

THE SOVIET LEGAL SYSTEM: CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTATION AND HISTORICAL COMMENTARY. By *John N. Hazard, Isaac Shapiro, and Peter B. Maggs*. Revised edition. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1969. Published for the Parker School of Foreign and Comparative Law, Columbia University. xix, 667 pp. \$17.50.

This book is a collection of cases decided by Soviet courts and of excerpts from Soviet laws and from the writings of Soviet legal scholars. The selections are arranged in a manner suitable for study and discussion in a course in Soviet law, with brief editorial introductions to the various chapters. To the nonspecialist the chief value of the book is as a reference work; indeed, there is hardly any aspect of Soviet society that is not illuminated by the materials contained therein. The book is divided into three parts: (1) "The Soviet State and Its Citizens," devoted chiefly to constitutional law, the agencies of public order, civil rights, criminal and civil procedure, and general principles of criminal law; (2) "Administering Soviet Socialism," devoted chiefly to land use, the system of industrial planning, contracts between state enterprises, collective farm law, labor law, and patent and copyright; and (3) "Private Legal Rights and Obligations of Soviet Citizens," devoted to personal property rights, inheritance, private contracts, torts and social insurance, marriage and divorce, and the rights and responsibilities of minors. There is a very useful bibliography of English-language writings on Soviet law, which runs to over seventy-five pages.

The nonspecialist may be surprised to learn from a careful reading of this set of translations how law-ridden the Soviet social and economic system is. Students of the Soviet economy, especially, will realize from a study of the second part of the book that Western literature on that subject has badly neglected the importance of legal regulations.

Although the editors have on the whole made an excellent choice of materials, the reader—whether specialist or nonspecialist—is faced with the difficulty that most of the selections are excerpts and, moreover, that the court decisions, though presented more or less in full, often refer to code provisions and statutes that must be sought elsewhere. When I used the earlier edition as the text for a course in Soviet law, I found this difficulty a substantial one—owing, very possibly, to my own inadequacies. The revised edition is considerably longer and richer, but the brevity of treatment of individual topics is still troublesome. The practical alternative would have been to reduce the number of topics by about half and double the number of pages devoted to each. Undoubtedly the editors chose otherwise in order to give a sense of the whole; but it is questionable whether the book itself conveys a sense of the whole, and if that sense is to be conveyed by the instructor who uses it as a text, the question arises whether he cannot do better if the students have pursued fewer subjects in greater depth.

Two minor criticisms of this important addition to Soviet legal literature: the translations are often faulty and inconsistent, especially those drawn from the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, and the publisher has made things worse by an inordinate number of typographical and other technical errors.

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