our rapid response group of forty key people throughout the U.S., coordinated from this office and operated by Carol Mandel of Cleveland; 3) good press, developed by Karen, Hal Light, Len Schroeter, and many of us in our local communities; and 4) last, but not least, the radicalization of the NCSJ in their approach to the President and Congress.

The day following the UCSJ annual meeting, September 5, Len, Karen, Hal, and I met with Leonard Garment and Howard Cohen of the President's office. Garment was highly impressed by Len's detailed report and asked for a written account he could use for preparing a memo to Mr. Nixon. Incidentally the political implications of the report, which flow from the assessment by Soviet Jews that Nixon had betrayed them, was evident to Mr., Garment.

"A meeting with the President's office on short notice was possible because of an interesting series of prior events. In July, I briefed a group of young people going into the Soviet Union. When they returned in August, they brought out important letters from activists in Kiev addressed to President Nixon and Senator George McGovern, Briefly, the letter to President Nixon was highly critical of his silence and the one to Senator McGovern was friendly and complimentary. These I directed to Karen Kravette for follow up. The letters were turned over to the respective addressees and copies were given subsequently to the press. Because of the nature of the letters, the President's office was interested in hearing from the UCSJ, if further material

relating to attitudes of Soviet Jews on Mr. Nixon came to our attention.

To continue with the chronology of events, the same day that we met with Mr. Garment we also met with members of the press. The next couple of days Len and Hal continued contacts with newsmen and columnists. On September 10-12, Len brought his message to Jewish organizational leaders in New York City, among them Jerry Goodman of NCSJ, the executive of the American Jewish Congress, and Yehoshua Pratt of the Israeli Consulate. On Wednesday, September 13, Len and I met with Phil Bernstein, Exec. V.P., Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Isaiah Minkoff, Exec, Dir., NCRAC, Jerry Goodman, NCSJ, and Sidney Vincent, Exec., Dir., JCF of Cleveland. The following morning in Washington, Karen arranged for a Congressional briefing. "The briefing — with Len Schroeder as principal, Misha Epelman (a Soviet *oleh*) supporting him, and me as chairman — was attended by over 40 Congressmen and their aides. The success of the briefing can be measured by the Congressional Record of that day. The bulk of the Record of the House contains statements on Soviet Jewry which drew heavily on the Schroeter Report. Visits to key Congressmen and Senators followed on the afternoon of the 14th and during the 15th.

In the days that followed, Karen developed new contacts, reinforced old, and lined up support as needed. Action Central people lined up support on their local level often on a few hours notice. Press coverage in most places was better than usual. Jewish organizations, for once, maintained a strong, determined front and worked to get out the vote [message], or at least did not oppose those who tried. Two important

> contributions in this latter category were: 1) a meeting in Washington on September 11 for Congressmen, under the auspices of the NCSJ, lead by Si Kenan, to explore possible legislative approaches and 2) the September 27th meeting of the NCSJ in Washington which openly criticized the President's stand and called for strong legislative action."

Well, the meetings that Len and I had with key congressmen and senators in mid-September indicated that they were primed to support new legislation. Indeed, Jackson's and Vanik's staffs were preparing drafts of appropriate legislation. Then, to force a decision from the ever-waffling Jewish establishment, Jackson invited himself to the NCSJ meeting in Washington, September 27th. He laid out the crux of the legislation he and Vanik would jointly introduce the following week. It was a *tour de force*: Which side are you on? It worked. NCSJ consulted with their establishment sponsors and subsequently declared their support.

DR: So Jackson-Vanik is now in Congress. I expect it was the beginning of another long road.

