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PARTICIPATION OF THE POLISH COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN AN EXTRA-CURRICULAR FORMS OF ADULT EDUCATION

**Udział polskiego ruchu spółdzielczego II Rzeczypospolitej
w pozaszkolnych formach edukacji dorosłych**

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Abstract

This article concerns extra-curricular forms of adult education organized by the Polish cooperative movement in the Interwar period. It presents the beginnings of the cooperative movement, as well as its unions and institutions. The two biggest unions, i.e. the Association of Agricultural and Economic and Commercial Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland and the "Społem", The Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland and their educational needs are explored in more detail. The article's objective is to present extra-curricular forms of adult education organized by the Polish cooperative movement. Therefore, the article incorporates issues related to the following: adult education course types; publishing activities carried out by cooperative unions; other extra-curricular forms of adult education, including training, conferences, lectures, reading, festivals and anniversary celebrations, radio and film, organizing theatres, choirs, concerts, and many other forms of educational activities.

Keywords: adult education in the Interwar period, the cooperative movement of the Second Republic of Poland, cooperative unions, extracurricular types of adult education, adult education.

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy pozaszkolnych form edukacji dorosłych organizowanych przez polski ruch spółdzielczy w okresie międzywojennym. Ukazuje początki ruchu spółdzielczego oraz jego związki i instytucje. Szezej charakteryzuje dwa największe związki: Związek Spółdzielni Rolniczych i Zarobkowo-Gospodarczych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i „Społem” Związek Spółdzielni Spożyców RP oraz ich potrzeby edukacyjne. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie pozaszkolnych form edukacji dorosłych organizowanych

przez polski ruch spółdzielczy. Dlatego artykuł zawiera problematykę dotyczącą: kursowych form edukacji dorosłych; działalności wydawniczej prowadzonej przez związki spółdzielcze; innych pozaszkolnych form edukacji dorosłych, do których należały szkolenia, konferencje, wykłady, czytelnictwo, obchody świąt i uroczystości, radio i film oraz organizowanie teatrów, chórów, koncertów i wielu innych przejawów aktywności mających charakter edukacyjny.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja dorosłych w okresie międzywojennym, ruch spółdzielczy II Rzeczypospolitej, związki spółdzielcze, pozaszkolne formy edukacji dorosłych, oświata dorosłych.

Introduction

The beginnings of the cooperative movement are related to the foundation in 1844 of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers near Manchester, England. It was the first cooperative in the world which, by becoming a model for cooperative organizations in various countries, initiated the development of the cooperative movement.¹

After the end of World War I and Poland regaining independence, there was a vigorous cooperative movement growth, dating back to the second half of the 19th century. From the mid-1930s, the cooperative movement functioned within four groupings: "Społem", the Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland, the Association of Agricultural and Economic and Commercial Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland, the Union of Cooperatives and Workers' Associations of the Republic of Poland and the Audit Union of Military Cooperatives. In addition to cooperative unions, there were also various cooperative institutions: the Cooperative Society, the Cooperative Scientific Institute, the Society for the Promotion of Work Cooperation, the League of Cooperative Students in Poland, and others. The Interwar cooperative movement in Poland encompassed over 20,000 cooperatives bringing together over 3 million people. In addition to economic activity, being a social movement, it conducted systematic educational and propaganda activities both in the adult community, as well as amongst children and schoolchildren. Adult education carried out by the cooperative movement was based on the principles of Cooperativism created by Edward Abramowski (1968–1918). Stigmatizing selfishness and the pursuit of profit, the cooperative movement taught social forms of work, mutual help, cooperation, solidarity, and creation of living conditions for the poorest strata of society (Magiera, 2014a).

