

6.3 Co-operation and rural society, II. Catalysts of rural mobilisation: co-operative movements with national or religious backgrounds Room 107

Convener and chair: András Vári

6.31 Torsten Lorenz – Nationalism as a factor of integration and disintegration in the co-operative movement of East Central Europe, 1850–1940

The history of East Central Europe in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century has been largely influenced by ethnic diversity and economic underdevelopment. In this specific setting of divided and predominantly agrarian societies, co-operatives played a twofold role: On the one hand, by providing credit, basic commodities and practical advice they helped small agricultural producers solve everyday problems of agricultural production and played an important role in accustoming them to the market and thus to the transformation of agriculture. On the other hand, setting up co-operatives meant institution building along the ethno-cultural dividing lines. When co-operatives became a social movement in the eastern central European countryside, there was an increasing pressure on individual co-operatives to make a declaration about their ethno-cultural belonging. This in turn meant the disintegration of rural society as a whole, but at the same time social integration along the ethno-cultural dividing lines.

The paper will analyse nationalism as a key factor for the integration and disintegration of the rural co-operative movement in East Central Europe. It will compare the different experiences of the Polish, the German and the Ukrainian co-operatives. For this aim it will take a look at the specific development of each of the individual movements, the specific economic role co-operatives fulfilled in each of the economic and cultural settings and the role of the state, which set up the legal framework, in which co-ops operated. Above that, examples of co-operation and non-cooperation between different ethno-cultural branches of the movement will be analysed.

Dr. Torsten Lorenz gained his PhD in Economic and Social history at the European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder (1999–2006) He is now lecturer in European history at Humboldt University, Berlin. Until this year he was researcher in economic education at the University of Oldenburg (2009), researcher in European history at the Technical University of Dresden (2008–09) and researcher in East Central European history at the University of Vienna (2007–08). His main areas of research are economic and social history of East Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth century; nationalism and ethnic relations in East Central Europe; and the history of the co-operative movement in East Central Europe.

6.32 Catherine Albrecht – Rural banks and credit co-operatives in Bohemia, 1860–1914

Rural co-operatives of all sorts were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Bohemian crownlands of the Habsburg monarchy. Co-operatives and agricultural associations were founded to help peasants respond to the challenges – both positive and negative – of a market economy. They helped peasants manage their debt by providing long-term mortgage loans on favourable terms. They enabled farmers to modernise production by providing credit for investment and access to agricultural machinery. Thus, they were intended to provide the support farmers needed both to withstand agricultural crises and to take advantage of economic opportunity. The co-operative movement grew most markedly during periods of economic expansion (during the 1860s and the 1890s).

Co-operatives were part of a growing network of rural associations that contributed significantly to mobilizing local populations. Voluntary associations integrated peasants into political parties, beginning with traditional liberal and national unity parties in the 1860s and leading to specialised agrarian parties in the early twentieth century. As national affiliation became more important in

defining political and economic relationships in Bohemia, rural co-operatives played a significant role in creating parallel Czech and German social environments. In addition to language use, other markers of national affiliation included co-operatives' membership in central associations, their participation in nationally oriented agrarian banks, and their affiliation with political parties that embraced national goals.

Even so, rural co-operatives remained committed to the special interests of rural producers. Social and economic interests, religious affiliations, and political affiliations were more important in the nineteenth century than ill-defined notions of national identity. Even as national identity became more salient in the twentieth century, particularly after 1918, rural co-operatives remained committed primarily to the social and economic needs of local farmers, regardless of their language of daily use or national affiliation.

Catherine Albrecht has a PhD in History from Indiana University, Bloomington, 1986. She was Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor at the University of Baltimore until 2009 and, since then, has been Dean at the Getty College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio Northern University. She has written a book on *Economic Nationalism in the Bohemian Crownlands, 1848–1938* and has published a number of articles on the topic.

6.33 Eóin McLaughlin – Competing forms of co-operation: land league, land war and co-operation in Ireland, 1879–1921

Two distinct forms of co-operation emerged in response to adverse economic conditions in late nineteenth-century Ireland: the land league and co-operatives associated with the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS). Both were top-down economic and social movements; both differed in their *modus operandi* and *raison d'être*, and their elites represented opposing views of constitutional politics. The land league used co-operation amongst tenants and combined agitation to reduce rents and transfer land ownership from landlords to tenants; whereas the IAOS encouraged imitation of Continental forms of agricultural co-operation, the co-operation of individual producers to reduce costs of production and realise economies of scale.

Potentially there was a capacity for the mutual complementarity of both forms of co-operation; but existing political, cultural and social factors militated against this. The paper explores the relationship between the land war and the development of co-operation in Ireland and argues that the competing forms of co-operation undermined the development of agricultural co-operatives along Continental lines in Ireland. The paper will specifically focus on attempts to imitate German Raiffeisen co-operative societies and argue that the *ad hoc* policies taken by the paternal propagating agency, the IAOS, were aimed at placating the existing socio-economic interest groups in Ireland.