

Michael Prinz

[Publiziert als:] Structure and Scope of Consumer Co-operation in the 20th Century. Germany in the English Mirror in: Acta of the International Congress: Consumerism versus Capitalism? Co-operatives seen from an International Comparative Perspective, Ghent, 16-18 October 2003, Amsab-Institute of Social History, Ghent 2005.

The history of consumer co-operatives is not only an important subject in its own right. Given the fact that it goes back 200 years and that it's an integral part of European as well as American, Asian and Australian general history, it can serve as a tool for the comparative description and analysis of national and trans-cultural differences and similarities. It relates to other important subjects as to the role and structure of collective self-help in modern societies, to the question of social alliances and conflicts, to patterns of saving and spending, to consumer rights as well as to the history of liberalism and the labour movement. There is, indeed, a long historiographic tradition of dealing with consumer co-operatives in a comparative perspective, which dates back to the early 20th century.⁽¹⁾ Most of the studies that form part of this tradition have tended to follow what John Stuart Mill has called "the method of agreement as opposed to the method of difference."⁽²⁾ An excellent example of how the method of agreement can be used to introduce a wider audience to the history of consumer co-operation is the article of Johann Brazda and Robert Schediwy on the crisis and the failure of European consumer co-operative movements in the International Handbook of Co-operative Organizations.⁽³⁾ The article starts from the notion that most European movements experienced serious crises in the last decades of the 20th century and then concentrates mainly on common causal denominators. Rising incomes, changing consumption patterns, the spread of chain-stores, supermarkets and branded products, the availability of easy consumer credit, long term changes in lifestyles are named by the authors as causes which eroded - probably once and for all in the European context - the basis of widespread collective entrepreneurial consumer self-help. The following text takes up again the question of the crisis and the failure of the European Co-operative Movement, but it does so by using the method of difference. The notion that all movements had had their share of trouble and suffered from the same general challenges, tends to obscure the fact that there were and are still

remarkable differences in the extent and the timing of the crises. How large those differences became, may be seen from the fact that the Swedish consumer co-operatives in the late 1960s still felt strong enough to invest heavily in the ailing German movement.⁽⁴⁾ Though there is no doubt that the present European consumer Co-operative Movement is a far cry from what it once was, even today there remain noticeable differences between, for instance, Germany and Austria on the one hand,⁽⁵⁾ the UK and Sweden on the other. In this context, the fate of German consumer co-operation stands out. Its crisis preceded the others while the outcome was more radical than in most cases. Already at the end of the 1960s the German movement had largely disappeared.⁽⁶⁾ To depict a peculiarity as a starting point doesn't render a comparative approach unnecessary. On the contrary, without a comparative perspective it would be impossible to distinguish between short-term and long-term causes as well as between structures and scope that set the framework for the historical actors. The main yardstick will be the development in the UK, which German co-operators themselves had continuously regarded as a model.

A Question of Substance

In historical writing, especially during the interwar years, German consumer co-ops were often portrayed as the model disciple of their British counterpart. Ever since the 1860s, when the liberal social reformer Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch spoke of the "*wonderful achievements of the English*" co-ops in the UK represented the role model for the German movement.⁽⁷⁾ In the 1890s, before the steep rise of the German movement, another delegation, this time composed of Social Democrats and trade unionists, left the premises of the Central Wholesale Society (CWS) in Manchester deeply impressed and with the zeal to work for something similar in structure and size on German soil.⁽⁸⁾ The spectacular growth, which followed, earned the German movement the reputation of being the second largest behind the English. In the late 1950s when the challenges of the Postwar commercial revolution had become highly visible, the two movements were again in close contact, exchanging their views and even sharing confidential internal information on the state of their financial affairs. At that time, there were remarkable similarities in the organisational structure in the sense that both movements then represented the more 'classical', i.e., decentralised form of consumer co-operation in Europe. These similarities proved

to be one of the major reasons why both movements found it particularly difficult to respond adequately to the rapidly changing environment. However, there was a difference between both that played an important role in the further course of the events. While the British movement with its 12 million members was still a giant when the crisis struck⁽⁹⁾, the German movement was already severely weakened in terms of members and financial assets.

The Quantitative Relationship

English consumer co-operation started early and remained well ahead not just of the German, but also of all other contemporary European consumer movements. During the difficult economic years from 1873 to 1896, Germany's co-ops obviously struggled, but did not succeed in closing the gap.⁽¹⁰⁾ All this changed when German co-ops took a deep second breath from the 1890s onwards. While the ratio between the respective memberships had been 5:1 in favour of the English consumer movement in 1890, it was down to just 1.3:1 at the outbreak of the First World War. In 1924, the year in which the big and devastating postwar inflation in Germany ended, the race to catch up seemed nearly won. By then German membership numbers amounted to 90 % of the English. From this year on, fortunes turned sharply. In striking contrast to what one might have expected, the German movement gave ground ever since. Instead of catching up and overtaking the leader, Germany's consumer Co-operatives not only grew slower than their English counterpart, but also lost in absolute terms while the English movement continued to grow impressively. In 1938, the ratio was about the same it had been half a century ago. That didn't change after the Second World War. Even if one corrects the absolute numbers for the territorial changes, there were - at least on the long run - no more signs that the German movement could ever follow suit again. The second breath of the 1890s had resulted in a situation where Germany's co-ops seemed to have lost their breath at all. The comparison indicates a great divide within the development of the German movement with two sharply contrasting trends: an impressive strong showing before 1924 and a sharp revision of this trend ever since.

