

## Abstract

### **Consumer Cooperative Movement in**

### **Rzeszów Province in the years**

### **1944 – 1975**

This doctoral dissertation is the first attempt to present in a summative way the activities taken by the Consumer Cooperative Movement in Rzeszów Province in the years 1945 – 1975.

The Cooperative Movement in Poland has a long and beautiful tradition, a rich history and is filled with impressive achievements. It plays one of the most important roles in a socio-economic life, and serves as a balance during intensive years of the development of the country. It significantly conduces to poverty elimination, new jobs creation and a civil society development. The basic goal of the Cooperative Movement was and still is to create an effective and rational administering to meet the economic and socio-cultural needs of the members of the Cooperative Movement, their families and the local community. Cooperative Movement was active at different times and in different parts of Poland and gave, through actions, an example of involvement in local and global matters. Nevertheless, the history of the Cooperative Movement is one of the biggest unknown among the history of Polish ideology. This is an underestimated, little known and often ignored aspect of our national, social and state-creating life, and our material and spiritual culture.

The Consumer Cooperative Movement in Rzeszów was active during difficult times when infrastructural development of the region took place, and this issue has not been analyzed so far. Therefore, with hindsight, the functioning of the Cooperative Movement and the presentation of the most important socio-economic processes which took place over the various stages of cooperative development in Rzeszów Province deserves attention and elaboration.

The essence of the Cooperative Movements, state policy towards the Cooperative Movements, legal regulations, operating conditions of cooperatives, postulated internal changes in the functioning of cooperatives are the issues subjected to further development and analysis.

Research objectives have been defined as following:

1. Impact of the economic and financial situation of the state on the activity of the Cooperative Movement .
2. The importance of economic and revisory associations for the development and implementation of goals and tasks of the Consumer Cooperative Movement.
3. Organizational, economic and educational achievements of the Consumer Cooperative Movement .
4. Presentation of the organizational structure, membership composition and economic performance of the Consumer Cooperative Movement.

This dissertation is of a chronological and problem nature where the functioning of the Consumer Cooperative Movements in Rzeszów region is presented in a summative way. Archival documents and scientific literature on the history and economy of cooperatives which present cooperative issues according to the national dimension are mainly employed in this thesis and this work is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter gives an overview of the issue. It describes the essence and the principles of functioning of the Cooperative Movements according to historical aspects. It also presents the formation and the beginnings of the Consumer Cooperative Movement in the world and in Poland. There are included descriptions of the development of Polish Cooperative Movement in the years 1918 – 1944 as well.

The second chapter presents the Cooperative Movement during the times of People's Poland which is divided into three periods: 1944-1949, 1950-1955, 1956-1975. This chapter also describes the relations between Polish Cooperative Movement and the International Cooperative Union.

The two remaining chapters account for essential part for this study and present the functioning of the Consumer Cooperative Movement in the Rzeszów Province in the years 1944 - 1975.

The third chapter is mainly devoted to two issues, the beginnings of the Consumer Cooperative Movement in the Rzeszów Province and the Cooperative Movements during the occupation period. However, the structure of the Cooperative Movement in the first post-war years, and after 1956 year is also discussed. Due to the bimodal nature of Cooperative Movements, they are discussed according to their economic activities and local government structures. The problem of organizational changes is discussed widely, as research showed

that the Consumer Cooperative Movement was constantly striving to upgrade its organizational standard. Activity of the Consumer Cooperative Movement is analyzed due to its great impact on the improvement of work, and due to its fundamental impact on structural changes. In 1950, the Union initiated the idea that The Consumer Movement is an integral part of the whole organization, which strengthened the position of the Consumer Cooperative Movement in the country. Therefore, the Consumer Cooperative Movement in the Rzeszów region is presented as a part of the General Cooperative Movement, according to national achievements.

The fourth chapter analyzes the activity of the Consumer Cooperative Movement in Rzeszów region, with a particular emphasis on structural and economic activities, commerce and financial management. The structure of employment of the Cooperative Movement employees in Rzeszów region is also discussed.

In summary, there is an attempt taken to analyze the main processes and changes that took place in Rzeszów and its close areas during the years specified before, and also to answer the question whether the knowledge of the Cooperative Movement activity in the PRL is of any use for the present Cooperative Movements and to what extent.