LR: Yes. Exactly. From October of '72, when it was introduced, until the late fall of 1974, when it was finally passed in Congress, many people invested a good deal of time and effort to insure its success. In this two-year period, the Union of Councils and Action Central were actively occupied in support of Jackson-Vanik. Our troops were out whenever it looked like the bill was threatened by an action of the administration, which was frequently, since the President and Kissinger did everything in their power to undercut it. However, in Congress, there were excellent people keeping things on track. Two in particular, Mark Talisman on Vanik's staff and Richard Perle on Jackson's staff, played decisive roles. We worked closely with them throughout the entire period, to great advantage

all around.

I won't go into the nitty-gritty of this two-year slog. Rather, let me tell you about two particular personal contributions. The first had to do with a serious threat to Jackson-Vanik, from within the Jewish establishment. This was from a friend of Nixon's, a wealthy Detroit Jew by the name of Max Fischer…

DR: Oh, I've heard of that name.

LR: You probably have. Fisher is an outstandingly wealthy, man: a philanthropist, a major donor to the Republican Party, and, in those years, was a financial supporter of Nixon. Presumably, he was asked by Nixon to get the Jewish establishment to withdraw its endorsement of the Jackson-Vanik legislation. Well, Max Fisher was a buddy of Jacob Stein, who was then president of the Conference of Presidents of Jewish Organizations. He asked Stein and 14 of his fellow presidents to meet with Nixon and Kissinger. And, what Jewish leader would ever turn down a private meeting with the President of the United States and the Secretary of State?

The meeting took place April 19, 1973. On leaving the meeting, Stein and company met with the press and issued a statement. Their statement applauded the Administration and Congress for their efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews *but* significantly omitted any reference to the Jackson-Vanik legislation. Were they supporting or not supporting Jackson-Vanik? Apparently, they were divided on Jackson-Vanik; so they sidestepped the issue.

It was important to nip in the bud a possible flip-flop., I succeeded in reaching Kyrill Khenkin in Moscow, two days later. Kyrill and I had been in phone contact for some time. He is a extremely bright guy, spoke several languages — including impeccable English — worked as a journalist and translator before joining the Jewish

activist movement. I presented to Kyrill the situation with Stein & company and told him in effective: we need from you and your friends a statement addressed to the Conference of Presidents of Jewish Organizations telling them where you stand on Jackson-Vanik. Kyrill understood completely and followed through. Within two days, a message of support for Jackson-Vanik signed by 10 of the Soviet Jewish activists was channeled to Jacob Stein and his colleagues. It did the trick. This timely reminder, from those whose lives were on the line, when added to the angry and indignant cries of "betrayal" from American Jews everywhere, stiffened the resolve of this wavering group of so called Jewish leaders. The result was a public statement, on May 2, "We continue our support for this [Jackson-Vanik] legislation[1].

DR: Today is March 8, 1998. We're in Bethesda, Maryland interviewing Lou Rosenblum about the Soviet Jewry movement and his involvement in it. We were talking about the Jackson-Vanik amendment and political action of the Soviet Jewry movement. Let's pick up from where we left off.

LR: OK. I was discussing personal contributions to Jackson-Vanik, during the two-year battle for the bill. I had given you one example; now let me give you just one more. Here's the background. In early 1974, a new game was afoot. The House, in December of '73, passed a trade bill containing the Jackson-Vanik amendment, by an overwhelming vote. And, a head count in the Senate indicated that over three-quarters supported Jackson-Vanik. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Kissinger initiated talks with both the Soviets and the Jackson-Vanik people seeking mutually

1. 1 My telephone conversation with Kyrill and his subsequent phone call from Moscow with a message from his fellow refuseniks was captured on tape recordings. This affair I dubbed the "Lou-Kyrill caper." I later made a PDF account of this affair, in which included audio files of all conversations: *Lou-Kyrill caper w-audio.pdf*

acceptable concessions. I was apprised of the negotiations by my contact in the Jackson office, Richard Perle. (During my visits to Washington, I often met with Richard in his office or at his home in the evening.) With negotiations in play, it was evident that there was a need for timely information on specific problems experienced by Jews applying to emigrate from the USSR. And, the best source for such information was the Jewish activists in Moscow. In this regard, I should mention that early in '74, the Soviet authorities began to cut off telephone service to the homes of Jewish activists. The cut-offs started in February 1974 and by April the phone quarantine was wholesale — a serious problem. The flow of news — collected and then relayed to us by Soviet Jewish activist — was dwindling.

