

Piotr Górski

Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza im. Stanisława Staszica w Krakowie

## **Attitudes Towards Foreign Administration Models in the Process of Reforms of the Government Administration in Interwar Poland (1918–1939)<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Introduction**

Debates about public administration issues show that the problem of administration reforms has always been topical, regardless of the ever-changing context in which reformers act and the criteria of the assessment of their actions. At present, reformers of the public sphere tend to utilize experiences and solutions already gained and developed by market sector organizations. It does not seem to be a novelty: administration systems in the course of their history have used various models, including those developed by the armed forces. The phenomenon of the use of ideas and concepts originating from different spheres of human activity or other cultures is relevant to researchers, as it shows the role of ideas, their transmission in time and space, as well as processes related not only to their creation, but also their transmission and reception.

The problem of the impact of ideas on human activities is a classic problem in the social thought more and more often raised by researchers of organization and management issues [“Global Ideas” 2005]. The application of sociological knowledge to research organization and management problems allows to understand processes related to the reception of management concepts, as well as conditions of their reception, transformation and use in new conditions. The paper is aimed at presenting inspirations used by Polish people in the course of public administration reforms in the interwar period. As the subject of the

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research relates to past events, the historic perspective method had to be adopted for the purpose of the interpretation of historic sources [Górski 2007]. The base source was provided by statements related to organizational changes in public administration and my attempt was to extract those statements that showed various attitudes of their authors towards foreign models. The recognition and awareness of values and action projects of the actors of reforms carried out 80 years ago may prove helpful to understand mechanisms governing the present reforms in Poland.

## **2. Public administration reforms in interwar Poland – conditions and actors**

Public administration reforms in interwar Poland were determined by many factors and circumstances.

Firstly, state administration structures after the end of WWI were created in an uncontrolled manner and changes of the cabinet often resulted in enthusiastic and somewhat disorderly actions, missing careful long-term planning. In the initial period, optimism was prevailing that originated with a belief that Polish people, building a new state system, were not like other states, restrained by bureaucratic traditions. The Polish had no such tradition and thought that all they had to do was to reject the administration systems of the former invaders and built up everything anew. The belief soon turned out to be just an illusion because (1) certain traditions, as unrevealed as they could be, were rooted in the customary habits of the civil servants of former administrations, (2) the tradition was instilled in the relation of Poles to any government and administration – which phenomenon is of particular importance, and (3) public discontent with the new administration system increased. The development of administration was obstructed by objective conditions: legislation works in progress and a lack of qualified administration staff.

Secondly, the increased pace of administration reforms after the coup d'état by Józef Piłsudski in 1926 were driven by ideological factors. The government administration was perceived as the pride of the state, which corresponded with the ideology and citizen education for the state, promoted by the Piłsudski's governing group.

Thirdly, people became aware that the number of tasks to be performed by the government and administration was apparently increasing, which entailed that government administration reforms were required in order to enable the administration to meet new challenges and to ensure a more effective performance of its duties.

Fourthly, an important factor considerably limiting the range and feasibility of reforms, particularly in the 1930s, was the situation of the state budget troubled by the economic crisis.

Nonetheless, the reforms of administration were assigned clear objectives: administration was to be more efficient, less expensive and more responsive to

citizens' expectations. The aforementioned goals seem to have remained valid until today. References to foreign concepts of administration, to be presented further in this paper, revealed new criteria for the assessment of government administration and new tools for the analysis of actions.

In my description of attitudes to foreign administration models, prevailing in the course of reforms, I will refer to three groups: (1) the Association of Civil Servants (*Stowarzyszenie Urzędników Państwowych*), (2) reformists promoting scientific management and (3) higher officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who drafted new organization rules. The development of reform projects was entrusted with the Committee for the Improvement of Public Administration /*Komisja dla Usprawnienia Administracji Publicznej*/.

### 3. In search of models and inspirations

The leaders of civil servants associated in the Association of Civil Servants in the 1920s represented an orientation related to the patriotic tradition of Polish intelligentsia, which was close to the views of the protagonists of Stefan Żeromski's novels. Their involvement in the creation of the foundations of the Polish administration was inspired by patriotic feelings and the sense of public service, i.e. dedication to the state. Civil servants were expected not only to be loyal to the authority and to act in a professional manner in compliance with laws, but also to be dedicated to the state and to show their patriotic attitude. Civil servants expected that in consideration of the foregoing they would not only gain public respect and their material status would be secured, but also that they would be allowed to participate in the development of laws related to civil service.