After regaining independence, the cooperative movement set itself important tasks concerning the need to compensate for the economic underdevelopment (caused by the 123 year period of partitions of Poland and the effects of the First World War) and to

¹ Polish cooperative movement is still based on Rochdale Principles, which include: voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, limitations on member compensation and appropriate use of surpluses, payment of limited interests, political neutrality and religious tolerance, cash trading, and conducting social and educational activities (Wojciechowski, 1930, pp. 79–98).

deal with the growing economic needs of the state and society. The economic achievements of cooperative associations were dependent on their membership and the body of recipients, therefore a great importance was given to the promotion of the cooperative ideology and recruitment of new cooperative activists. There were the tasks at the heart of the development of extra-curricular adult education, organized by the Polish cooperative movement, in order to respond to the needs of educating cooperative members, candidates, and the entire society. The words of Stanisław Wojciechowski, written in 1918 and saying that the cooperative movement “cannot cease to be a missionary movement”, were put into practice (Wojciechowski, 1930, p. 160).

For the purpose of this article, I chose only the two largest Polish cooperative unions: the Union of Agricultural and Economic Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland and the “Społem” Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland, to answer the question ‘What role did the Polish cooperative movement of the Second Republic of Poland play in extra-curricular adult education?’ However, the growing cooperative movement of national minorities in Poland 1918–1939 also had its educational achievements that require further in-depth research (Magiera, 2014b, pp. 353–365). This article was written following archival studies and printed sources carried out at the Archives of New Files in Warsaw and at university libraries across Poland. In my research I used the historical methodology in the scope of source analysis and methods of establishing, organising, classifying, interpreting, and identifying relations between facts and their transformation into a historiographic synthesis.

Characteristics of cooperative unions in Interwar Poland

The Union of Agricultural and Economic and Commercial Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland (hereinafter: ZSRiZG RP) was established in 1934, in which two cooperative organizations of the Union of Cooperative Unions and the Union were merged. The head of the USSRiZG of the Republic of Poland was Włodzimierz Seydlitz. However, the beginnings of the association's activity date back to the second half of the 19th century. In the Prussian partition, cooperative organizations were established under the patronage of Fr. August Szamarzewski (1832–1891), then Fr. Piotr Wawrzyniak (1849–1910) and Fr. Stanisława Adamski (875–1967). In 1924, S. Adamski led to the unification of cooperative organizations, creating the aforementioned Association of Cooperative Unions in Poland, which implemented the liberal trend of cooperatives (Magiera, 2016). The second cooperative organization was the Union, dating back to the 1890s, based on the Christian Solidarity model, promoted by Franciszek Stefczyk (1861–1924). Before the outbreak of World War II, the USSRiZG RP counted over 5,300 cooperatives with 1.6 million members affiliated with savings and loans cooperatives, cooperative banks, dairy cooperatives, agricultural and commercial cooperatives, and others.

Educational activities were a statutory duty of the USSRiZG RP, which included the following: organizing training and educational activities for members of the union, as well as for people working in cooperatives; collaboration with school and local government authorities, agricultural, youth and teaching organizations, as well as conducting trainings and lectures in seminaries, teachers' training establishments, and agricultural schools. ZSRiZG RP dealt with the professional training of its employees and the popularization of the idea and practice of cooperatives among the general public, and especially directed its activities at women, youth and teachers (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, p. 1.2, Action ...).

In line with the ideological foundations formulated by the pioneer of agricultural cooperatives, F. Stefczyk, in 1924, at the First Polish Agricultural Congress, agricultural cooperatives played an educational role by educating socially and economically the rural population, advancing the material and cultural life of the village, strengthening private property in agriculture by socializing individual functions in the field of production, exchange and money-credit turnover; it also strengthened moral ties and professional solidarity amongst farmers (Bielecki, 1938/1939, p. 307). The second half of the 1930s saw the USSRiZG RP dynamizing its activities in the field of adult education by collaborating with extra-curricular education instructors in the scope of cooperative education. The union noticed that "due to the low level of education and socio-economic development of the rural population, especially in the central and eastern provinces, the cooperative movement encounters difficulties" (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, page 1, Appendix ...). It turned out that the difficulties in the performance of some cooperatives, to a greater extent, originated in the lack of economic culture and socialization of its members rather than from the crisis in agriculture. The correlation between socio-economic and cultural-educational problems was observed, and therefore the Association decided to interest cultural and educational activists, especially extra-curricular educators, in cooperative issues. They were offered various forms of promoting cooperatives across society.

