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The regeneration of the Greek co-operative movement through education and training

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Although Greece is now firmly launched on the path of industrial development, a large portion of the population (approximately 35 per cent) is still engaged in agriculture, which accounts for some 15 per cent of the country's GNP.[1] Yet the splitting up of farms, the absence of a national land register, the large number of islands and the many mountainous and arid areas still present major obstacles to the rational organisation of the agricultural sector. Thus the average size of cultivated plots is only 0.57 hectares and, out of the total land area of 13.2 million hectares, only 4 million are arable whereas mountains cover 5.7 million.[2]

Moreover, the perpetuation of outmoded forms of organisation still seriously obstructs social development in the countryside: for example there is the problem of the middlemen who have exclusive rights to collect, process and market agricultural produce as they please. Act No. 921/1979 should have solved this problem by granting farmers belonging to co-operatives the right to market their produce themselves; however, the lack of financial and social structures within the agricultural sector makes the desired formation of co-operatives very difficult. The situation is complicated by the fact that Greece became a member of the European Community in January 1981 and now participates in the determination and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy. Unless it takes steps to rejuvenate its agricultural structures it runs a grave risk of not being able to compete with the other members of the Community.

Following the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1974, the Greek agricultural co-operative movement, the main economic and social institution operating in the rural areas, set itself the task of helping to revitalise agriculture through concerted and collective action. Such action, however, necessarily entailed carrying out educational work among the co-operative leaders who had emerged from the elections, and the training of employees running the co-operative undertakings. In addition, the new

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socialist Government advocated, at the end of 1981, a reorganisation of co-operative societies so as to give them a new agro-industrial orientation.[3] These two types of action, education-training and reorganisation, are complementary and both are necessary in order to promote an independent and effective co-operative movement geared to the needs of rural Greece. On its own neither can ensure the regeneration of the co-operative societies which is an essential condition for integrated rural development.

The training activities conducted by the agricultural co-operative movement in Greece are of special interest because they could provide lessons for other movements or countries which are feeling their way in this field. What has been achieved in Greece is the fruit of steadfast efforts by the co-operative movement to assume full technical responsibility for training without allowing the State and its numerous public and semi-public bodies to encroach on its prerogatives. Both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Bank felt that they should intervene directly in co-operative education and training through their various supervisory services; however, they were committing a fundamental error by taking on the tasks of ideological motivation, co-operative education for the members and vocational training for the employees in addition to their functions of registering and inspecting co-operatives. Besides confusing the principles governing co-operative societies there was a danger that the authorities might use the co-operatives for the political indoctrination of their members. This is in fact what happened during the military dictatorship of 1967-74 when not only state officials but also military personnel ranged over the countryside using the co-operative message as a tool for disseminating military propaganda.

It is therefore vitally important that co-operative movements, especially those operating in a rural environment in which the population is still not sufficiently literate or economically independent, should try from the outset to obtain ideological and educational independence of the public authorities. In addition, experience has shown that the tasks of advising and training cannot be combined with those of official inspection and supervision. An educator-trainer and an inspector-supervisor cannot be one and the same person.

After describing in the next section some of the characteristics of the Greek co-operative movement, this article will discuss the education and training programme it has carried out since 1977.

Characteristics of the Greek co-operative movement

Legislation providing the basis for the organisation of Greek farmers into co-operative societies was first enacted at the time of the distribution of the so-called "national" lands during the First World War. To be sure, in the course of the nineteenth century, various pre-cooperative, community and participatory associations, such as spontaneously formed groups of shepherds, fisheries, communal mines, brotherhoods of cotton spinners and

dyers and, finally, groups of shippers had sprung up in almost every part of Greece.[4] This movement, founded on the principles of voluntary association and participation, was for a long time the principal means of collective production and contributed to the emergence and development of a socialised economy or "popular pre-capitalism". However, ignorance about these spontaneous economic institutions and the distrust they inspired, due to the break with the country's earlier traditions and culture as well as the Europeanisation following the 1821 revolution, long prevented the Greek legislature from learning the lessons that were implicit in these popular forms of social experimentation.[5] In 1915, for economic and political reasons, the Government introduced the Raiffeisen co-operative model by means of a general enabling Act. This was done because the Greek peasantry was suffering, as had the German peasantry before it, from usury and the lack of institutions for organising production.