From the end of the 1920s, civil servants organised in the Association of Civil Servants showed – more and more frequently and openly – their criticism of subsequently changing governments. Their criticism was based on the conviction that governments failed to respect covenants related to the basic interests of civil servants, i.e. their wages, rules of advancement, medical care and pension plans, *which (by failure of the authorities – author's note) is detrimental to the functioning of the administration system and impacts upon the interests of the state* (*Walny Zjazd Delegatów Kół SUP* 1929, p. 2). As social tensions were growing due to economic conditions (affected by the crisis) and political situation (attempts by “Sanacja” governments to gain more and more authoritarian power), civil servants became increasingly critical about governing groups of the 1930s. It was then that the Association of Civil Servants undertook actions in co-operation with other groups of civil workers from whom the Association would dissociate in the previous decade [*Kongres pracowniczy* 1936; *Nowe drogi ruchu zawodowego* 1936]. Civil servants criticized capitalist economy and not only demanded more state interventionism in economy, but also wished for more involvement of government in social policy in order to counteract social inequality [*Deklaracja*

*społeczno-gospodarcza* 1936]. Civil servants criticized laws imposing restrictions on civil freedoms [*Nowe prawo o stowarzyszeniach* 1932]. In their actions they demonstrated that their patriotism and sense of responsibility for the state did not allow them to go on strike (which, at that time, was declared by French civil servants) [*Drastyczny dowód* 1933]. A turn to the left side of the political scene quite clear in the 1930s did not mean a surge of sympathies towards solutions proposed by the USSR or fascist governments [*Ruch pracowniczy a wybory* 1937]. Generally, civil servants in the interwar period were not favourably predisposed towards any novelties from abroad. They would argue that government administration should be based on highly qualified civil servants, well educated and dedicated to the state. They struggled against nepotism, corruption or nominations of army officers to civil servant positions in public administration [*Niedole urzędników cywilnych w administracji wojskowej* 1932; *Jądro zła* 1936]. Their attitudes to the idea of the application of scientific management principles to public administration is well illustrated by the following: In the middle of the 1920s, “*Życie Urzędnicze*” published a number of articles by promoters of the application of scientific management principles to public administration [Twardo 1925; 1926; *Dwanaście zasad wydajności H. Emmersona* 1926]. The reception of the publications by civil servants was initially that of curiosities, but when certain solutions offered by scientific management were eventually applied to employment policies in the government administration, they were strongly objected [“BP” 1936].

The promoters of the application of scientific management principles to public administration, along with promoters of the principles of such principles in economic organizations, referred, first of all, to American experiences [Górski 2005]. They argued that a new approach and new criteria for the assessment of government administration should be transplanted onto the Polish ground and that expert centres should be established in order to support decisions of the administration at the government level. “*Przegląd Organizacji*” in its first issue of 1926 published a paper *Wydajność pracy urzędników państwowych* credited to Frederick Winslow Taylor. The publication of a work by the American pioneer of scientific management was intended to show challenges faced by the administration and readily available solutions well tried in industrial companies. The author’s approach is also noteworthy, and is so characteristic of Americans convinced that civil servants are paid by taxpayers, which gives ground to see if the administration is effective and inexpensive. The effectiveness and costs, that is, time saving, procedures describing jobs to be performed by civil servants and modes of handling matters became the subject of concern of Polish pioneers in scientific management as well.

Other American aspects pointed out then were the importance of civil servants being apolitical, as well as the requirement to establish expert and counsel

groups to support decision making processes. The solutions were implemented in the US by the promoter of scientific management, the future US President, Herbert Hoover, when he was still the Minister of Trade [Spaczek 1929].

One of the Polish authors who published in "Przegląd Organizacji" in the early 1930s and who referred to the American models of administration reforms was Czarnecki [1931]. He pointed out that the USA was the only state in the world in which so much attention and effort was devoted to the formation of the administration system and – in particular – its management. The efforts consisting in the establishing of various committees and offices *were intended to make the state (federal) machine less expensive and to co-ordinate actions of the units of that machine* [op. cit., p. 2]. Czarnecki was impressed by the organisation system of the US federal administration. He described the structure and scope of competence of an office responsible for the organization of work in federal departments. The head of the office reported directly to the President. Czarnecki, with all his heart, recommended the application of American solutions to the Polish administration system. The idea that units to support government administration should be established at the ministerial level in order to develop work organization methods was promoted by Kazimierz Barliński [1935; 1936], but his initiative was ignored in the course of the re-organisation of the Polish administration system.