The roots of "Społem", the Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland go back to the creation in 1911 of the Warsaw Federation of Food Industry Unions, whose leading activists were Edward Abramowski, Rafał Radziwiłłowicz, Romuald Mielczarski, Stanisław Wojciechowski. From 1905, the magazine "Społem" (the title proposed by Stanisław Żeromski) was published. After the regaining of independence, other cooperative unions were active, which in 1924–1925 united to form the "Społem" Union of Consumer Cooperatives of the Republic of Poland (hereinafter: "Społem" ZSS RP), representing the neutral trend of cooperatives. The union was headed by Romuald Mielczarski (who died in 1926), followed by Marian Rapacki. In 1938, the Union "Społem" affiliated 1,776 cooperatives with almost 400,000 members, achieving great economical potential, founding a network of shops, bakeries, butchers, dairies, and others.

Consumer cooperatives were well prepared to conduct extra-curricular adult education. This union was not only an economic institution, but also conducted lustration, organizational and instructional, as well as social and educational activities. Its structure consisted of the following departments: economic, lustration, social and educational (Zalewski, 1922, pp. 1–67). The responsibilities of the latter department included organizing training and correspondence courses, student cooperatives, promoting the cooperative movement and its principles, publishing books, prints and accounting books and magazines: “Społem”, “Spółnota”, “Young Cooperative”, and “Spółdzielca Seller”.

The “Społem” union was divided into districts with social and educational departments; the districts consisted of regions (Domański, 1938/1939, pp. 301–302). In 1938, there were 49 districts that dealt with the training of regional delegates and the preparation of teams of clerks and lecturers, to secure a response to all the lecture and course needs in the district (AAN, “Społem” ZSSRP, reference number 100, p. 11, Plan...). In the regions, not only adult education was organized for members and employees of cooperatives, but also there was collaboration with teachers in the creation of student cooperatives. Social and educational departments were facilitated by pre-prepared talks to be read or elaborated at the meetings of members of individual cooperatives (Ułatwienie..., 1934, pp. 20–21). These departments had a detailed work program inclusive of the following:

1. Propagation of the cooperative movement (through daily work; visiting members at home by representatives of the management board and the supervisory board; occasional speeches during assemblies, rallies, meetings; organising readings aloud and discussion evenings on cooperative topics);

2. Strictly educational study of cooperatives (conducting series of readings, lectures, courses on cooperatives, cooperative self-education circles, libraries and reading rooms of cooperative literature);

3. General education (general libraries and reading rooms, general education clubs and self-education, courses for the illiterate and general training courses);

4. Cultural and social activities of an educational character (evening parties, Christmas trees, choirs, orchestras, amateur performances groups, excursions, sports games and activities);

5. Activities of an educational nature in the field of social welfare (organizing summer camps for children, summer recreation for employees and members, material assistance for children and youth in education);

6. Propagation, educational and cultural activity in the wider community (adult generation, who were not members of the cooperative, youth in out of school ages, as well as school children and youth) (Szkic ..., 1924, pp. 4–5; Zalewski, 1922).

Year on year “Społem” formulated an “Educational Program in the Consumer Cooperative Movement”, which was sent to all districts. By organizing the educational campaign, the program facilitated the preparation of course programs, increased their

numbers and made efforts to attract to cooperatives the entire society (AAN, ZSSRP, reference number 100, p. 50, Program...).

Course forms of Adult Education

All types of interwar cooperatives (agricultural, consumer, labour, military, etc.) organized extra-curricular forms of adult education, amongst which a large group of various types of courses can be distinguished.