The 1915 Act did not only concern the rural sector; however, it was almost exclusively in that sector that co-operative societies were established. In the urban areas, the late development of big towns, the lack of a large wage-earning class and the fact that town dwellers remained in contact with the countryside, from which they continued to obtain their food supplies, had militated against the organisation of consumer and production co-operatives. Those which did come into being did not go beyond the primary stage and were short-lived, vulnerable as they were to price fluctuations and the high cost of living during the war. In the majority of cases it was the privileged social groups–state officials, bank employees, the armed forces–which used co-operatives as a means of acquiring a secondary residence or importing luxury items. Clearly, these societies did nothing to meet the basic and urgent needs of the harder-up working classes as co-operative principles demand.

On the other hand, Greek peasant farmers rapidly adopted the co-operative form of organisation, with each rural district becoming the seat of at least one agricultural co-operative. Table 1 shows how the formation of rural co-operatives evolved between 1915 and 1980. Table 2 shows the distribution of these co-operatives by category in 1980.[6]

Well before the Second World War the agricultural co-operative movement had a fully formed vertical structure. The majority of the primary co-operatives, functioning at the district level, were affiliated to secondary-level regional unions. By the end of 1978, according to the 1979 report of the Agricultural Bank, there were 134 secondary organisations with a total membership of 6,541 primary co-operatives, comprising 636,750 heads of families. With very few exceptions the regional unions are affiliated to tertiary-level organisations known as central unions, which operate either at the level of one or more administrative divisions or on a nation-wide basis. In 1979 there were 11 central unions, most of them in Athens and in the Peloponnese. The secondary- and tertiary-level unions are represented in the Panhellenic Confederation of Agricultural Co-operative Unions (PASEGES, after the Greek acronym), an apex institution created in 1935

Table 1. The development of agricultural co-operatives since 1915

Year	Co-operatives	Members (total)	Average membership
1915	150	4 500	30.0
1920	1 171	58 500	50.0
1930	2 800	168 000	60.0
1939	4 959	405 495	81.8
1950	6 552	750 000	114.5
1961	7 543	746 000	98.9
1970	7 493	745 000	99.4
1976	6 981	697 954	100.0
1978	6 984	704 568	100.9
1980	7 053	706 663	100.2

Source: Report on activities for 1980 of the Agricultural Bank of Greece.

with the task of representing and defending the interests not only of the co-operatives but of the agricultural community as a whole. Its membership also comprises four pools (joint action organisations set up by certain of the regional unions) and various paracooperative societies, as shown in the diagram.

In principle the main functions of the primary co-operatives are organising the agricultural production of their members, managing loans granted by the Agricultural Bank and distributing seed and fertiliser. In a few instances they also process and market some of their members' produce (grapes, olives, milk, vegetables). The regional unions plan agricultural production, defend the interests of the primary co-operatives and market their produce, while the central unions undertake the promotion, at the regional, national and international level, of one or more products of the secondary unions.

Vertical structure of the agricultural co-operative movement

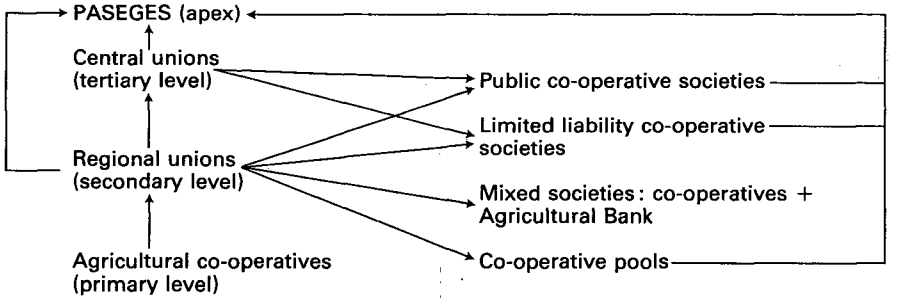

Table 2. Distribution of primary agricultural co-operatives by category, 1980

Category[1]	Co-operatives	Members
Credit	4 926	465 613
Sales	201	19 116
Production	992	128 340
Forestry	404	13 759
Fishing and handicrafts	69	2 095
Health, etc.	101	7 769
Compulsory (irrigation, etc.)	295	64 549
Total	**6 988**	**701 241**

[1] "Miscellaneous" co-operatives not included.
Source: Report on activities for 1981 of the Agricultural Bank of Greece.

