

Gerard Pieter van den Berg, 1937–2004

Ger van den Berg, a distinguished contributor to the study of the Soviet Union and, since 1991, post-Soviet Russia, died suddenly on 21 April 2004 in Leiden, the Netherlands. For years he had been part of a group of North American and European legal scholars who periodically came together for team research at international conferences on both sides of the Atlantic.

Van den Berg began his academic career with a B.A. in physics from the University of Leiden, but after fulfilling his military service with the Royal Netherlands Air Force, he switched to the field of law. After completing his law degree at the university's faculty of law in 1967, the young scholar was invited to join the staff of the prestigious Documentation Office for Eastern European Law (in 1993, renamed the Institute of Eastern European Law and Russian Studies) at the University of Leiden, the foremost center in the west for the study of Soviet and east European law. After completion of his doctorate in law, van den Berg was subsequently appointed senior legal research officer at the Documentation Office for Eastern European Law and joined the Faculty of Law of the University of Leiden.

His early publications were on Soviet labor law, but his first book was on the Soviet system of government, published as *De regering van Rusland en de Sovjet-Unie* (Leiden, 1977). A German edition followed in 1984. A year later, another book, *The Soviet System of Justice: Figures and Policy* (Dordrecht, 1985), his most widely cited work, appeared to excellent reviews.

Van den Berg was also co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Soviet Law* (Dordrecht, 2d ed., 1985), and long time co-editor of the Leiden institute's law journal, *Review of Central and East European Law*, the premier journal on the subject in the world outside of Russia. A frequent participant at East-West international conferences, he presented papers (later published), at the conference on "Privatization and Entrepreneurship in Post-Socialist Countries" in Trento, Italy, in 1990; the conference on "Toward the 'Rule of Law' in Russia?" at Lehigh University in 1991; and others.

What was to become van den Berg's magnum opus took early form as a paper presented at the AAASS National Convention in St. Louis in 1999. Subsequently published in two special issues of *Review of Central and Eastern Law* (27:2/3, 2001 and 28:3/4, 2002–03), *Constitution of the Russian Federation Annotated*, a magisterial work of scholarship of more than 750 pages, is the most comprehensive study in any language, including Russian, of contemporary Russian constitutional law and practice.

In 2002 Ger van den Berg was honored by his European and North American colleagues with a Festschrift entitled, *Human Rights in Russia and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Ger P. van de Berg*, edited by Ferdinand Feldbrugge and William B. Simons (The Hague). George Ginsburgs of Rutgers University Law School at Camden joins me in saying Ger will be sorely missed by all his friends and colleagues in North America.

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