Adult education organized by the USSRiZG RP included courses that not only provided general and specialist knowledge and developed the skills necessary to work in cooperatives, but also educated adults by shaping their attitudes towards other people, the state, society, and work (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, p. 1–2, Action...). ZSRiZG RP organized general and industrial courses, verbal and correspondence courses addressed to employees of the cooperative (two-week, 2-, 3-, 5-day), instructional conferences and lectures given in the clergy seminars, at various social courses, for youth cooperative training teams and in youth organizations (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, p. 1–3, Programs...).

As an example, in 1936, 14 courses were organized for employees of the cooperative, in which 529 people participated (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, p. 1–2, Paper...). Permanent courses included conferences and dairy courses organized in Lisków near Kalisz and in other places, courses for accountants, for agricultural instructors, for the employees of savings and loan cooperatives of agricultural and commercial cooperatives, agricultural and consumer, and others (Dąbrowski, 1937, p. 100). The union also organized summer courses. Courses were given by educational clerks and expert clerks in a specific field of cooperatives. The ZSRiZG RP also organized courses for youth activists from rural areas (Kurs..., 1934, p. 248).

In autumn 1936, the ZSRiZG RP initiated the Cooperative Correspondence Courses, which had an educational character and could be accessed by cooperative employees, candidates for employees, members of supervisory and management boards, people not affiliated with cooperative and cooperative preparatory teams for young people, especially rural youth. The program of 44 lectures included the following topics: the history of the cooperative movement; ideological and educational foundations of the cooperative movement; organization and structure of cooperatives; conditions for growth of rural, dairy, savings and loan, agricultural and commercial cooperatives; the rights and obligations of the members of the cooperative; organization of a cooperative; legal regulations, accounting of cooperatives; cooperative movement and rural youth (Tyczyński, 1938, p. 453). The course participants received two lectures weekly along with homework, which on completion was sent to the course office for revision. After the assignments were checked and supported by a commentary, they were sent back to

students for their perusal. Following the completion of training, participants were invited to a two-day conference combined with an exam (Kursy..., 1939, p. 1020; Małanicz, 1936a, p. 598). In total, in 1937, 1,610 people enrolled on such courses, and 1,383 people graduated. There were also teachers among the participants of the Cooperative Correspondence Courses. In the academic year 1936/37, 24 teachers (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, sheet 3, Action...) took a letter course in savings and loan cooperatives. The growth of rural commercial cooperatives meant that as from 1938/39 correspondence courses were launched in the field of agricultural and commercial cooperatives. In consultation with adult education inspectors, efforts were made to include information about the cooperative movement in the curricula of adult education courses for the purposes of studying and propagation.

Adult education courses were also organized by "Społem" of the ZSSRP. Adult education was particularly appreciated in the document containing a 3-year plan for the development of the movement, prepared on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the "Społem" Association in 1936. In terms of education, the plan envisaged the collaboration of consumer cooperatives with student cooperatives and cooperative training teams in youth organizations, as well as supplementing the education of cooperative employees during verbal and correspondence courses (Dominko, 1933, p. 77). Specialist courses lasting from one day to several months (dairy, for shop assistants, other), were considered particularly important. General cooperative courses were rather rare. In 1920–1925, the Union of Polish Consumer Cooperatives organized 33 courses for cooperative employees and 33 for unaffiliated individuals (Weydlich, 1927, p. 265).

On the 1st October 1926, the Association "Społem" initiated the Cooperative Correspondence Courses (SKK). They were strictly vocational and intended for employees of the cooperative movement and people interested in cooperatives (Spółdzielcze..., 1928, p. 18). One could enrol anytime during the year and commence studies at any time. To encourage trainee candidates to apply for the courses, the incentive of 33% fee discount was introduced for employees of union cooperatives, members of the Union of Cooperative Workers, employees of military cooperatives and teachers. School and university students were entitled to a 50% discount. In the academic year 1931/32, 1,301 people enrolled. In 1937, 1500 people took advantage of the Cooperative Correspondence Courses offered that year, and in 1938 the total number of SKK participants reached 3,200 (Domański 1938/1939, p. 300). SKK had a program divided into three groupings: for shop and warehouse employees, for accountants and office workers, as well as for managers of cooperatives and cooperative activists (Szkoła, 1932, p. 76; AAN, SIN team, reference number 12, Program...).