Regional and central unions participate in marketing companies, which are also affiliated to the PASEGES; as a result the secondary- and tertiary-level organisations are members of the PASEGES twice over. Similarly, the four co-operative pools are directly affiliated to the PASEGES, whence also a dual membership of the unions establishing such pools and an exception to the rule as regards the vertical structuring of the co-operative movement.

The trading companies are either limited liability companies or public companies. At the present time there are 81 of them. A third of them are composed of the regional unions, holding 49 per cent of the shares, and the Agricultural Bank, which holds 51 per cent. The latter, at the request of the agricultural co-operative movement, is gradually handing over its shares to the regional unions. In the other two-thirds of these companies the membership as a rule exclusively comprises secondary and tertiary co-operative organisations. All 81 are governed by common commercial law as regards their legal status. The setting up of these companies, which started after the Second World War, was felt to be necessary because of the abundance of agricultural production and the pressing needs in regard to its marketing. To be sure, their role and their legal status mark a departure from the Rochdale principles and give the entire Greek co-operative movement, and especially its higher echelons, a paracooperative character; but it is no less true that these higher echelons owe their origin to the inadequacies of Act No. 602/1915 and the country's particular economic needs. And it is thanks to this special form of organisation that the co-operative movement has become both vigorous and effective.

The promulgation of the enabling Act No. 921/1979 governing the establishment and operation of rural co-operatives did not affect the structure of the societies. The accent was nevertheless placed on increasing the autonomy of the movement and the co-operatives were granted the

express right to process and market their agricultural products themselves. Moreover, all rural co-operatives (forestry and fishing co-operatives, in particular) became part of the agricultural co-operative movement and answerable to a single ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture.

In assessing the situation, account must naturally be taken of both the advantages and the disadvantages of the Greek co-operative movement at the present time.

On the doctrinal plane, the movement has always espoused a unitary philosophy, which has proved very advantageous from the economic angle. Its horizontal and vertical structure has ensured massive participation of the farmers and other agriculturalists (approximately 70 per cent of the total) in the primary co-operatives. While these were intended, according to Act No. 602/1915, only for purposes of production, the higher organisations devoted themselves mainly to marketing. The paracooperative sector proved to be necessary in order to counter the virtual monopoly over the collection and processing of produce enjoyed by the traditional industrial and commercial agents, to whom Act No. 602/1915 left full freedom of action in the agricultural sector.

From 1915–the date of its establishment–to 1974 the co-operative movement passed through a number of critical phases which left their mark on its structures. The first structural disadvantage was the fact that administrative control by the State reduced the movement to close and harmful dependence upon it. Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and, above all, of the Agricultural Bank were always at hand to dictate the Government's will to the primary and secondary co-operatives, especially at election times. The management committees, even the elected ones, were dissolved on a number of occasions by dictatorial regimes (1936-40 and 1967-74) or persecuted during the Civil War (1946-49). There was thus no regular succession within and at the head of the co-operatives, which was made all the worse by the fact that a large number of farmers, following the Civil War, left the countryside to look for work in the urban centres or abroad (Australia, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Sweden). The Greek villages and, with them, the agricultural co-operatives were thereby deprived of their best human elements.

Article 12, paragraph 5, of the 1975 Constitution required the legislature to promote the development of co-operatives. This led to the adoption of the aforementioned Act No. 921/1979 which, in the minds of its authors, was intended to fill the gaps left by Act No. 602/1915. It is not certain, however, that it will succeed in cutting back the paracooperative sector since it is unlikely that the middlemen will cease their activities in the agricultural sector as long as the movement is not financially independent. What is needed is a purely co-operative body which will ensure the necessary financing for the creation of the infrastructure which is indispensable for any co-operative marketing activity. The 1979 Act unfortunately did not provide for the establishment of such a body and this means that agricultural co-

operatives will continue to depend on the Agricultural Bank, which is a semi-state commercial institution.[7]

Another disadvantage of the new Act is that it only covers the rural sector whereas the urban sector continues to be governed by the 1915 Act, which has been repealed only in part. Because of this the division of the national co-operative movement is officially sanctioned, with the danger this entails of undermining co-operative principles and adversely affecting the development of urban co-operatives. Thus the major problems which impeded the harmonious and independent development of co-operatives when Act No. 602/1915 was in force have not been satisfactorily solved by Act No. 921/1979. Hence the initiative of the socialist Government, which came to power in October 1981, to revive, rehabilitate, intensify and reorientate co-operative action within the framework of a collective and participatory economy.[8]