A Promising Start 1860-1924

The reasons why Germany compared to England started at least two or three decades later in building up a modern consumer movement cannot be detailed here. The main causes may be summed up by pointing to the relatively late and unequal process of commercialisation in most German states up to the 1860s.⁽¹¹⁾ This includes the backward state of German urbanisation, an aspect in which Germany lagged more than half a century behind England, strong traditions of social protectionism in the sphere of consumption, restrictions on commercial transactions etc. which in some German states were still in place in the 1860s.⁽¹²⁾ When change finally came, it was - a general feature of German economic and social modernisation - rapid and radical. Supporting structures of a modern consumer society took shape since the late 1850s and were well in place in the 1870s. A key element of change was the fixed shop. Its spread reduced the importance of the annual fair, the weekly market, and the itinerant trader.⁽¹³⁾ The provision of basic foodstuff as well as clothing and other aspects of consumption was transformed within a few decades.⁽¹⁴⁾ Internal wholesale trade - an essential for the establishment of customers' self-help - evolved rapidly since the 1860s and international free-trade treaties facilitated the import of consumer goods.⁽¹⁵⁾

Apart from the economic change, important political and social conditions were now in place. After a decade-long period of repression a process of political mobilisation started in the early 1860s: political parties were founded and extended their reach. For the first time, modern elections campaigns were contested, political leaders tried to build social and economic organisations around the political parties in order to give them a solid footing. With the emergence of trade unionism among workers, the question arose on what basis and social ideals a modern German society should be erected: as a class society with a few capitalists on the one hand and millions of working people on the other hand with the perspective of radicalisation and ultimately revolution or as a middle-class society, built on the foundations of self-respect, thrift, small capital, secured property rights, evolution and peace-meal reform under the control of moderate and enlightened bourgeois reformers.

Some Specific Causes

Early consumer co-operation in the German States benefited from the availability of a tested and efficient model: the famous Rochdale principles.⁽¹⁶⁾ The importance of this model can only be assessed by looking at other forms of consumer co-operation. In many different instances consumers combine their purchasing power, in historic as well as in present societies, but when they do so, this tends to happen in the vast majority of all cases on a temporary basis. There is an immense temptation to collect the gains of collective shopping as they come in. Profits are realized in a way that gratifies the collective action immediately. This instant gratification encourages further action on the same basis, but it doesn't lead to a shop. Why should it? The importance of the Rochdale model for the start of consumer co-operation all over Europe lies in the fact that it was set against the social logic of spontaneous co-operation. The Rochdale legend was capable of neutralizing and superseding this logic by providing a powerful narrative of 'poor weavers' becoming successful merchants and - by doing what seemed to be in the power of everyone - created the foundations of a more just society. The magic spell of the Rochdale formula must be seen against the background of what was perceived by many European liberals as the advantageous English way: the obvious ability of the English elites to create thrifty, loyal and responsible, in other words, politically and socially integrated lower classes. There is little doubt that even without this model one would have seen some form of consumer co-operation in the German States and other continental societies. But it is doubtful whether anything as coherent and large would have started without a focus that was at the same time concrete and inspirational.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Danish as well as the other Scandinavian examples show that in many cases the rural population, farm labourers, but also independent farmers and smallholders, constituted the backbone of early consumer co-operation. This did not happen in Germany on a large scale for reasons that remain to be thoroughly investigated.⁽¹⁸⁾ Instead, Germany became known as the cradle of co-operative credit unions ('Volksbanken', 'Raiffeisen-Kassen'), which had the aim of defending the economic independence of the self-employed middle class by means of collective self-help. It has largely gone unnoticed to what extent early German consumer co-operatives were helped by the existence of an exceptionally strong co-operative movement of artisans and smallholders. German consumer co-ops in the 1860s were still too small and, in political and social terms, much too insignificant in order to muster parliamentary support: The first German

co-operative laws in 1867 (Prussia) and 1868 (North-German Union) were passed in order to facilitate the founding of self-employed persons' co-operatives and were tailored to their respective needs. However, consumer co-ops clearly profited from the establishment of a legal framework and many of them registered under the new laws.

A second area in which the contribution of self-employed persons' co-operativism is obvious relates to the question of inter-local, inter-regional and national organisation. With the exception of some regions, the early consumer co-operative movement was not coherent and financially strong enough to build and finance its own organisation. Instead, most of them preferred to slip under the roof of Schulze-Delitzsch's liberal General Union of Purchase- and Economic Co-operatives founded on Self-Help which consisted mainly of smallholders' and artisans' co-operatives. Schulze personally travelled from regional assembly to regional assembly and shouldered the Herculean task to advise and discipline the small, often carelessly operating co-operatives. The available protocols show of his anger and frustration. Out of this frustrating personal initiative developed the third important contribution of middle-class co-operativism to the development of 19th century consumer co-operation: the establishment of compulsory accounting and auditing.⁽¹⁹⁾ There is no doubt that compulsory auditing, which was mainly developed with an eye on the credit-unions, helped much to "*ensure good management ... instil confidence*"⁽²⁰⁾ in the operations of the young and inexperienced consumer movement as well. Thus, at a very early stage of their development, German consumer co-ops received professional auditing and expertise to guide their way through the economic turbulent waters of the 1870s and 1880s. Though still small in numbers the movement, in general, was sound and stable.⁽²¹⁾ An important structural difference between German and English consumer co-ops that developed in this context was a clear separation between management and control. In Germany the supervisory board and the management board remained apart with the latter being much smaller than its English counterpart.⁽²²⁾ In other words, German co-ops were modelled on the pattern of the joint-stock company. In this respect, they were leading the way in terms of rationalisation and modernisation while it took English consumer co-ops more than a century to follow suit. Of course, it is difficult to say what this distinction exactly meant on a day-to-day basis. One may assume that it reduced the influence of the lay-element in daily operations; on the other hand it should have contributed to structured accounting and economic efficiency.

