



Województwo
Śląskie



Instytut Myśli Polskiej
im. Wojciecha Korfańtego

Instytut Myśli Polskiej
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jest instytucją kultury Samorządu
Województwa Śląskiego.



Współfinansowane przez
Unię Europejską

To rule means to serve

Michał Sikora

Wojciech Korfańty was a charismatic type, able to mobilise and bring out the best in people. This politician, Upper Silesian leader, publisher of the „Polonia” daily, leader of the 3rd Silesian Uprising, and in reborn Poland a member of the Sejm of the 1st and 2nd term, with a social worker's vein and sensitivity anchored in the current of Christian democracy, published in 1927 a dissertation *Duties of Officials*. The article, characterised by a fiery style, reveals the author's ambition as a social reformer who has at heart a significant improvement of the national organism, which consists in healing the relationship between rulers and citizens by cataloguing the potential vices of power and then explaining step by step the elements that must be transformed in order for the instruments controls have not degenerated, and those responsible for them have not fallen into mindless routines of duty. It is worth noting that Korfańty's work was not the first text in Polish, the creation of which was motivated by the improvement of state management, which translated into the flourishing of generally understood prosperity combined with the sanitation of customs. Korfańty's paper is also part of the journalistic tradition dating back to ancient times, in which a galaxy of leaders, philosophers, poets and writers expressed in their literary legacy concern for the quality of collective life, recommending - usually - the restoration of the old, golden times, or appeals for orientation towards future and openness to the renewal that flows from it. So what does Wojciech Korfańty postulate? At the outset, he characterises the main characters - the title officials. He claims that officials are responsible for „the entire economic life of a country, its trade, industry, relations with foreign countries, its means of transport, all military and political actions, most moral actions”. Therefore, the author wants to portray the legion of bureaucrats in the whole range of tasks that weigh on them, reducing their work to three basic goals: „1) to ensure the normal functioning of public service, 2) to align functions with the interests of the general public, 3) to perform them without causing unnecessary difficulties and unpleasantness to private persons and the public community”. Administration,

explains Korfanty, is a necessary driving force of every mature statehood, testifying to its level of civilizational advancement. Unfortunately, the author points out, the Polish administration is relatively young, inexperienced and unprepared professionally. The reason for this state of affairs is the dark period of the Partitions, characterised by „annoying Austrian bureaucracy or worse, unbearable Russian influences, and (...) we are far from European administration. It will be a long time before we have professionally prepared officials in Poland, with a sense of responsibility and never forgetting that he is only a servant of the nation. The intention of the Silesian, however, is not to blame the deficiencies among officials, but to present remedies that make people aware of what a good, useful bureaucracy is. However, before we get to the heart of the aforementioned term - as understood by Wojciech Korfanty - let us emphasise the importance of this term in Max Weber's sociology. The German thinker distinguished three forms of domination, referring to charisma, tradition or legal rules, which in social and political realities may intertwine in various proportions. According to Weber, different types of power are an indicator of the progressing rationalisation of power, which culminates in procedural legalism corresponding to modern administration. The system of officials, called bureaucratic, in Weber's view, which, as it will turn out, is consistent with Korfanty's views, departs from the generally accepted negative connotations, and whose operation is obedience to rules, not to people and/or political inspirations, in which each the stakeholder is treated equally. Therefore, the very meaning of bureaucracy is misleading, because what we mean by it expresses the excessive power of officials or the numerous shortcomings of many bureaucratic bodies. Bureaucracy, on the other hand, as Weber wrote about it, and as Korfanty shared this reasoning, is a well-oiled mechanism, professionally dynamizing the state apparatus, behind which there are people with high skills, not subject to political pressure, as well as morally disciplined. So what solutions for efficient bureaucracy does Wojciech Korfanty see? Firstly, it indicates the conscientious performance of duties, while any deviations from this rule are treated as an abuse of position. Interestingly, Korfanty denies the civil servants the right to strike (even the Italian one), arguing that any longer breaks in the administration's activities are detrimental to the interests of the nation, therefore they are inherently illegal, and the strike is, after all, an arena where private interests prevail over the interests of the general public. An official should also be subject to Christian morality that requires apoliticality, reliability and getting rid of the

lust for careerism. A good official, suggests Korfanty, is to ensure the happiness of the society, to which he is responsible for avoiding sick or even pathological meticulousness, as well as disrespect for public property, and especially reprehensible profits from it. Nor can he have moments of hesitation, because the rules towering over him should be formulated clearly enough to be able to guide him through the meanders of his service. This is also to prevent the official's responsibility for decisions taken from being shifted to incomprehensible legal guidelines. The lack of communication between individual administrative centers is also unacceptable, and the resulting piling up problems fall for supplicants, poisoning their lives. Besides, it works obstructively for the proper development of the state. Korfanty points out the complexity of procedures, unnecessary formalities and excessive, often unfounded, control, which are short-sighted actions that sabotage the emergence of new initiatives aimed at expanding national prosperity, effectively weakening the social fabric, becoming a ready-made recipe for disaster. Another enemy of proper bureaucracy is the selfishness of administration employees serving the interests of the rulers, the governed cities. The author of *Official Duties* emphasises the requirement of full ideological autonomy of bureaucrats, which is to be respected and not exceeded by the state, provided that official beliefs threaten the social order. Hence the need for bureaucratic control, which, however, must not rape their souls. Any tightening of the surveillance logic can quickly turn a democracy into a dictatorship. This is how Wojciech Korfanty perceived officials - people guided by the commandment of love of neighbour, exemplary professionals who respected established regulations, fulfilling the mission of serving the state, while renouncing state goods and other personal benefits resulting from close ties with politics.

Tłumaczenie powstało w ramach projektu realizowanego przez Instytut Myśli Polskiej im. Wojciecha Korfanteo (2021-1-PL01-KA121-ADU-000006366). Instytut jest instytucją akredytowaną na lata 2021-2027, która otrzymała dofinansowanie z programu Erasmus+ w sektorze Edukacji dorosłych.

Tekst oryginalny: „Władać znaczy służyć”, „Korfantówka” 1/2020, s. 8,10

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