The emphasis is now being placed on promoting the creation of agro-industrial co-operatives capable of processing agricultural produce on the spot by employing and training the manpower available in each region. This reorientation should lead to the elimination of the middlemen and restore the movement's purely co-operative character. Next, the co-operatives will be urged to work hand in hand with the local authorities with a view to enhancing their autonomy, interdependence and complementarity. Finally, it is anticipated that co-operatives will be established in the industrial (especially shipbuilding) and craft sectors, and that emigrants returning home could also be organised into co-operatives.[9] When land is redistributed the co-operative formula will be used as a model for the organisation and efficient operation of the new farms.[10]

In this particular case, as indeed throughout the history of the co-operative movement, one must nevertheless ask oneself to what extent the restructuring and development of a movement which professes to be popular and participatory depend on legislative and administrative texts. The success of co-operative societies, as history proves, has always been linked primarily to the human factor, for and by which they are created. What is important, in the last analysis, is to increase people's awareness and to motivate them for working together under the co-operative banner.

In Greece, as elsewhere, each generation reacts in its own way to the question of participating in co-operative societies and their management. Things were easier for the generation preceding the Second World War since the role of agricultural co-operatives at the time was limited to production in a largely susbsistence economy in which the only agents of change were the industrialists and the retailers. However, with the growing importance of co-operative marketing, the movement had to awake to its new role and responsibilities: the farmer was henceforth required not merely to produce but also to market his output himself. Before the movement could be expected to manage co-operatives with a marketing slant, however, it was necessary to modify the peasant farmer's very way of thinking. Hence the

recourse to co-operative education and training programmes worked out and widely applied in the Greek countryside over the past five years with a view to rejuvenating the entire movement.

The education and training programme

Not without some difficulties and friction due to the practical implications, the State recognised the agricultural co-operatives as the sole bodies competent to take charge of co-operative education in the rural areas. There had not previously been any coherent over-all programme in this respect. Isolated activities, like the award of study grants and the organisation of the occasional seminar, were undertaken from time to time, and in 1965 the Co-operative College of Thessalonika–which was responsible for training intermediate-level staff–had been set up with initial assistance from the Swedish co-operative movement, but there had never been any educational programmes for the grass-roots co-operators and the members of the management committees.

When the last military dictatorship came to an end in 1974 there was a shortage of staff to run and direct the co-operatives and new people began to assume these functions: so there was a pressing need to educate and train new officials and retrain the old ones. The education and training programme was worked out in 1976 in the course of 14 preparatory meetings organised by the PASEGES in the country's major rural centres. It was decided to attack on three fronts simultaneously: to educate and motivate a large proportion of the 60,000 management committee members elected since 1975; next, to provide vocational training for some of the 23,000 co-operative employees at every level; finally, to try to persuade the State to introduce co-operative education into the curricula of the national education system. Responsibility for administrative and technical questions was entrusted to the PASEGES Education Service which had engaged for this purpose the temporary services of a national expert on co-operative education. The project was financed, to the tune of some US$250,000 a year, by contributions from the co-operative societies, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Bank. Although a committee composed of representatives of these three groups had to approve the project, the co-operative movement set up another committee composed of co-operative experts, university professors and educational specialists whose opinions were taken into serious consideration. Each secondary and tertiary co-operative organisation appointed a graduate employee to participate in the preparation and execution of the national programme. This group of senior personnel met once a year to keep themselves fully up to date on the programme and to evaluate the progress made.

