

**From Theodore Bikel**

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Si Frumkin Shloshim Memorial: June 14, 2009

## PHARAONU GAVARYU ATPUSTI NAROD MOY

– **‘to you, Pharaoh, I say, let me people go’** - whenever I sing those lyrics of the Soviet Jewish underground movement I see Si Frumkin in my mind’s eye. From the very beginning he, along with a woefully small number of activists, saw the plight, understood the danger, knew that action had to be taken even though it was fraught with risks to the very people who needed to be helped to freedom. In those early days we fought a seemingly unwinnable battle, not only against the goliath of Soviet stubborn bureaucracy but also against ignorance and apathy here at home among those who were reluctant to be called to arms in a battle they did not understand.

But Si Frumkin never shied away from battle. He argued, cajoled, and shamed people into awareness. A small cause became a mass movement in great measure because of Si’s activism. We took to the streets, we marched, we sang, we enlisted the support of legislators, we stood at the gates of embassies and consulates, we were visible and audible.

A trickle of Jews began to be released from Soviet bondage, later to become a regular exodus.

Much is owed to my friend Si Frumkin. The release of such luminary prisoners of conscience as Natan Sharansky, Vladimir Slepak or Ida Nudel might have long been delayed had it not been for Si’s indefatigable insistence. He was a marvel of dedication and so often neglected to attend to his own needs because the needs of others were greater.

A life has come to an end but the spirit of that life remains to challenge us.

I know one thing: if Si should observe an injustice, wherever he is now, he is already at work to correct it.

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