On this solid foundation rested the spectacular expansion that started in the 1890s. This development was an element in and, in part, caused by the general expansion of the socialist movement, i.e., the SPD and the trade union movement. At that stage, German consumer co-operatives occupied a middle-ground between the Belgian model on the one hand with its wide overlapping of political and economic organisation ⁽²³⁾ and the other with the English co-ops which originated much earlier than the political party and constituted a self-assured, independent institution when a large independent workers' party finally emerged. No contemporary observer was doubted that the German consumer movement had strong links with the socialist trade unions and the SPD. Long before the official recognition in 1910, Social Democratic representatives defended the co-ops in parliament against persecution, discrimination and direct repression. Union, party and Co-op membership overlapped to a large extent. By 1914, workers constituted between 70 and 80 % of all members. In many cases, the call for the foundation of a new co-op originated during a party or a union meeting.⁽²⁴⁾

Given the political circumstances, one might have expected that the German movement would stick closer to the Belgian pattern. It was the political environment of a semi-authoritarian state that made the difference. German association law strictly forbade any direct links between political and economic activities and the state administration installed a whole machinery to guarantee the observance of the law. If one could trace a financial contribution of a consumer co-op for anything that smelled socialist, it provided the ground not only for a heavy fine, but for the dissolution of the co-operative. Moreover, when a member of the supervising board or of the management was exposed as a member of the SPD, civil servants had to give up their membership.

However, this policy of strict control that the authorities pursued towards the German consumer movement had consequences unforeseen and probably unintended by the authorities. As any overlapping between the economic organisation and political activity was strictly forbidden, the consumer co-operatives in turn could not be instrumentalised by the party, at least, not directly. To put it blunt, German consumer co-operatives earned a lot by the rise of the socialist movement and the trade unions in terms of social and political energies and support, but were largely kept from paying back this support, at least, in financial terms. While other movements

contributed substantial sums to political purposes, German co-ops literally kept all the money either for dividends or for economic investments. It is impossible to look into the heads of leading co-operators - it would have been difficult even for contemporaries - but one may assume that this constellation wasn't entirely unwelcome as it coincided with their interests to build a strong and autonomous consumer movement. The authoritarian state spared the co-operators the difficult task of constantly negotiating their relative autonomy against the claims of the party and the unions, in other words, to hold their ground in a morally and politically charged infighting. In this respect, state policy constituted something of a functional equivalent of the assertive co-operative culture that existed, for instance, in the northern English heartland of consumer co-operation.⁽²⁵⁾

The notion that the movement failed to pay back what it received highlights an important point, but it doesn't answer the question how the 'legitimacy gap' that evolved from this constellation was filled. An answer seems all the more important as there were other factors that further widened the gap. As the socialist movement before 1914 was persecuted, morally outlawed, and in turn based on total dedication and on taking high personal risks, heroic norms and the stressing of idealism were central to its culture. In this context commercial transactions and commercial success, especially profits and dividends, were viewed with suspicion and appeared illegitimate to many of the rank and file. The culture of heroism with its anti-commercial implications was reinforced by the traditional low esteem of commercial values in German society as a whole. In popular writing and thinking shopkeeping was regularly equated with cheating. It was not by chance, that German co-ops shied away from calling dividends 'Dividenden' and stores 'Laden' and instead preferred to speak of 'Rückvergütung' (pay-back) and 'Verteilungsstelle' (distribution places). Along the same line was the stressing of transparency and honesty as key values. The consumer co-operatives' leadership in Hamburg portrayed itself by referring to an idealised image of the local merchant-class, i.e., as honest and trustful merchants. The most important expression of this self-styled image was the extensive public statistical bookkeeping. German consumer co-operatives inherited this tradition from the credit co-operative movement for which it had once meant a question of do-or-die. Annual public statistics were seen by Schulze-Delitzsch as being vital to gain public approval and build trust for credit operations by have-nots. The consumer co-operatives adapted the tradition and carried it to

an extreme. As far as I can see, no other consumer co-operative movement was obsessed similarly with compiling detailed statistics of nearly every quantifiable aspect of its transactions. For everyone who wants to study the German movement, there is breathtaking wealth of printed information available, not just on the national, but also on the regional and local level. This includes detailed information about the social composition of the rank and file - information that is almost completely missing in the English case.

Another aspect where socialist ideology and consumer co-operatives' objectives converged was the question of rationalisation and modernisation. It has often been stressed that German socialism had a favourable view of technological progress, centralisation and even mergers. Thus little ideological objections stood in the way when consumer co-operatives developed along these lines. Already before 1914 the movement tried to found District-Co-operatives, encompassing several smaller cities.⁽²⁶⁾ As the consumer movement grew into a mass movement with what seemed to be an unlimited horizon, production facility after facility was erected. Thus consumption finally gained a reputation of being one of several ways not of reaching - this was left to the party and its supposed conquering of the commanding heights of the state - but of approaching socialism.

The Impact of War and Inflation

Strange as it may seem for a movement that is dedicated to peaceful reform and to everyday needs, many European consumer co-ops flourished during the great wars of the 20th century or, at least, managed to hold on and strengthen their position vis-à-vis their competitors.⁽²⁷⁾ The English as well as the German co-ops exemplify the nexus between total warfare and consumer organisation. The growth rates of their respective memberships are remarkably similar [See Table 1, Appendix]. At the end of the First World War both movements had gained more than a million new followers. With the influx of these newly won co-operators the share of organised consumers augmented considerably. In the midtwenties around one third of all German households had access to a co-operative store through one family member.