Learning at SKK could take place individually or in self-education teams, in which each participant received a series of lectures prepared by experts. Participants were to read them, answer the test questions at the end of each paper and send them to the SKK's

office to be assessed by the lecturer. Course participants were given checked, and commented on assessment papers, which they stored for submission during an oral exam. Such work was systematic and continuous, and due to its controlled nature allowed to avoid mistakes (Małanicz, 1936b, pp. 89–91). In addition to the lectures, teams received their own supporting resources, inclusive of several books on the theory and practice of cooperatives. After a two-month study period, teams held discussion meetings within the cooperative to which they belonged. At these meetings, they shared with their local community the cooperative ideology, the role of cooperatives in Poland and the cooperative members' tasks. The SKK office provided teams with leads and handouts to facilitate discussion meetings. The goal of the discussion meetings was to raise their local community's economical awareness and propagation of the cooperative movement. When appointing a team, the need for collaboration with local teachers and youth organizations was emphasised. SKK fulfilled their task by educating vocational employees for cooperative institutions and raising economical awareness, especially of rural communities. As from 1938, SSK realised cooperative training by the means of youth teams, who made discussion meetings happen in their communities in accordance with the SKK guidance, in order to prepare any given local community to lead newly established cooperatives in line with agreed terms (AAN, "Społem" ZSSRP, ref. No. 100, p. 11, Plan...).

As from 1926 and every year afterwards, the second group of courses came to life, organized by the Association "Społem" in various tourists and holiday destinations in Poland, two-week cooperative summer courses for employees, cooperative activists, teachers, and youth. They constituted a separate type of courses due to the specificity of tasks, program and working methods. The distinguishing feature of the summer courses was their socio-leisurely character. The lectures incorporated discussion and were tasked with assuring ideological and social convergence between lecturers and participants, discussing current national and social cooperative issues, and strengthening the cooperative worldview of the course participants. In 1937, the "Społem" Association organized 25 of the aforementioned courses, attended by 736 people, and in 1938, 31 summer courses with 942 participants (Domański, 1938/1939, p. 300).

Moreover, the Association "Społem" organized short courses and conferences on professional-cooperative, as well as promotional and organizational issues. In 1929, about 500 employees received training at courses organized by consumer cooperatives, with duration between two to six months (Przegaliński, 1929, p. 7). The "Społem" was very proactive in organizing courses for adults. In the 1930s, the association conducted about 100 courses each year. For example, in 1936, 155 courses and 87 conferences were organized, with a total number of participants reaching 8,587. Some courses organized by the "Społem" Association had had their long-standing traditions and were addressed at specific environments: workers' activists, youth, cooperative employees, stewards of student cooperatives, cooperative booksellers and others. For example, in

1938, 488 courses were organized with 17,890 participants. During that summer holidays, 31 courses were conducted, attended by 942 individuals, and 3,208 people attended correspondence courses (Statistics..., 1937, p. 49).

Publishing activity of the Polish cooperative movement

A consequence of the need for multilateral educational impact on adults was the publishing, which can be considered as an out-of-school form of adult education. It was assisted by the fact that cooperative unions had their own printing houses. The printed word in the form of cooperative magazines, books, newsletters, cooperative handbooks and various promotional materials reached the common rooms of individual cooperatives operating throughout the country, ipso facto fulfilling their educational function through reading and discussing their contents. All publications of the cooperative movement could be divided into the following categories: propagation materials, papers raising membership awareness, technical, informational, scientific and promoting cooperative knowledge.