It was clear to me that now was the time to make a trip to the Soviet Union. Did I discuss with you earlier my trip with Si Frumkin, Zev Yaroslavsky and Bob Wolf?

DR: I think you mentioned it in another context, but we actually didn't go into it.

LR: Well, I phoned Si, Zev, and Bob, discussed the need to visit our Soviet Jewish friends, and they were game to go. I arranged with a travel agent in New York for a package tourist trip to the Soviet Union for the four of us. The earliest trip available that fit all of our schedules was for April 28th through May 4th, with 4 days in Moscow and 3 in Leningrad. A few days before our departure, I called Richard Perle for an update on the negotiations and to let him know where I was headed. He said that on the issue of compromise they had informed Kissinger that — and I'll quote here from a transcript of our recorded conversation — "we would not compromise on the principle of immigration, on the principle that the first to leave would be the people who waited the longest, and

on the requirement that harassment be terminated. The one area we are willing to compromise is on the rate of flow…we have given Kissinger a very specific number, an absolute minimum." Richard also said he had been assigned by Jackson to prepare a detailed memorandum on harassment that would be included in an anticipated final agreement.

Our trip to the Soviet Union was intense but rewarding in many ways. We met with over 60 Soviet Jewish activists. Among these were representatives of most of the factions and interests that made up the Soviet Jewish *aliyah* movement. But, I don't want to digress here by giving you all the details, so on with Jackson-Vanik matters. In meetings with leading individuals like Alex Luntz, Vladimir Slepak, Alex Lerner and Victor Polsky, I emphasized the need for timely reports on problems in emigration from the Soviet Union — a brief review of the situation, analysis, and recommendations. The first, of what became a series of reports, arrived when tripartite compromise negotiation between Kissinger and the Soviets and Kissinger and Jackson was in its final stage. It was a two-page report that dealt with factors essential to assuring the effectiveness of a possible compromise. The report, written in Russian and signed by Alexander Luntz, Alexander Lerner, Vladimir Slepak, Victor Bailovsky and Lev Kogan, was sent September 5th from Moscow and was received by me, in Cleveland, September 27th. I immediately mailed a copy of the Russian document to Si Frumkin, who quickly translated it and telephoned me the translation. On September 30th I mailed the report and translation to Sen. Jackson.

The report was apparently timely and helpful. I have here a copy of the exchange of letters of understanding between Senator Jackson and Secretary Kissinger, October 18, 1974. Jackson stated in his one-page letter (paragraphs 2, 3 and 4) that it was his and Kissinger's understanding that "certain specific impediments, punitive actions and reprisals against persons seeking to emigrate

would not be permitted by the government of the USSR." And, the specific impediments, punitive actions and reprisals mentioned were the ones highlighted in the report by Luntz and company.
Perhaps it's no coincidence that the closing paragraphs of both the Moscow report and Jackson's letter hit same vital point. I'll read them for you.
The Moscow report: "In order for controls to be effective, information about what is happening inside the USSR is essential. For this, the least requirement is for working phones and functioning mail service. None of these exist now."
Senator Jackson's letter: "Finally, in order adequately to verify compliance with the standard set forth in these letters, we understand that communication by telephone, telegraph and post will be permitted."
It pleases me to think that this represents a modicum of justice for the 'Jews of silence': accorded a voice in the negotiations over their fate.

DR: Now in retrospect, having seen what transpired in the years after Jackson-Vanik passed, do you think it was effective?