The reasons why consumer co-operatives fared rather well during the years after 1914 are manifold. One important element was the growing importance that the access to basic foodstuffs

gained in face of the politics of mutual starvation that accompanied total warfare. Co-ops were supposed to have privileged access to scarce goods. Under these conditions, many customers tried to maximize their options, a fact that carried consumer co-operation to new groups and to new regions, some of which had been 'enemy territory' before the war. One may speak of a 'nationalisation' of co-operation in the various countries that participated in the war. This occurred in England where food shortages were more of a threat and a fearful vision than a reality and it happened in Germany where shortage and rationing came at a very early stage. Consumer co-ops were helped and hindered at the same time because they did not participate in the black market for food that developed since 1916. Their reputation and their practice of being honest providers of food attracted many new members. In general, consumer co-operatives in Germany as well as in Austria, France and England were in a better position than most other shopkeepers during the war as many of the bigger co-operatives had some form of production facility at hand. Another factor for the spread of co-operation was political integration. As early as August 1914, the conservative central government repealed decrees prohibiting civil servants to enter socialist-led co-ops.⁽²⁸⁾ The expertise that had been accumulated by the co-operators in managing the efficient distribution of food on a large scale was another reason why the organisers of the war economy, at least those who were little prejudiced, invited leading co-operators to participate in the critical process of distributing scarce food resources. While this development in England was more or less in line with long-term trends and confined to the final stage of the war, the invitation extended to German co-operators constituted an abrupt and complete break with the past.⁽²⁹⁾ The similarity in the numbers tends to obscure a very different political context. In this respect, the differences that existed during the war became even stronger in the early 1920s. While the English government, with regard to the financial institutions of the City, had a strong economic incentive to return to a market economy, to end rationing and to stop inflation, and, what should be added, felt politically strong enough to do so, the German government lacked both - will and ability - and left inflation run its course. After the downfall of the 'Kaiserreich', the system of rationing basic-stuff, which persisted in some areas until 1922, tended to favour the co-operatives, as many local administrations were now led by socialist politicians and union representatives. Whereas in 1923-24 English co-ops were again doing

business as usual, German societies operated under very special circumstances in which favourable and destructive tendencies were simultaneously at work.⁽³⁰⁾

The instrumentalisation of the currency as a tool in foreign relation-policy as well with regard to internal power relations produced a nightmarish hyperinflation which accompaniments have been ingrained into the popular memory and are remembered still today.⁽³¹⁾ At the climax of the inflation, in 1923, when the exchange rate of German Mark per dollar fell to less than a billion to one, the infamous rush into material assets started, a phenomenon that had highly ambivalent consequences for the consumer associations. The term describes a pattern of behaviour by which consumers desperately tried to save by deliberately spending - the ultimate perverted form of a mass consumer society. Being under the strong pressure of their respective members struggling for financial and physical survival, German co-ops were caught in the inflationary maelstrom, attracting ever more members while, at the same time, 'selling out'. Referring to the differences in the overall political and economic setting of the immediate postwar era helps to understand the enormous gains in membership which nearly closed the gap between the English and the German movement. On the other hand, the very 'success' in the German case already contained the seeds of crisis and even bankruptcy.

Crisis and Downfall. Limits to Integration

After 1945 when the surviving representatives of the German consumer Co-operative Movement demanded special treatment from the Allied Administration, referring to their persecution under National Socialist rule, a bitter controversy erupted. In a brochure, titled *Only for reasons of political persecution ?* the organisations of Germany's lower middle-classes questioned the whole notion that the dissolution of many of the largest German consumer co-operatives after 1933 had been motivated by political considerations. Instead, they argued, that the real cause of the liquidations was quite simply the poor state of large parts of the German movement as a result of hazardous financial transactions during the specious prosperity of the 1920s and the following depression. This argument has been taken up again and examined by recent research. One aspect that has come to light much clearer than before is, in fact, the gravity of the financial crisis that many of the largest German co-ops faced in the early 1930s.⁽³²⁾ In principle, the pattern

of behaviour that was behind the financial crisis is well known. After the turmoil of the years between 1914 and 1924 many public and private companies tended to draw a bill on the future which they were not able to pay when the unexpected happened: the return of a dragon already thought to have been vanquished once and for all. In a way the much-criticised "*imprudent behaviour*" that consisted in the use of short-term funds for long-term investments must be seen as a psychological reaction to the extreme conditions experienced for more than a decade. There was the unique feeling so characteristic of the public mood in Weimar Germany that "*this generation had had its share of evil*" and that, because of this, things quite simply had to turn better. In the economic predictions made during the few bright years of the Weimar Republic, one finds an astounding, given the outcome, naive optimism that can only be explained with reference to the background of a foregoing collective traumatising experience. This is the context in which one has to place the investment pattern and the financial crisis of the German consumer co-operatives following the Great Depression. The final phase of the inflation had a lasting impact insofar as it stripped the co-ops of most of their liquid capital. Saving deposits, which had been used to finance investments in the prewar era, had evaporated by 1924. Because of the selling-off in the crazy months of the hyperinflation at the moment of monetary stabilisation little financial stocks were left. In the *Co-operative Yearbook* of 1924 an anonymous expert estimated that around 50 % of all German consumer co-operatives were close to bankruptcy.⁽³³⁾ Given the fact that there were just four to five good years to rebuild a sound financial basis, one cannot but attribute the inflation an important role in the long-term development of German co-ops. When in the early 1950s, the first signs of a financial crisis of the English consumer movement appeared, a retrospective interpretation of the 1920s emerged that, in a way, resembled very much a narrative popular within Germany, namely that of the 1920s as a specious prosperity and a time of false security.⁽³⁴⁾ The membership growth of these years was interpreted as hiding or even, in itself, as the beginning of a deep structural crisis. The movement was said to have expanded into groups that were merely interested in financial gains and did not identify with the co-operative ideals. The lack of a strong identification, so went the narrative, could be read from the statistics that proved that the rate of household expenditure spent within the movement did not rise significantly after 1914.⁽³⁵⁾ While, indeed, it is true that the numbers indicate limits to further growth and could be read - especially with the benefit of the hindsight - as an indication