Cooperative magazines played an important educational role. Their circulation in the first half of the 1920s was as follows: 1921 – 15 cooperative journals (73,000 copies); 1923 – 18 periodicals (44,000 copies); 1924 – 7 magazine titles (16,000); 1925 – 7 magazine titles (17,000). In the Interwar period, a steady increase in the number of cooperative press titles and their annual circulation can be observed. In 1931, 12 titles of Polish cooperative magazines were published, the annual circulation of which was 968.200 thousand copies. In 1933, the number of titles increased to 18, and the annual circulation to 1,120.4 thousand copies. The year 1935 brought another increase in the number of journal titles to 25 and the circulation to 1,715.2 thousand copies (Szubert, 1935, pp. 64–66).

Cooperative ideas were promoted by the daily and periodical press, which systematically received articles and messages on the life of the cooperative movement in Poland and abroad. ZSRiZG RP published 5 magazines, incl. “Czasopismo Spółdzielni Rolniczych”, “Unia”, “Poradnik Spółdzielni”, which contained introductory articles and reviews on cooperative theory and practice, and a cooperative chronicle. The books were published as part of the Cooperative Information Library (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, pp 1, 2, Action ...). The Agricultural Cooperative Calendar issued by the USSRiZG of the Republic of Poland as from 1931 served the general promotion of cooperatives and adult education.

The ZSSRP Union of “Społem” also published magazines. One of them was the periodic “Społem”, published since 1906 initiated by the Cooperative Society. It contained information concerning, initially, the current needs of consumer cooperatives. Its editor was Stanisław Thugutta. At the beginning of 1939, its circulation was 3.500 copies. Another periodic “Spółnota”, was published since 1921, edited by Tadeusz Janczyk,

a magazine promoting cooperatives amongst the general public. It had a circulation of 64,324 copies. The magazine “Sprzedawca Spółdzielczy”, intended for shop-workers, had a circulation of 3.400 copies. In 1937, there were 1.800 subscribers of “Społem” and 49,000 subscribers of “Spółnota” (Dominko, 1938a, p. 20). The monthly “Young Cooperative”, subscribed by student cooperatives and schools, was initially published 2,780 copies, and at the beginning of 1939 the average circulation was about 4,000 copies (Jasiński, 1965, p. 18). The Cooperative Calendar, published every year by the Association “Społem”, also served to meet educational and promotional objectives and contained information, propagation, cooperative fiction and advertising materials of the Polish cooperative movement. The cooperative press educated broad strata of society about economic issues and prepared them for work in cooperative institutions by promoting the principles of the cooperative movement. It united all cooperative members, taught self-government, supported civic education, popularised the knowledge of the life of the cooperative movement in Poland and abroad, thus broadening the intellectual horizons of adult and student cooperative members, and the supporters of cooperatives.

“Społem” ZSSRP conducted a wide publishing campaign of books on the topics of history, theory and the cooperative movement state of affairs, specialist textbooks, promotional brochures, cooperative fiction, calendars, stage plays, books for children, and other promotional materials. The numbers of books sold on the topic of cooperation were as follows: 1918 – 15,407; 1919 – 28,258; 1920 – 34,623 (Dippel, 1933, p. 2). In the years 1918-1937, 192 items were published (Rusiński, 1937, pp. 28-29). In 1938 alone, the Association published 17 books with a circulation of 106,350 copies (Domański, 1938, 1939, p. 301).

Other extra-curricular forms of adult education

Apart from courses and training, the other forms of adult education used by the cooperative movement in Poland were conferences, conventions, lectures and talks. All cooperative unions were involved in organizing training for cooperative members and employees. District conferences were an ad hoc, one-off form of training. Circulars sent to individual cooperatives by cooperative unions were also used for training and instructional purposes. This issue is illustrated by the following data: in the years 1920–1925, the Association of Polish Consumer Cooperatives organized 394 talks and lectures in cooperatives and 614 outside cooperatives. In 1928, the “Społem” Association organized around 300 lectures, attended by around 30,000 people (Żerkowski, 1929, p. 6). Educational work was also carried out by the Association of Polish Agricultural Cooperatives in Warsaw, which, for example, in the years 1920–1925 organized 469 lectures and talks (Weydlich, 1927, p. 265).