Co-operative education

Naturally there was no question of the programme covering all the members of the management committees who, as we have already said, numbered some 60,000 people. The object was to motivate a representative group in each region and each primary co-operative, in particular. The expectation was that these executives would return to their village and pass on what they had learned to the other members of the management committee as well as to the rank-and-file co-operators with the aid of simple documents prepared and supplied free of charge by the PASEGES; this succinct and carefully written material dealt with the particular co-operative and agricultural problems of each region in which the seminars were organised. Lasting one or two days, the seminars were held on the premises of the regional union or of a primary co-operative, i.e. in the actual living and working environment of the co-operators, who thus did not have to absent themselves from their families or farms. Responsibility for their organisation was entrusted to the regional union concerned, which drew the attention of the PASEGES to the specific problems its primary co-operatives were facing. It was the regional union, too, which invited the participants and drew up the list of speakers and subjects. The topics discussed usually included the history and rules of co-operatives, the problems of marketing local agricultural produce, and the experience of other co-operative societies in Greece, Europe and the Common Market. The PASEGES and the regional union reimbursed the travel expenses of the participants who, at the end of the seminar, attended a "fraternisation banquet" with representatives of the municipality. Each year 30 or so seminars were organised for 1,500 people in all. During the five years of the project, 7,500 leaders of primary co-operatives were able to attend one such seminar.

Since 1981 some of these seminars have been enlarged to include grass-roots members of primary co-operatives. Also during that fifth year of the programme's operation four regional centres were set up in different parts of the country with a view to decentralising responsibility for educational activities. Furthermore, each year since the programme's inception the Co-operative College in Thessalonika has organised ten or so one-week seminars on agricultural co-operation for the most interested and intelligent executives from the primary and secondary co-operatives. The number of participants has been restricted to about 30, the subjects discussed being of a more technical and complex nature, and the speakers have been co-operative experts and university or college lecturers. More than 1,500 people have so far benefited from these seminars. Finally, each year the programme has also provided for visits to co-operatives and contacts with their managers to facilitate an exchange of views and experience.

Co-operative training

The present national system of school education does not provide expressly for the training of managers for co-operative societies but only turns out middle-rank and senior personnel for the public service, the professions and private capitalist undertakings. Hence the need for the co-operative movement itself to organise training for the managerial staff it requires. Under the legal provisions in force since 1973 all employees of co-operative organisations and undertakings who are not graduates must take courses in co-operation offered by the Co-operative College. During the first four years, the students were selected from nominations made by co-operative organisations at different levels, including both existing fixed-term employees and candidates for employment with these organisations. The courses were so designed as to provide both co-operative education and vocational training. Nine months a year were devoted to comprehensive coverage of the history, rules, structure and economics of the national and European co-operative movement. At the same time, the students were introduced to agricultural economics, finance, management of agricultural and co-operative undertakings, book-keeping, statistics and mathematics. Satisfactory completion of the theoretical and practical studies and the submission of a dissertation led to the award of a certificate which co-operative undertakings were bound to recognise. Over the period 1976-80, 150 middle-rank managers obtained this diploma.[11]

In 1981 the training programme was completely revised, following criticisms that it was too theoretical. The course was divided into two parts. The first, covering basic training, is now provided in the four regional centres already mentioned. Each course lasts approximately two months and there are two sessions a year. The number of participants is limited (20 to 30 for each of the four centres), and they are no longer aspiring employees but those who have already been working in a co-operative for at least one year and have developed a taste for the practical problems it involves. The courses are the same as those previously given at the Co-operative College but shorter, more intensive and more practical. Following this the trainees return to their previous posts where they apply what they have learned. It is only after a second year of work in their co-operatives that they are authorised to attend a higher-level course lasting three months, provided solely by the Co-operative College, which now functions exclusively as an institution of advanced co-operative training. These courses are more technical, being oriented towards the solution of practical problems relating to co-operative investment, administration and management. The intention is to organise two advanced training sessions a year, which will be attended by 60 or so employees in all.

In addition, depending on the needs and the demand, the Co-operative College organises several times a year higher-level specialised training seminars lasting about a month for senior staff (directors and section heads)

who would like to improve their professional skills. Each seminar is devoted to a single subject, such as management, book-keeping and taxation, marketing, finance or investment. This training is given by highly skilled co-operative experts as well as university professors.

Finally, the co-operative movement often covers the study costs, whether in Greece or abroad, of existing employees or of their children who are interested in training for subsequent employment as senior managers of co-operative undertakings.

For those employees who have already graduated from a college or university, special month-long seminars are organised each year in Athens with a view to improving their understanding of co-operative questions which, as we have already mentioned, are not dealt with as a separate subject in either the universities or the agricultural colleges. Thus the 200 or so agronomists who have been recruited over the past five years by the larger co-operative organisations are of course already conversant with the technical aspects of their agricultural production and marketing duties, but it is up to the co-operative movement to instil in these senior managers the elements of co-operative theory that will help them cope with some of the other complex problems their work entails.

