



Justice in Luritz: Experiencing Socialist Law in East Germany

Inga Markovits

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As a child, Inga Markovits dreamt of stealing and reading every letter contained in a mailbox at a busy intersection of her town in order to learn what life is all about. When, decades later, working as a legal historian, she tracked down the almost complete archive of a former East German trial court, she knew that she had finally found her mailbox. Combining her work in this extraordinary archive with interviews of former plaintiffs and defendants, judges and prosecutors, government and party functionaries, and Stasi collaborators, all in the little town she calls "Lüritz," Markovits has written a remarkable grassroots history of a legal system that set out with the utopian hopes of a few and ended in the anger and disappointment of the many. This is a story of ordinary men and women who experienced Socialist law firsthand--people who applied and used the law, trusted and resented it, manipulated and broke it, and feared and opposed it, but who all dealt with it in ways that help us understand what it meant to be a citizen in a twentieth-century Socialist state, what "Socialist justice" aimed to do, and how, in the end, it failed. Brimming with human stories of obedience and resistance, endurance and cunning, and cruelty and grief, *Justice in Lüritz* is ultimately a book about much more than the law, or Socialism, or East Germany.

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