Other extra-curricular forms of adult education used by cooperatives in the Inter-war period included running: theatres, performances, evening functions, choirs, orchestras and concerts; the celebration of anniversaries and feasts; games, festivities, picnics, bank holidays. One form of education and propagation of cooperatives were various trips organized mainly to visit exemplary cooperatives and cooperative villages. In the field of adult education, the importance of common rooms was indicated, where evening gatherings devoted to the topic of cooperatives were run, poems were recited, plays were staged, books, brochures and cooperative magazines were read.

The cooperative structures included libraries and reading rooms, the activities of which served the education of adults, enabling the broadening of general mental horizons, and in particular learning about the ideology and practice of cooperation, the latest events in the life of the Polish and European cooperative movement. Cooperatives and others could not only take an advantage of the space facilitating access to books, other informational resources and library materials, but also could develop their own interests, foster their reading and learning habits, thus developing intellectual, cultural, and social sensitivity. It should be noted that cooperative literature was to be available not only in cooperative libraries, but in others as well. The expanding network of libraries open to general public had to be supplied with cooperative literature. In addition to libraries and reading rooms, cooperative organizations owned community centres, which can also be considered as a form of adult education through developing musical, vocal, acting and other creative skills, and facilitating participation in the aforementioned forms of spending time together.

Anniversaries and festivities deserve a special attention, not only due to their entertaining or social value, but also to an intrinsic presence of an educational ingredient. Promoting the cooperative movement and familiarizing the general public with the achievements of the cooperative took place during the celebration of the cooperative weeks (*Tydzień...*, 1925, p. 7). Every year, the Cooperative Day and the Savings Day were observed. Various cultural and educational institutions took part in these cooperative celebrations to encourage the general public to learn about the Polish cooperative movement and its founding principles (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 166, p. 1, Appendix...). In this respect, the activities cooperative unions “Społem” and ZSRiZG RP should be emphasized. The latter promoted the national savings movement in Poland in all social groups, considering it a valuable educational measure. It propagated the following: a) Thrift builds strong willpower b) Saving serves a prominent increase of the future capital reserves c) It teaches an individual in their own placement a prudent and foresighted economy” (AAN, ZSRiZG RP, reference number 152, p. 16, *Oszczędność...*).

An occasion to promote the cooperative idea and a form of adult education were celebrations of the anniversaries of the local cooperative institutions.

In the 1930s, the propagation of the cooperative movement and adult education was intensified through the use of radio, press, film, slides, and publications (AAN,

“Społem” ZSSRP, reference number 100, pp. 1, 4, Plan...). Referring to radio, the activities undertaken by the Cooperative Scientific Institute should be recalled. They looked at ways to promote the cooperative movement and asked Polish radio to include topics related to cooperatives in the programs they broadcasted. They proposed to broadcast weekly cooperative news on cooperative life, talks about cooperatives delivered once a month by the cooperative movement’s leaders, monthly programs devoted to a cooperative self-education inclusive of information on books and magazines on cooperatives, discussion programs on socio-economic topics related to cooperatives, special broadcasts related to cooperative festivities, reports on the outstanding cooperatives; cooperative programs aimed at children, dealing with the issues of school cooperatives, question and answer boxes on the practical activities of the cooperative (AAN, zespól SIN, file number 11, Pismo...).