Co-operative education and the national education system

Apart from the activities listed above, the co-operative movement has been making special efforts for some years now to convince the State that it should introduce some co-operative studies into the school curriculum.

At the primary school level, efforts launched at the end of the Second World War to create school co-operatives have continued. In 1954-55 there were only 15, with 265 members and an income of 228,000 drachmas (US$ 1 = 70 drachmas); by 1979-80 there were 471, with a membership of 22,455, an income of 10.39 million drachmas and an outlay of 9.96 million. It is already known that there were more than 500 in 1980-81, with some 23,300 members.

The agricultural co-operative movement, which was solely responsible for the setting up and organisation of the school co-operatives, launched a campaign in 1974 to rationalise them. This led to a decline in their number in the period 1974-79 but also to a very marked increase in the sums administered by their young members. To develop these co-operatives the PASEGES has been able to rely since 1976 on the assistance of the French National Office for School Co-operation, on the one hand, and on the other, on the aid and advice of psychologists. The scope was subsequently extended to cover the students of 13 teacher training colleges. Principals who wish to set up a co-operative for their students receive advice directly from the PASEGES for this purpose. They are given, free of charge, model rules, instructions and some learning materials. The activities organised by the student co-operators cover gardening, joint execution of minor works and the supply and sale of

school equipment. The sums earned in this way are used by the students to organise fêtes, decorate school premises and finance social work. Through their participation in the co-operative the pupils learn to work together and run their school affairs by their own joint efforts, thus becoming potential co-operative members who, later on, will swell the movement's ranks. Naturally, it is the principals, some of whom have been won over to the co-operative cause by their participation in meetings organised by the PASEGES, who are the main driving force behind the co-operatives. In an effort to involve them in the expansion of the movement in even greater numbers, the Co-operative Education Service has asked the Ministry of National Education to examine the possibility of recognising the work done by teachers to develop school co-operatives when considering their promotion.

The agricultural co-operative movement as a whole helps the school co-operatives in several ways. In 1978, for example, an art competition on the subject of village co-operatives was organised among the school co-operators. The best school co-operatives have also been encouraged by gifts of books for the school library, while several regional unions have given financial assistance to those facing temporary difficulties. In 1981 the PASEGES organised holiday camps for a number of young co-operators selected from the co-operatives which had shown the best results over the preceding year. (School co-operatives are required to send an annual report on their activities to the Co-operative Education Service.)

All these activities to promote the development of school co-operatives aim at achieving concrete results in terms of motivating future co-operative managers, whether at the village level or at that of the higher co-operatives. Obviously, the results cannot be precisely evaluated or measured since it is difficult to keep track of young people from the time they leave school to the time they start work. One thing is certain, however, and this we can attest to empirically: many of the leaders of primary and secondary co-operatives who began assuming co-operative responsibilities after 1974 had been inspired with co-operative ideals when they were still at primary school. Others, who continued their studies at the secondary or higher level, have since become senior managers of secondary- and tertiary-level co-operatives. Some may also have benefited from the study grants awarded by the co-operatives of their region; in this way, they have been in permanent contact with the co-operative movement, which is currently seeking to involve large numbers of them in co-operative management, organisation and training tasks. Finally, more converts can be found in university circles where they encourage the teaching of co-operative economics and law within the framework of other disciplines. All these partisans of the co-operative ideal are helping to make the movement part and parcel of popular culture as well as of the general body of knowledge taught at various levels.

In the secondary schools the task is more difficult in view of the bias of the curriculum towards urban occupations. What has been achieved to date is the introduction of an annual course on agricultural undertakings and co-

operation in the curriculum of the agricultural technical schools.[12] Pupils leaving these schools are employed as first-line supervisors in rural development activities and in the technical services of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Bank and the Agricultural Insurance Institute. Their introduction to the basics of co-operation will assist them in carrying out their agricultural extension tasks more easily and effectively. What still has to be done in the secondary education field is to introduce an appropriate course of co-operative studies (history, theory and selected texts) into all secondary schools so as to give future co-operative members and managers the grounding they will need.