One answer to that comes from the enemy camp, from the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin. He served in Washington from 1962 through 1986. In his book, *In Confidence*, published in 1995, he writes about Jackson-Vanik, "Our biggest mistake was to stand on pride and not let as many Jews go as wanted to leave. It would have cost us little and gained us much. Instead our leadership turned it into a test of wills and we eventually lost."

DR: Was there a point later on — I'm not talking about in the '70s, but maybe in the late '80s when things started changing in the Soviet Union — when you thought that it might have outlived

its usefulness?

LR: First off, let me say that I think Jackson-Vanik is a model of practical human rights legislation. It denies reward to reprehensible behavior. It establishes foreign policy in harmony with our country's best ideals of human rights and decency. But, as to its usefulness or effectiveness at any given time, that depended on a complex mix of factors. Remember, Jackson-Vanik was part of a bigger picture —the ongoing cold war struggle between the U.S. and the USSR. Jackson-Vanik was only one of many things that the Soviets had to take into account. Please understand, I'm not a Kremlinologist; but I'll take a crack at making a few conjectures. I've been reading and thinking about these matters for some time. Actually, you started me off several years ago, when you mailed me this report, *The Third Soviet Emigration: Jewish, German, and Armenian Emigration from the USSR Since Word War II*, by Sidney Heitman. So, let's begin with the emigration numbers given here and see what I can make of them. Keep in mind, these are just my conjectures.

Starting at 1971, over 14 thousand Jews were allowed to leave — more than the total that were let go in the previous decade. And, by 1973, the numbers grew to 35 thousand a year. Interestingly. it wasn't only Jews who were let go. Substantial numbers of ethnic Germans were also permitted to leave the Soviet Union for West Germany. Why? Was it the Soviets attempt to cleanup their image for American politicos — to woo the U.S. away from cozying up to China and to sway lawmaker drafting trade and credit legislation. Or, was it internal house cleaning — siphon off malcontents and dissidents, as well as a slew of old pensioners, and thereby improve both the political and economic bottom lines? Perhaps it was a bit of both.

Next, from 1974-1977 the number of Jews leaving dropped off,

averaging about 15 thousand a year. Was that an expression of displeasure with the Jackson-Vanik amendment and the Stevenson amendment that would put a 300 million dollar limit on export credits to the USSR? Quite possibly.

Then just a year latter, *mirabile dictu*, the number departing jumped to over 30 thousand; and in ’79, increased to over 50 thousand. Was it to convince President Carter, who was soft on Jackson-Vanik, to push for repeal? Why not?

After that, from 1980 through 1986, the immigration roller coaster dropped rapidly to about one thousand Jews a year. Why? My money is on Afghanistan. In late ’79 Soviet troops intervened in the Afghanistan conflict. Jimmy Carter cancelled U.S. participation in the 1980 Olympics in Moscow and put an embargo on exports to the Soviet Union. End to *détente*!

It wasn’t until ’87 and ’88 that Jewish immigration picked up again — 10 and 20 thousand a year, respectively. And, in ’89 and ‘90 it rocketed to over 80 thousand a year. I think this was a part of Gorbachev’s now-or-never try at saving the Soviet Union. The Jews were an offering to the U.S. — with a bow to Jackson-Vanik — in hope of American financing to stave off economic disaster. And what do you know? In December 1990, President Bush invoked the presidential waiver clause contained in Jackson-Vanik and made a billion dollars credit available to the Soviet Union for purchase of U.S. foodstuff. However, for Gorbachev and the Soviet Union it was too late; and, a year later both were “history.”

You asked me, did I think that Jackson-Vanik might have outlived its usefulness? No, absolutely not. Jackson-Vanik remains an outstanding human rights marker. It offers a clear choice to repressive regimes: allow your citizens to leave, if they wish, or

you get no trade benefits from the U.S. Let me wind up by saying that I'm pleased as punch to have been part of the struggle for the passage of Jackson-Vanik — a struggle that engaged so many dedicated men and women throughout our country.