that the co-operative penetration dogma was flawed, any comparison with Germany suggests that the mentioned interpretation severely underrates the success story written by English co-operators after 1914. The differences in membership trends are stunning. The absolute gains of the English movement nearly equalled the losses of the German movement as if both were connected through some hidden channel. Within five years the ratio of English to German membership fell from over 90 % to under 60 %.

However weak the identification of the new members that entered the English movement after 1924 may have been, in the case of Germany these groups simply did not join at all or left again in large numbers as soon as normalcy returned.

Regarding this aspect, the breakdown of member statistics by occupational groups allows some telling insights [Table 3 and 4, Appendix]. If one concentrates on the absolute numbers, there is no arguing that during war and inflation the German consumer movement gained some ground among the general public in relation to 1914. In 1927 around 70,000 more artisans had become members of the consumers' organisations than there had been in 1914. The same holds true for farmers. In 1927, the number of civil servants organised in co-operatives belonging to the 'Zentralverband' was fivefold of what it had been in 1914. On the other hand, except for the civil servants, these developments did little to change the overall composition of the movement.⁽³⁶⁾

Taken into account that, for instance, the group of self-employed had been heavily underrepresented in the 'Kaiserreich', the relative gains after 1914 seem quite modest. After the stabilisation of the currency the share of self-employed in trade and industry among members fell even below what it had been in 1914. It seems that these groups regarded co-operative membership not only purely instrumental, but that they had actually been 'forced' to acquire membership by the extreme economic circumstances. No pragmatic or instrumental considerations held them back!

The major influx in these crucial years came from the ranks of the working classes, which continued to be significantly overrepresented. On the other hand, there were obvious limits to the mobilisation of blue-collar workers as well. In the Golden Years of the Weimar Republic some 300,000 workers gave up their membership. Against the background of low incomes and

constant high unemployment among both white- and blue-collar workers that figure appears quite large. At least some blame must be laid on the uneasy, sometimes strained relations between the co-operative movement and the labour movement in general after 1918. During and in the aftermath of the revolution, old differences gained new importance. The consumer movement distanced itself from all plans of municipal socialism. It perceived these plans as being directed at its political and economic independence. Given the electoral gains, important groups within the SPD tended to view the magistrates and the municipal administrations as the best suited tool for an effective defence of consumer rights whereas co-operative societies came to be regarded by some as politically selfish organisations caring only about their respective members.⁽³⁷⁾ At the same time, the integration of many former members of liberal consumer organisations forced the Central Union of Consumer Associations (Zentralverband der Konsumvereine) to put a much stronger emphasis on maintaining 'the strictest political neutrality'. This emphasis made the co-operatives in the perception of the newly founded communist party still more of a decadent and bourgeois institution. At some stage the KPD tried to gain political control of local co-operatives whereas the Zentralverband used every mean to contain these efforts and expel communist members.⁽³⁸⁾ Another battlefield between the co-operatives and the labour movement became the highly symbolic question of the eight-hour day, a central achievement of the revolution. Its maintenance collided with the interests of the co-operative movement to have its investment into modern bakeries and costly machinery paid off and to let the machines run for three consecutive shifts. The struggle around this crucial question continued for most of the decade and turned into a general debate on whose interests should be given the priority: the workers' or the consumers'.

Despite such open conflicts of interests and of ideology between the organisations of the consumers and the labour movement, the former did not succeed in escaping the realm of party politics in the public eye. The existing federations - the Zentralverband to whom belonged about 80 to 90 % of all co-ops, and the much smaller Reichsverband der Konsumvereine - were still ascribed to the socialist resp. the catholic camp. The overall picture of Weimar consumer co-operation is one of conflict and fragmentation. The appeal of consumer co-operation resonated among employed consumers, i.e., white- and blue-collar workers and civil servants, while it made little or no headway among the self-employed, in other words, class-related issues and

perceptions superseded the interests of the consumers.⁽³⁹⁾ This constellation reflected, in part, recent developments like the food shortages of war and inflation and the conflicts that arose from them. These experiences had served to set consumers against farmers, not just the mass of the people against a few mighty landlords, but the urban population against the countryside in general, resulting in violent pre-industrial forms of conflict. But even among each other German consumers continued to be separated by deep-rooted ideologies. Weakened as it was by war and inflation, the consumer movement did not and probably could not succeed in playing a neutralising and integrative role.⁽⁴⁰⁾ On the contrary, it got deeply enmeshed in the struggles that finally brought the republic to an end.