Finally, at the university level the co-operative movement is seeking the creation of chairs of co-operative economics and law in the faculties of agronomy, law and economics. The State has shown some interest in this proposal since it recently asked the faculties for their opinion on the desirability of including elements of co-operative education in the social sciences and agricultural economics curricula. Co-operative research institutes also need to be set up and encouragement given to the publication of scientific works dealing with co-operatives.

The press and publications

Any co-operative education and training programme needs to be backed up by magazines, brochures and other publications which will make information on co-operative matters easily accessible to grass-roots members as well as co-operative managers. The PASEGES itself and many secondary- and tertiary-level organisations have press services which regularly put out information bulletins and magazines on agricultural and co-operative questions.[13] The Co-operative Education Service and the Co-operative College also publish brochures, manuals and studies on agricultural economics and co-operation for students, trainees and co-operative members and executives. This activity has recently been extended by the translation and dissemination of classics of European co-operative literature.

Assessment of the programme and conclusions

This programme of co-operative education for rank-and-file members and of training and retraining for co-operative employees was devised and carried out with the administrative and technical assistance of the regional unions which watch over the primary co-operatives and are answerable for them to the highest levels of the movement. The observations and suggestions of the co-operatives concerned were solicited at various seminars and in the various regions to ensure that the programme would be really useful and directly geared to the needs and problems of each region.

The multitude of complex problems facing the movement after 1974 meant that it was not possible to implement the programme in stages or

starting with favoured regions: it had to be launched simultaneously at every level. There is of course no reason to suppose that this approach would automatically work elsewhere: the precise circumstances would have to be examined first. As far as Greece is concerned, however, it proved to be constructive and effective since the seminars were attended by large numbers of co-operative members and managers even though they were only compulsory for uncertificated employees. The attendance level was therefore very satisfactory and the discussions, and the suggestions to which they gave rise, were lively and positive. Altogether several thousand people have benefited from the programme during the five years it has been operating, which ensures that it will have multiplier effects. The executives were given reliable and objective information on the European Community and its Common Agricultural Policy. As a result of the programme farmers gained a better understanding of the need to diversify crops, and the co-operative undertakings agreed to the introduction of new methods of book-keeping. Finally, dozens of executives were able to gain first-hand knowledge of the experience of other co-operatives and other co-operative movements through study tours.

The programme of training for co-operative employees offered by the Co-operative College, as initially conceived and implemented, nevertheless had the great disadvantage of being more theoretical than practical and made no provision for sandwich courses. In 1981 a new approach to the training programmes, adopted first of all in the four centres and then in the Co-operative College, introduced this method and trainees must now supplement their theoretical training with practical experience.

With rare exceptions, the state services, as mentioned earlier, did not intervene either directly or indirectly in the planning of the programme thanks to the vigilance and objections of the co-operators concerned. This is to the credit of the co-operative movement, which must be able to act in full freedom in spreading the co-operative message; it would be contrary to its principles, its history and its independence to accept state intervention in a matter which is entirely its own responsibility.

The collaboration of academics, including psychologists and pedagogic experts, gave the programme a scientific foundation and helped to avoid the improvisations which are common among popular movements. Thus for the first time in Greece an economic and social movement like that of the co-operatives was able to work together with scientific circles and the intelligentsia to spread co-operative ideas to the younger generation which, as part of its socialisation process, could usefully be exposed to the ideals of co-operation, namely peace, tolerance and participative self-management.

The fact that the whole programme started from the grass roots of the co-operative movement at the village level and was implemented for their benefit guaranteed that it would be of practical value, geared to immediate needs and in no way institutionalised. Institutionalisation should only enter the picture where co-operative education has to be integrated into the

national schooling system. The efforts made by the movement to promote school co-operatives and the few initiatives taken by the State to introduce co-operative education into the agricultural technical schools and possibly the universities as well gives hope that this institutionalisation could become a reality one day. It is, in fact, an essential condition if the continued implementation of the programme is to produce tangible and lasting effects.

These efforts are more than ever necessary since the new needs emerging from the programme of agro-industrial reorganisation are more important and more complex than in the past. While, in recent years, the programme was mainly aimed at educating the leaders of primary co-operatives and then at training and retraining co-operative employees, in the near future the accent will have to be placed on rapid training for the intermediate and above all senior managers needed to assume the increased responsibilities of managing an agricultural economy transformed into co-operative industrial complexes. It is thus only through a far-reaching programme of educational and training activities that the co-operatives will be able to bring about the necessary reorientation and restructuring of the movement by overcoming the indifference and isolation of the rural world and the harmful influence of the bureaucrats and middlemen that still hold back the march of social progress.

