Book review: Jarosław Zbieranek (ed.), *Subwencje z budżetu państwa dla partii politycznych. Jawność i kontrola* [Subsidies for Political Parties from the State’s Budget: Transparency and Control], Warsaw 2008, pp. 112

by Joanna Marszałek-Kawa

In 2008, a very interesting and modern work published by the Institute of Public Affairs, could be noticed, entitled *Subwencje z budżetu państwa dla partii politycznych. Jawność i kontrola* [Subsidies for Political Parties from the State’s Budget: Transparency and Control]. As the editor of the book, Jarosław Zbieranek, states in the introduction, the ISP [the Institute of Public Affairs] has been initiating research for years, as well as organising academic sessions, whose core is an analysis of the Polish solutions as to the financing of political parties passed by an amendment of the political parties act of 12 April 2001. Resultingly, the reviewed work constitutes an outcome of these activities. It is a conclusion from the research project *Transparentność finansów partii politycznych* [Transparency of Finances of Political Parties] of 2008, whose members devoted their research predominantly to the evaluation of two, considerable from the point of view of proper and clear functioning of democracy, issues, namely the case of transparency of the parties’ use of financial means from the state’s budget, as well as the control of their expenditure.

As mentioned before, the issue od financing the work of political parties is extraordinarily important for the proper and clear functioning of a political system. While today, when facing the world economic crisis, of which results have recently been experienced also in Poland, the problem of spending public
means on political activities has been once again present in public debates since an argument is underlined that the search for savings should also include politicians. Only in 2008, as much as 107 mln zloty, paid in the form of subsidies, went to parties’ accounts. Thus, it must be remembered that since 2001, the budget means constitute the most important and basic source of income for the biggest political parties.

The construction of the book, the arrangement of chapters is right and well planned. The discussed report consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, Aleksandra Jackowska presents the most important system solutions, which regulate the issue of subsidies for political parties in Poland. Especially interesting in this part of the book are these studies of the author herself that become the conclusion of the sums so far devoted to cases of particular political parties.

Marek Chmaj, the author of the second and third chapter of the study, is preoccupied with the problem of the status of the means received by parties from the state’s budget. He also discusses the constitutional rule of transparency. Moreover, he presents the position and meaning of institutions that are competent to supervise party finance (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza [the National Voting Commission], Najwyższa Izba Kontroli [the Supreme Chamber of Control], Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne [the Central Anticorruption Bureau], and Urząd Zamówień Publicznych [the Public Procurement Office]).

According to Chmaj, the authority of the PKW (National Elections’ Office) is too little. He votes, then, for strengthening the role of the organ, from definition non-political and independent, which, as proven by long experience, fulfills its authority diligently and professionally.

Next, in chapter four, Aleksandra Jackowska and Jarosław Zbieranek deal with the problems of social control over the money of political parties, exercised by citizens, social organisations, and the media.

The fifth chapter includes mostly the ruminations of Jarosław Zbieranek on managing and supervising the usage of financial means by political parties.

The most interesting part of the work is chapter six, in which the reader finds considerable motions for change in the abiding regulations of financing political parties, changes both legislative and institutional-procedural in character, whose predominant aim is to provide wider transparency of party finances. It is worth here at least mentioning a motion stated by the authors for more detail in the annual party forms of ‘information on the received subsidy and the expenditure coming from the subsidy’, or a motion to introduce an obligation for political groups to present
all documents and information concerned with the expenditure from a given subsidy. A valid issue is also the matter of widening the authority of the PKW in the area of supervising party finances, as well as of specifying in more detail the functioning of an Expert Fund. In addition, the authors pay attention to the necessity of providing a wider access to documents connected with the expenditure of sums coming to political groups from budget subsidies, so as to assure real social control.

As the editor of the work rightly remarks, adapting the ideas [of the authors of the report] leading to the increase of the transparency of the system of political parties’ financing from the state budget will influence the quality of public life.

Numerous appendices follow the report, which include interesting data on financing political parties in Poland, and a text of the act on political parties, which considerably helps in researching the given subject.

The reviewed book ends with a list of publishings which have been issued as parts of the ISP library in the years 2000-2008. To my mind, it creates a valuable prompt and an extraordinary benefit, especially for those readers who use a book published by the Institute for the first time.

It should be also underlined that, I must say rarely these days, footnotes in the whole work are used in an educated way, they include professional and true references to the literature of the subject. However, to benefit the work, it would be better to make a few language and style corrections, as well as editorial ones. In my opinion, some repetitions which appear in consecutive parts of the report are unnecessary. To illustrate, on page 16 in the second paragraph and in footnote 5 on page 17 there is the same information about aimed and subject subsidy, or on pages 12 and 18 of the work, the authors write in detail about the lowering of the sum of subsidy in the years 2002 and 2003. Nevertheless, these minor drawbacks do not lower in any way the high value of the work.

Moreover, the outstanding, precise style and pragmatic language must be noticed. The reviewed report can simply be easily read and understood, which, I think, is really valid. It undoubtedly constitutes another advantage of the work, and it can be used by academics, politicians, journalists, publicists, and students interested in the subject.

As pointed by the editor of the book, Jarosław Zbieranek, the report would not exist in the given form without the priceless help of two outstanding representatives of science, Marek Chmaj and Aleksandra Jackowska. Their involvement in the project noticeably proves the serious meritorical value of the work.
To conclude, I would like to underline that the reviewed work, entitled Subwencje z budżetu państwa dla partii politycznych. Jawność i kontrola [Subsidies for Political Parties from the State’s Budget: Transparency and Control], constitutes a worthy item, due to which the reader is endowed with an academically interesting study of the matter.

Moreover, the discussed report is beyond any doubt a book attractive both for students and academic teachers. It is an important contribution to the development of Polish political science. To my belief, the given book entirely fits into the recently loud discussion on financing the work of political formations from the budget of the state, creatively developing the debate devoted to party finances.


by Ireneusz Kraś

The processes of international integration have been noticed for years. The inconvenience with currency exchange has been perceived long ago by the representatives of classical economic thought – David Ricardo and the father of the common currency idea – J. Stuart Mill. He thought there is so much barbarism in many transactions in civilized countries that almost all independent states protect themselves by keeping their own currency. Although there is some inconvenience for those countries and their neighbours.

International integration increased after the World War II in Western Europe. The cause of this integration was that countries wanted to recover their lost economic position after WWII. The significant moments in the process of integration were the treaties. First Treaty of Paris, bringing into existence the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty was signed by six countries: Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg on 18th of April 1951. Next on 25th of March 1957 other Treaties of Paris were signed and brought into existence the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. These organizations were first to create uniform economic space in Europe with free flow of goods, labour force and capital. This process was implemented by other stages of integration – that is custom union and common market. Integration processes finally conducted till the beginning of