The Impact of National Socialism

During its election campaigns the Nazi party had promised shopkeepers and artisans to smash the consumer co-operatives, liquidate their economic assets and distribute them among members of the middle-classes, a promise that was never fulfilled. Consumer co-operatives continued to exist in their traditional form until the early 1940s. Afterwards they were transferred into a centralised conglomerate under the control of the German Labour-Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront), the Nazi organisation that replaced the trade unions.⁽⁴¹⁾ Why, in contrast to the fate of the party and the trade unions, consumer co-operatives were allowed to survive under National Socialist rule at all is an interesting question for any general interpretation of the regime, but it is of much less relevance to the history of the consumer movement. While one may argue over developments in the Weimar era, the overall destructive impact of National Socialism on the German consumer movement rests beyond doubt. The question is not if there was such an effect, but how strong it was and what were the underlying motives and the forces behind it. The negative effect of the regime change becomes all the more apparent if the development inside Germany is put into a comparative perspective.

In many European states, including those where democratic institutions remained intact, the 1930s represented an era during which the organisations of small traders and artisans lobbied successfully for social protection against the harbingers of modern times in their respective trades. Department stores, in particular, were confronted with extra taxes or outright bans on

further expansion.⁽⁴²⁾ Some of these restrictions encompassed the consumer co-operatives as well, with England being no exception to the rule.⁽⁴³⁾ However, in most cases these measures did not work as an effective check on further growth. During the 1930s English co-operatives, for instance, continued to expand and attracted more than 1.5 million new members (Table 2). This expansion was in line with the development of most other European movements at that time. The overall mood after the depression was one of caution, of longing for security, combined with an outlook on the future as a zero-sum game - psychological factors that favoured at the same time social protectionism and the seeking of membership in consumer co-operatives.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Falling or stagnating wages further enhanced the value of consumer co-operation. In England, in particular, an important shift within the realm of basic foodstuff, the growing importance of the milk trade and the active role the co-ops managed to play in this shift, contributed to further growth.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Thus a comparative perspective relativises all relativising of National Socialism's impact on German consumer co-operation. By 1938, membership of German co-operatives was half of what it had been in 1933 and down to less than a quarter in relation to the English movement. The causes may be resumed as follows:

- The announcement of the Nazi party to destroy the Konsumvereine within short notice - though, in the end, it never materialised - made many members in 1933 literally run for their savings, thus aggravating the financial crisis of the movement. This was taken as a welcome pretext by the government to close down the saving facilities and prohibit their further use. This measure must be seen in contrast to the situation in England where members' savings constituted the main source of investment capital.
- The so-called Discount Law ('Rabattgesetz') - which, by the way, has been abolished only recently by the current red-green government⁽⁴⁶⁾ - put a cap of 3 % on all discounts, thus robbing the co-ops of the power to determine the amount of dividend and 'levelling' the field for all players. What this law meant, can again be seen by contrasting it with the situation in the UK. Though dividends after the First World War were usually lower than before the war, even in 1945 many British co-ops still paid dividends of up to 10 %. In principle, the German law was a direct attack on the very form of the consumer co-operative. It abolished almost completely the incentive to become member.

- Not all of the financial troubles German consumer co-operatives faced in 1935 were, as mentioned before, due to developments after 1933. The point where politics came in was the exclusion of any generous help as it was given to many other private companies in a similar position. In 1935, some of Germany's largest co-ops - among them the Berliner Konsumverein - went out of business. The pressure by the small traders to liquidate the rest continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. There was a constant stream of denunciations to the authorities and to the Gestapo. In 1942 secret informants suggested that consumer co-operatives were serving as a basis for socialist resistance, a fact that accelerated the dissolution into a centralised structure.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The Labour Front, which since 1933 had tried in vain to incorporate the co-ops, grasped the opportunity, brought the remaining companies under control and tried to turn them into a giant conglomerate. Restructuring was still under way when the war ended.

New Challenges and Old Foes

The reconstruction of consumer co-operatives in Germany after 1945 offers some rare insights into the social fabric because of the simultaneousness of continuities and breaks, and because the situation represented a test of the durability of long-term structures in relation to conscious and bold decisions. Better than at most other stages of modern history, we can observe how the past was perceived, what kind of future was expected by the historical actors, how these perceptions influenced the process of decision-making and, finally, what role the unexpected played in the final outcome.

Among the important continuities that shaped the fate of German consumer co-operation was the strong position of the self-employed lower-middle class. Two seemingly contradictory trends among these groups were of special importance. The first one was an impressive economic modernisation process engineered by the small traders themselves during the 1950s. This group that, for a long time, had defended its social position mainly by political means, now consciously adopted the co-operative self-help model. The change, which may be seen as a way of 'learning from the enemy' came exactly when it had to and reaped a rich harvest as it enabled the fittest among the group to withstand the fierce competition by chain stores. However, the strategy of conscious modernisation on behalf of the small traders was less of a substitute than a supplement

to the old ways. With the assistance of a conservative government, the traders managed to re-establish some of the protectionist laws directed at consumer co-operatives. In 1954, the National Socialist Discount Law was reinstated.⁽⁴⁸⁾ With dividends as low as 3 % members objected that part of their dividend should be used to build up their share. The result was a sharp reduction of over 60 % in the equity capital in the three years that followed the renewal of the law in 1953.⁽⁴⁹⁾ All this happened at a time when the demands for further investment capital in order to prepare the movement for the coming self-service revolution reached a peak. What this political intervention meant, can be read once again from a comparison between English and German co-ops. While the English societies had six times more members, their equity capital was fifty times larger.⁽⁵⁰⁾ If one looks for peculiarities, which help to explain the early troubles of the German movement, the law of 1953 and its consequences have to figure prominently in any interpretation.