In the above-mentioned various forms of adult education, different didactical methods were used, based on a spoken or written word and visual forms (posters, decorations, etc.). Decorated, aesthetic shop windows and cooperative premises were considered as a visual method of adult education, promoting tidiness, cleanliness and the principles of the cooperative movement. Adult education, including the propagation of cooperatives, was carried out with the use of films, the purpose of which was to vary cooperative meetings. The Association “Społem” gathered a collection of seven Polish and foreign films, especially English ones, devoted to cooperatives. The films enjoyed a great interest, especially in rural and small-town communities, which – as reported in the source materials – enthusiastically welcomed free show screenings propagators. Unfortunately, due to the lack of equipment, the cooperative associations had great difficulties in showing films. Sometimes, in the mornings, cinemas made their movie theatres available to adult cooperatives. Secondary school film projectors and some elementary schools were also made available (Dominko, 1936b, pp. 18–19).

The Polish cooperative movement paid particular attention to self-education and self-nurturing. Members and employees of the cooperative, while performing their daily duties, were gaining knowledge and socio-economical skills. It was especially important in the rural communities, which – thanks to the growth of collaboration – were activated and acquired knowledge and skills related to setting up and running a cooperative.

Conclusions

It is worth noting that the educational activities presented above, undertaken by the Polish cooperative movement (especially course forms), were primarily addressed at members of the cooperative. All these social activities, on one hand, allowed the cooperative movement to gain favour with society (by means of the press, books, propaganda materials), and on the other – to educate and nurture not only its members, but also the

general public through both widening the scope of their knowledge and skills and shaping attitudes based on traditional cooperative values i.e.: mutual help, collaboration, cooperation and a civilised way of spending time together. The cooperative movement in their capacity of a social movement ran systematic educational, nurturing and promotional activities among adults.

In their scope, cooperatives had implied not only an understanding of the importance of propagation and educational work, but also its live application through extra-curricular education, covering as many cooperatives as possible and influencing the general public. Therefore, various above-mentioned forms of adult education were used. The adult education program informed about history, ideology and founding principles of cooperation, their founders, activists and organizers. In addition to theoretical knowledge, there was a need to develop practical skills as to setting up cooperatives, division of labour, economy, facilitating an efficient running of associations, including both rural and urban environments, utilising verbal methods, written word and visual propagation.

The Cooperative movement taught social forms of work and created living conditions for the poorest strata of society. In rural environment, it raised the level of farmers' knowledge and skills and fostered their activation. It spread cooperative ideas, theoretical and practical knowledge needed to set up cooperative institutions. The movement conducted popularizing activities, propagating knowledge in the field of cooperatives and education based on cooperative values, conducive to undertaking activities in the field of self-education and self-nurturing. It used multiple forms of adult education including the following: 1) running various cooperative courses i.e.: correspondence, summer, short-term, long-term, cooperative training for rural youth, and other; 2) conducting a rich publishing activity of books on the history, theory and cooperative movement's state of affairs, professional textbooks, promotional brochures, cooperative fiction, magazines, and others; 3) organizing trainings (lectures, conferences, talks) for various environments: employees, members of cooperatives, teachers, students and pupils, other groups of people; 4) founding cooperative libraries, community clubs, theatres, choirs, orchestras and many other forms in service of adult education. The cooperative movement used various forms and methods of adult education, tailoring them to the intended environments. Resources used for propagation and educational activities also depended on the types of cooperatives. Consumer, agricultural, labour and other cooperatives created their own propagation methods, which were coordinated by individual audit unions. The Polish cooperative movement had great organizational and practical achievements in the field of adult education in Poland in the Interwar period and played a significant role in raising adults' socio-cultural and educational standards of living.

It should be emphasised that the educational activity of the cooperatives belonging to the two analysed unions was their statutory duty. This meant that each consumer or

agricultural cooperative, as well as any other, was obligated to conduct educational activity. It is difficult to indicate in which regions of the Second Republic of Poland the educational activity of cooperative members was the greatest. This issue requires further in-depth archival research and the analysis of printed sources, especially the reports of the districts of individual cooperative unions.

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