

Obituary

Vitaly Aronovich Rubin (1923–1981)

Vitaly Rubin was killed in an automobile accident near Beersheba, Israel, on October 18. He was a Professor of Chinese Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He assumed this post on his arrival in Israel in 1976 after a tortuous, four-year struggle to leave the Soviet Union, where he was born and educated. During those four years, the international community of China scholars, led by David Keightley, Frank Shulman, and William Theodore de Bary, waged an unrelenting campaign to persuade the Soviet authorities to let Rubin live in the land of his choice. This unprecedented, worldwide support helped sustain Rubin's morale during his long ordeal; it also helped secure his release.

The English-language version of his major work, *Individual and State in Ancient China*, was published by Columbia University Press in 1976. In a prefatory biographical sketch, Steven I. Levine, who translated this work from the Russian, wrote a perceptive analysis of the forces that shaped Rubin's character and ideas.

Rubin was a Jewish nationalist and a pioneer fighter for democratic rights in the Soviet Union. His admiration for Confucian humanism, which he found similar to the teachings of the Prophets and the ethics of Martin Buber, endowed him with optimism and courage that helped him withstand painful physical and psychological pressures. His interest in humanistic philosophy did not stop in the classroom. It was part of his lifestyle.

During his life Rubin endured incredible hardship. As a volunteer-soldier during World War II, he was captured by the Germans, escaped, and rejoined the army, only to be sent to a labor camp because of Stalin's suspicion of ex-prisoners of war.

Yet, these last five years brought him tremendous joy and satisfaction. He made the most of the opportunity to write and teach as he wished, and to travel freely. Students and colleagues and his many friends throughout the world will remember him with affection. Above all, he will be remembered as a symbol of man's yearning for freedom.

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