Book Reviews

A Sourcebook on Socialist International Organizations,
(William E. Butler, ed. & transl.)

Osnovnye Dokumenty SEV.

Dopolnitel'nye Dokumenty SEV.

Students of international institutions encounter many difficulties in gaining access to the documents issued in the past 30 years by the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or COMECON), and to additional documents related to cooperation in economic and other fields among the socialist countries. Even those students who master one or more of the languages used in these countries cannot avoid such problems. The official text of many documents is Russian, but these texts are not all regularly published. The COMECON journal—SEV. Ekonomicheskoe Sotrudnichestvo Stran-Chlenov SEV—contains documents only in a haphazard way. Some documents have also been published in the official gazettes of one or more of the member countries. So, for example, the Gezetsblatt der DDR and the Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Socialisthe România contain many such documents, but only in the language of the relevant country (which is usually not the language of the authentic text).

Even the second book under review, which is a reprint of a sourcebook issued by the COMECON Secretariat, lacks many documents, some of which are held to be important by less official compilers, e.g. the rules regulating the activities of the Council for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, the Protocol on the Character and Forms of Cooperation between COMECON and the International Association of Shipowners, and the rules governing the carriage of goods are not included.

Nevertheless, this book, which is a reprint of a 1976 Russian language book, has made available many COMECON-documents for the first time to students of international institutions who have access to sources in Russian.

The non-official compilations issued in some of the COMECON countries for their own internal use are normally incomplete and they contain only a small selection of the available documents (though a Hungarian compilation from 1968 is quite good). The same holds true for the compilations issued some years ago in the German Federal Republic and for an English-language edition, issued in 1977 in Moscow.
Professor Butler's volume is much more complete than the above-mentioned Moscow English-language edition, and the documents, compiled and translated by Butler, give the student of international institutions, who does not master one of the languages used in the COMECON, a unique opportunity to study socialist international institutions. He also includes a number of useful documents elaborated outside the framework of COMECON. Although this volume is the most complete published to date in English translation, Professor Butler might also have consulted the non-Russian sources mentioned above. He could then also have included the important Statute on COMECON Standards (of 1974) and the Agreement on Scientific-Technical Cooperation in the Framework of COMECON (of 1976).

One additional point is that Butler included a document on Model Provisions on International Economic Organizations (of 1973) which has been replaced in 1976 by a new document, entitled Uniform Rules on the Founding and Activity of International Economic Organizations.

Notwithstanding these comments, we congratulate Professor Butler on his successful efforts to make so many COMECON-documents available to all students of international institutions. His translations certainly give a good idea of the institutional framework for the cooperation among the countries of the COMECON in both economic and other matters.

The publication of both books under review is an important event in the study of socialist international institutions.

Ger P. van den Berg

NOTES

1. Of course, this book does not contain documents enacted after 1976, such as the General Conditions of Delivery of Goods between COMECON-countries and Finland: Obshhie usloviia postavok tovarov iz stran-chlenov Soveta Ekonomicheskoi Vzaimopomoshchi v Finliandskii Respubliku i iz Finliandskoi Respubliki v strany-chleny Soveta Ekonomicheskoi Vzaimopomoshchi (OUP SEV—Finliandiia), Moskva 1979; these General Conditions have been translated into the English language.


5. GBL II 1974, p. 512.