However, American office work techniques using chronometers and Grantt charts were applied. At the end of the 1920s, they were used in the work organization systems applied in the offices of land districts (powiat) of the Warsaw Voivodship (województwo). They helped to facilitate citizen service, internal communication in offices and the development of organization structures [Tomaszewicz 1929]. New solutions were developed without an explicit reference to the American experience. Instead, rational and universal rules were invoked in a belief that effectiveness and efficiency criteria, as well as methods on which the solutions were based, have a universal dimension. Solutions proposed in the interwar period by the promoters of the application of scientific management into public administration were limited and covered only the organization of municipal offices and utility companies, such as waterworks, power stations or natural gas distribution companies [Górski 2009. pp. 77–88].

The third group that formulated its opinions about foreign administration models were the senior officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They developed a re-organization scheme of the government administration in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Their attitude noticeably combined two approaches: (1) the legal approach marked by the conviction that good, clean-cut legislation must be developed, this originating from the awareness that the uncontrolled development of the administration system had resulted in the depreciation of laws, and (2) the approach founded on the conviction that it was necessary

to apply solutions ensuring that the administration system would be efficient and economic, i.e. such as offered by scientific management. The said attitude of senior officers resulted in the implementation of certain aspects of scientific management into administration actions. The various aspects were applied not only to the organization of office work, but also to planning, control and inspection. Organization solutions used for this purpose were based on legal regulations, and corresponded to new requirements addressed to the managers and officers of planning and control/inspection units. Planning and control/inspection activities were linked with the improvement and effectiveness of the work of offices performing duties assigned to them.

Foreign models used for these purposes were mostly of German origin. Leon Biegeleisen, responsible for the education of administration staff, and Stefan Stosyk, assigned to implement changes in the organization of government administration offices, co-operated with the Committee for the Improvement of Public Administration and travelled to Germany, England and France. Germany, defeated in WWI, had to focus on the re-organization of its administration system with regard to costs and work efficiency of offices. However, whilst Americans talked about economizing in the context of the financing of civil service by taxes, Germans stressed the effectiveness with which citizens' cultural and economic requirements had to be satisfied [Biegeleisen 1926]. Reforms carried out by Germans helped to develop the sense of independence and responsibility among civil servants, whose number was decreased and thus the increase of their wages was allowed.

As regards the education of civil servants, Biegeleisen appreciated the establishment of specialist institutions and university chairs in Germany, addressing municipal issues, which helped to combine theory, practice and economic policy. He also appreciated that social and economic studies were added to university curricula [Biegeleisen 1931, p. 34]. But he also valued the English system of educating civil servants in which students were allowed to share their critical and individual opinions about subject matters and were not required to memorize material being taught, but to solve practical problems based on sources and scientific principles [op. cit. p. 547]. However, administration staff education oriented towards practicalism was objected in Poland by academic lawyers who could not imagine that the education of administration staff could be based on anything other than law science, by which they understood the Roman law and subjects related to the history of law [Brody 1937]. Prolonged debates of lawyers, concerning the teaching of law as well as the financial turmoil of the 1930s obstructed and eventually disabled the establishing of an education system addressed to administration personnel in interwar Poland.

Germans also provided models for the reform of office work in Polish offices. Stosyk appreciated Germans for their systematic approach, formalism and



acceptance of new rules and regulations by civil servants [1929]. Following German patterns, he recommended that the administration be reformed from top to bottom, i.e. that instructions should be developed for the central administration first. He also acknowledged that the reform of office work was a part of the general reform of the administration system in Germany. The organization of office work in administration was based on office work organization rules which became an independent branch of science. In Germany, the reform was supported by the central institute dedicated to research and development of work organization principles for administration. The institute carried out research, collected data related to organizational experience of offices from all over the country in order to analyze the same and publish best solutions. Research work was combined with training courses in office work rationalization. The key mission of the German administration reform was *Wirtschaftlichkeiten*, which Stosyk translated as *gospodarcza praktyczność /economic practicality/*.