Notes

[1] This share declined from 28 per cent in 1977 to 14.3 per cent in 1980. See Panhellenic Confederation of Agricultural Co-operative Unions (PASEGES): *L'agriculture grecque* (Athens, 1978), p. 13.

[2] For further details see ibid., pp. 18 and 21, and C. Evelpidis: "La structure des exploitations agricoles en Grèce", in *Mediterranea* (Paris, Centre international de hautes études agronomiques méditerranéennes), 19 Mar. 1968.

[3] According to the government programme presented by Prime Minister Papandreou to Parliament on 22 November 1981. There is hardly any literature on agro-industrial co-operatives, which have been operating with success in Bulgaria since 1971. See, however, B. Louvel: "Agriculture et socialisme en Bulgarie", in *Economie et politique* (Paris), Nov. 1972, pp. 121-138.

[4] See, for example, K. Koukidis: *L'esprit associationniste chez les Grecs modernes,* Ph.D. thesis (Paris, 1948); D. Mavrogiannis: *L'association coopérative d'Ampélakia. Contribution à l'histoire sociale du mouvement coopératif grec (1780-1966),* Ph.D. thesis, University of Paris II (Paris, 1975); and R. Louis and D. Mavrogiannis: "The advantageous and beneficial system of Ampelakia (1780-1812)", in *Co-operative Information* (Geneva, ILO), 1975, No. 2, pp. 21-50.

[5] It was not until the promulgation of Act No. 921/1979 that the legislator referred to the country's associationist antecedents. The subject of Greek pre-cooperative associations was widely and positively discussed during the International Symposium on Traditional and Non-Conventional Co-operatives organised from 27 to 31 May 1981 in Athens under the aegis of the International Co-operative Alliance by the University of Thrace and the PASEGES.

[6] Details and statistics on primary agricultural co-operatives in the period 1915-66 can be found in J. Chombart de Lauwe and J. Poitevin: *Problems of agricultural co-operation,* Case study in Greece (Paris, OECD, 1964); and D. Mavrogiannis: "Regards sur le développement

des coopératives en Grèce, 1915-1966, in *Archives internationales de sociologie de la coopération* (Paris), 1968, No. 33. The decline noted after the 1950s is only an apparent one: it was due to the amalgamation of primary co-operatives and then their dissolution under the military regime in the period 1967-74.

[7] It should be pointed out to those who doubt the feasibility of setting up a co-operative bank that the reserve funds of the agricultural co-operatives have to be deposited in the Agricultural Bank and that these funds are in fact sufficient to pave the way for the creation of a co-operative financial institution.

[8] From a speech made by the Prime Minister to Parliament on 22 November 1981.

[9] Ibid. As regards returning emigrants, they will be assisted by interest-bearing loans. Cf. the UNDP/ILO European Regional Project for Second-Generation Migrants, which refers to workers' co-operatives as a possible means of organising migrant workers returning to their country of origin. See Tripartite Technical Seminar on Second-Generation Migrants (Lisbon, 4-9 May 1981): *Report* (ILO doc. RER/79/001/SEM.I/GEN.7(e); preliminary version), p. 17.

[10] It is interesting to note that the first person to have raised the question of using the co-operative formula for the distribution of so-called national lands in Greece was François Boulanger, a disciple of Charles Fourier, in a letter addressed to the Greek Prime Minister on 7 April 1847. But we have had to wait until now to see this idea, which might have avoided the dismemberment of farms, surface again in the government programme.

[11] On 31 December 1979 co-operative society employees numbered 8,369 permanent staff and 14,769 fixed-term and temporary staff.

[12] There are 17 technical schools specialising in agricultural matters (mechanisation, plant cultivation, animal husbandry, etc.), the programme lasting six years.

[13] In particular, a monthly review *(Agrotikos Kosmos)* published by the PASEGES and intended for agricultural co-operatives in general; a scientific co-operative review *(Synetairistika Themata)* published by supporters of the movement and aimed at jurists; and an illustrated magazine *(O Synergatismos)*, published by the Co-operative Education Service for the benefit and encouragement of school co-operatives.