Scope

We now turn to the question of decisions and perceptions that influenced the course of developments. When the decision to rebuild German consumer co-operation after 1945 was taken, one of the major questions to be answered was how to make its structure fit for the anticipated political and economic future. In these circumstances, a bitter conflict arose among leading representatives of the German movement with some of them citing the US as a model of the future while another faction pointed towards the UK. This conflict was relevant in two respects: the first and most important one was the question to what extent the centralisation that had taken place during the war, should be preserved when rebuilding the movement; the second one - related to the first - concerned the question when and how to introduce the principle of self-service. In both cases the more conservative and cautious group which was strongly oriented towards the British model bore the palm⁽⁵¹⁾, though it should be said that - in last instance - the decision was taken with regard to what was deemed the future of Germany.

The refoundation of German consumer co-operation was characterised by protracted efforts, lasting several years, to dismantle the huge conglomerate created by the Nazi regime and to reconstruct independent local co-ops one by one. In what concerned the organisational form, we

can speak of a near-complete restoration of Weimar consumer co-operation. Continuities also prevailed in the internal organisation. With the exception of a few isolated local experiments consumer co-ops in the early 1950s held on to the traditional service-intensive form of shopkeeping.⁽⁵²⁾ Client counseling, so the leadership of the ZdK argued, was central to co-operation, because it was a way to rebuild and keep personal ties between the rank and file and the co-operative and, moreover, it was a way to guide the individual member and his/her shopping preferences rationally, instead of using advertising and emotional appeals. While the latter decision was revised in the second half of the 1950s, the former shaped the structure of the movement until its terminal crisis.⁽⁵³⁾ Once the impact of the commercial revolution set in and was fully recognized, the leading personnel tried hard to revise the decision of 1945, but it didn't manage to overcome the built-in localism.⁽⁵⁴⁾

When trying to explain the outcome of these debates in which the traditionalists prevailed, one has to bear in mind that it was not determined by immovable structures and that a different decision might well have been taken. An illustration of this point is the behaviour of the Austrian co-operators who faced a similar situation in 1945 and opted for a more centralised form of reconstruction⁽⁵⁵⁾ - an option that proved much better suited for developments already visible at the horizon and which helps to explain why the Austrian consumer co-operatives fared rather well during the 1950s. There is little doubt that the decision to rebuild the German movement in a decentralised way was influenced directly by English co-operators in the military administration. This plan fitted perfectly into the overall political strategy of the Western allies to rebuild German democracy from below in order to check what was deemed the dangerous German inclination towards centralisation. But it would be wrong to describe the decision as something forced upon a majority of German co-operators. The latter had always looked in admiration at the English movement and quite a few of them had spent the years of Nazism in exile watching the constant and impressive growth of the English co-ops up until 1945. The strength of continuities in the reconstruction process had also much to do with the fact that the leading personnel of the German movement consisted of a generation born before 1914. Nazism and war had interrupted the normal generational flow. This older generation that occupied the commanding heights of Germany's politics after the war in general shared an interpretation of National Socialism as the outcome of mass society. In this outlook mass society had produced

disoriented individuals prone to be seduced by emotional incentives and charismatic leaders. Only guidance from above and education could stem these strong tendencies. The reconstruction of consumer co-operatives in a traditional form was hoped to lead to responsible behaviour both as a consumer and a citizen.

But it was not solely the inclination to what was deemed well-trying traditional forms that explains the decision to opt for small units, a strong-handed consumer education and step-by-step modernisation instead of a radical new beginning. In popular memory and even in historical writing there is a tendency to skip the first half of the 1950s and to project developments of the late 1950s on to this earlier situation. There were very few groups inside Germany who reckoned with a short period of reconstruction, least of all, with an anything resembling an economic miracle. If one had asked for a miracle at this stage, many Germans would have pointed to the fact of individual and collective survival. Instead, it was assumed that Germany would go through a long period of austerity. Against this background a cautious course of reconstruction seemed reasonable, not just for the organisations - as the leading representatives of the German consumer co-operatives believed - but for the individual consumer as well. Traditional values as prudent spending, conscious saving, resisting temptations to overstretch one's resources - which in an English context may be referred to as Victorian values - were hailed as adequate for the peculiar situation of a defeated, impoverished and morally disoriented society. The fact that England kept on rationing basic foodstuffs still in the early 1950s was envied as an expression of responsible behaviour and moral resilience.⁽⁵⁶⁾ This cautious and defensive attitude was reinforced by the perception that the old forces that strived to abolish consumer co-operation in Germany completely were still very much alive and gaining strength.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The exuberant optimism that had once characterised the movement, especially in the years before 1914, was no longer in place. The hopes of conquering the economy by rapid expansion were dampened after experiencing devastating defeats. Considering the fact that the co-operators had to cope with a legal framework, dating back to the 'Kaiserreich' and the National Socialist era, their caution made sense, albeit one has to say that an important and rare opportunity to turn the tides was missed.

Summary and Outlook

Closer scrutiny of the German case demonstrates that the - within a European context - early downfall of the German consumer co-operation after the Second World War cannot be explained by a corresponding early weakness. On the contrary, the existence of a well-trying model, support generated by a strong liberal self-help movement later supplanted by that of a strong, well-organised labour movement, the context of rapid industrialisation, commercialisation and urbanisation constituted an excellent framework for the development of a strong self-help movement of consumers. At least some of the legislation passed before 1914 that should have hindered the advance of consumer co-operation, in fact, proved to be beneficial.

