

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Lőrincz Lajos: A közigazgatás alapintézményei* [The Basic Institutions of Public Administration]. HVG–ORAC, Budapest, 2005. 406 pp.

The experiences of human history demonstrate that at times the leading forces of societies need to pause and retrospect, evaluate the present and outline the future, since the future is obviously anchored in the past, or more precisely, in the present. Thence, the evaluation of “the present” will necessarily result in a conspectus, scilicet, a conspectus of the available, or favourably, accessible facts, circumstances, experiences and knowledge in the specific framework.

I may not be incorrect, if I simultaneously contend, as a university professor dealing with public administration for more than two decades, that in our own (personal) lives peculiar situations ensue or might ensue, when we must also pause and accomplish what no one else can objectively effect, including our colleagues most familiar with our achievements. Scilicet, a conspectus or summary of our theoretical and practical knowledge acquired and scientific achievements attained during the recent years or decades. That is, the commitment to the writing of all the knowledge which perforce we master most.

Initially, these were the thoughts that entered my mind, when I took “The Basic Institutions of Public Administration” by Lajos Lőrincz into my hand and read the work, which was published possibly not unintentionally upon the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the author.<sup>1</sup> All along, it gave me the impression that I was holding an oeuvre, a *kind of conspectus* on public administration, and not merely Hungarian public administration, in my hand. A conspectus, which intends to provide a comprehensive and complex introduction to the basic institutions of public administration for the first time since the publication of the textbook of Zoltán Magyary in 1942 titled “Public Administration in Hungary”. *Complexity* in this case implies that upon the introduction of basic institutions, the author endeavoured (with success, I might add) to consider the achievements of all sciences concerned with public administration, including those of legal and political sciences, the sciences of

<sup>1</sup> The volume was published by HVG–ORAC Publishing House Ltd. in exacting finish.

administration, sociology and psychology and comparative sciences. In my judgement, however, complexity marks the volume not only by reason of the consideration of the achievements of sciences concerned with public administration from various points of view, but also in the sense that besides drawing on the results of Hungarian special literature, the author works through the American, German and French special literature concerning public administration uniquely from a Hungarian point of view.<sup>2</sup>

*The title projects the introduction of the basic institutions of public administration*, hence, it is regarded important, on the one hand, what the author defines as the concept of public administration, and on the other hand, what the author deems to be “the basic institutions” in the context of public administration. As a matter of fact, this complex question can be answered as follows:

As to the first part of the question, we can establish that *public administration* implies a specific activity of the state carried out by a specific group of experts working in a specifically structured organisation. Thus, public administration can be most clearly described through the detailed introduction and analysis of these three elements, i.e., activity, organisation and staff, which is to be construed as the generic term of state and local administration in a democratic state founded on the rule of law.

As to the other part of the question, *the basic institutions of public administration* are considered to be the three referred to elements of public administration, i.e., activity, organisation and staff, complemented by two further essential elements. One of these, or, if it suits your convenience, a starting point is that public administration is never realised or operates in a vacuum, but in a particular social environment, thus, the introduction of the real character of public administration requires the analysis of the system of relations with respect to that social environment. The other further element is the circumstance, that in modern societies public administration as to its organisation and functions cannot be distinctly separated from its environment, that is, on the frontiers of public administration we can find several so-called para-

<sup>2</sup> In recent years, primarily in the spirit of the accession of Hungary to the EU, more and more studies were published, which examine various legal institutions from a Hungarian point of view. Let me adduce the following two works: Kecskés, L.: *Tézisek az Európai Közösség jogáról és a jogharmonizációról – immár magyar szemmel is* (Theses Concerning the Law of the European Community and Legal Harmonisation, by This Time from a Hungarian Point of View). *Jogtudományi Közlöny*, 52 (1997)181; Pap, L.: *Az Európai Bíróságról – magyar szemmel* (Concerning the European Court from a Hungarian Point of View). *Jogtudományi Közlöny*, 53 (1998) 107.