According to Stosyk, office work rationalization was not the ultimate purpose for Germans to achieve, but a means to streamline the work of office work. Actions of Germans were aimed at economizing efficiency (which was calculated with the proverbial German accuracy) and usefulness. What mattered to Germans were both time and efficiency. Hence, they introduced a rational division of labour and a clear distribution of responsibilities and competences. They also changed the mode of office operations in order to enable clearer and more accurate decision making, and to introduce a uniformed system for the handling of acts with the use of a set of symbols affixed to each document (which Stosyk particularly liked). They also introduced standardized forms for applicants' submissions and for officers to issue routine decisions. According to Stosyk, Germans assigned high priority to the work system organization reform in the government administration, which was proved by the fact that in each ministry there was an officer appointed specifically to streamline administration work, while an inter-ministerial committee working on issues related to work streamlining was composed of all officers so appointed in each ministry.

It's obvious that Stosyk, having collected so many positive impressions, concluded his description of German office work methods in administration with a recommendation that German solutions should be used in the reform of the Polish administration. He wrote: "I conclude my work with a motion that the principles of the new-German system be adopted as a basis for the future uniformity of office work system in Poland. I say "principles" because in our conditions certain detailed solutions may vary. The implementation sequence and the time span of certain stages of reforms may also be different. I am of the opinion that there are bases in Poland developed enough [to introduce reforms – author's note] and the need is urgent. Let us not allow others outdistance us too much. We have lost too much time on considerations and attempts to implement

– in various locations – inadequate solutions which had not been thought out well enough” [op. cit. p. 9]. What is noteworthy in this statement is not only the acknowledgement of well-trying, scientific methods but also the patriotic inspiration and the awareness of challenges that the Polish administration had to meet in the course of changes resulting from reforms. It’s also noticeable that Stosyk considered foreign models (in this case – German ones) in terms of general principles to be respected by Polish reformers, and that he did not take them as ready-made and readily-available solutions.

#### 4. Conclusions

Public administration reforms in interwar Poland were noticeably influenced by the traditional intelligentsia ethos which was still vivid in the social consciousness of civil servants. The ethos stimulated individual and personal dedication to the creation of the structures of the state administration and inspired readiness to sacrifice. The actions of civil servants were inspired by patriotic feelings and belief that the efficiency of administration depends, in the first place, on professionalism and morale of civil servants. They believed that the government administration was to observe the principles of democracy in relation to both citizens and civil servants who expected that their adequate social position and employment stability would be secured.

However, as the number of duties to be performed by the government administration increased, the efficiency of the administration system could no longer be secured solely by the quality of its staff. This is why specialists from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who reformed the government administration, used Western models amongst which German ones were particularly valued. Following the German experiences, the reforms of the government administration were carried out in a systematic and planned manner, starting from the central administration level through the provincial (*województwo*) level to complete the reform at the land district (*powiat*) level. The transparency of the system, the legislative order and office work organization were considered particularly important. Financial turbulences of the 1930s caused that the range of reforms was limited, particularly as regards the administration control system and education efforts addressed to civil servants.

Inspirations provided by scientific management and the use of methods applied in industrial organizations are noteworthy. American inspirations were not reduced to the organization of office work, but extended to the idea of agencies assisting central administration bodies in their decision making processes. However, these inspirations did not enjoy favourable public reception and remained merely the projects of the promoters of scientific management. Nonetheless, the principles of office work organization were applied at a larger scale which covered citizen service and the improvement of internal communication.



The reforms of the government administration were prepared and implemented from the mid 1920s until the mid 1930s. The reforms were accompanied by the awareness that to have the genuinely Polish administration with Poles as civil servants (which had been merely a dream before Poland regained its independence) was not all that was needed. Polish people were increasingly aware of the importance of good laws and such organization principles that would ensure effective performance of tasks that the administration in a modern state was to perform. While creating their modern administration system during the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Polish were open to use the experience gathered by Western countries considered to have rich traditions and well organized public administration and institutions.

### Abstract

*The paper is aimed at presenting inspirations used by Polish people in the course of the public administration reforms carried out in Poland in the interwar period. The views of three groups expressing their opinions about foreign models in the context of the public administration reforms were presented against a historical background coloured by the coup d'état by Józef Piłsudski, the difficult situation of the state budget due to the economic crisis of the 1930s and the increase of duties to be performed by the state. The three groups consisted of (1) the promoters of the principles of scientific management to be applied to the government administration, (2) higher officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who prepared the reform of the administration and (3) civil servants associated in the Association of Civil Servants. Differences in the attitudes towards foreign models, as presented by each of the groups, were briefly described in the paper, as a result of search of a model that could ensure an increased efficiency of the administration and thus satisfy the requirements of the first two groups mentioned above, and that could secure professional and material position of the third group, as well.*

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