With the outbreak of the First World War a new epoch began not only for German, but also for European consumer co-operation in general. The movement tended to leave its original setting and grow considerably so that in some places its newly won membership dwarfed the prewar numbers. Behind this development that came as a surprise to many contemporaries several factors were at work. In countries like the UK and Germany co-operatives were established in most regions by 1918 and didn't have to be founded by mobilising heterogeneous groups of consumers. In contrast to their competitors consumer co-operatives were big players in the market for foodstuff: non-corrupt, efficient, reliable, capable of handling large-scale operations, excelling in good bookkeeping etc. During the interwar years making ends meet continuously troubled large parts of the general population. Acute shortages of basic foodstuff, the slow rise of real incomes, chronic unemployment, and widespread economic hardship reaching the middle classes made it seem sensible to join. At least equally and probably even more important were political developments, which tended to favour the spread of consumer co-operation after 1914. The accelerated process of political integration that followed the outbreak of the war directly affected the place of consumer co-operation within the economy, social relations and the political system. Legal obstacles to entry were removed as was, at least, some of the stigma that consumer co-operation carried. This was especially important with regard to civil servants and white-collar employees, groups that tended to suffer more than others from the inflationary tendencies after 1914. For the first time, consumer co-ops entered into direct contact with the authorities and were recognised as equal partners. Due to the political rise of the European labour movement

other restrictions such as special taxes etc. often disappeared in the course of the 1920s.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In some places former deprivation turned into limited privileges. The building of the social state after 1918, by and large, did not hinder or replace the functions consumer co-operation performed. Sometimes it rather strengthened the movement. The most important field where one can observe this effect is public housing, which developed on a large scale only after 1918. In many cases, the newly erected housing estates with their many working-class tenants had a flourishing consumer co-operative as their commercial centre. Nowhere was the fidelity of the members - i.e. the percentage of members' income spent at the co-operative - stronger than in these places, which came close to Robert Owen's vision of a co-operative settlement. The climax of such favourable tendencies was marked in Germany by the presentation of a new comprehensive Social Democratic reform concept called 'Wirtschaftsdemokratie' (Economic Democracy) in 1928. The manifesto which was supported by the Social Democratic General Federation of Trade Unions, the ADGB, developed the vision of an evolutionary transformation of the current capitalist system into a participatory economy, attributing an important role to consumer co-operatives as a concrete and hopeful sign of further progress in this direction.

However, even at this point there were already unmistakable signs that some assumptions on which the optimism rested, were inherently flawed. In fact, consumer co-operatives in the interwar years housed two different cultures, one that was rooted in the prewar years and in which co-operation symbolised a disciplined, rationally controlled life style⁽⁵⁹⁾ and a vision of a more equitable and democratic society and another more pragmatic outlook which tended to regard co-operation mainly as a source of cheap, unadulterated commodities. But it was not only the influx of a new type of member, which set limits to long-term democratic aspirations attached to consumer co-operation - a tendency, by the way, whose implications should not be exaggerated because, at least, some of the characterisations of the newly won members only reflected the psychological distance between different generations. More important was the fact that the percentage of household-expenditure attracted by the co-ops tended to stagnate from 1914 onwards. The inability of the co-ops to organise consumption on a larger scale among their rank and file in general was, in part, due to the fact that the process of commercialisation never stood still, even not in the rough-and-tumble interwar years. Equally important was the fact -

something that Carl Strikwerda and Ellen Furlough have pointed to quite rightly - that from the very beginning consumer co-operation had been symbolically and ideologically tied to the idea of essential needs. This idea permitted technological rationalisation as well as constant changes within the realm of basic consumption, but it made it extremely difficult for consumer co-operatives to operate outside this moral frame of reference - even, if in retrospect, we clearly recognize the shifting meaning of 'essential'. The very legitimacy of consumer Co-operation, seen from the outside as well as from within, hinged on this definition. In other words, the counterfactual question, often posed, why consumer co-ops hesitated to organise consumption beyond this frame has to be reformulated as to why consumer co-ops did not reinvent themselves after 1914? Looking upon their behaviour from this angle, makes it obvious that it would have taken quite extraordinary circumstances to do so.

High obstacles to further advance can be identified in the political realm as well. In countries like Germany, where the consumer movement had participated in the administration of the war economy, its representatives had held high hopes that these arrangements could be conserved after the armistice. Despite constant lobbying, organised consumers in Weimar Germany never managed to gain significant influence in the centralised corporate power structure.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Neither capital nor labour wanted consumers to have a say in their closed circles. The British movement, obviously much more assertive than the German, tried a different approach by founding its own political party, the Co-operative Party, but had only slightly more success. The idea of actively connecting citizenship and consumer status at the national level through their own organisation resp. its political branch seemed plausible to many co-operators, but it did not produce the expected results.⁽⁶¹⁾

In the early 1930s, a new-old enemy gained strength, trying to curb the influence of consumer co-operation or, in some places, to destroy its much-feared competitor once and for all. In the interwar years small-scale retailing in Europe - on a larger scale than ever before - turned into a hospital for the victims of war, inflation and capitalist rationalisation, the last asylum for those who had fallen through the coarsely meshed net of social security. Small-scale retailing was at the same time part of the general labour market and a place for genuine individual self-help albeit in an often sub-proletarian form. Any pressure put on this sector generated despair and the bitterest resentment among those living in it from hand to mouth. But it took more than

desperation to turn demands into legislation. The American historian, Victoria de Grazia, in a brilliant article on Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, has warned to reduce the forces behind this development to a panic among small traders. Instead, she rightly points to the deep-rooted European "consumption regime" behind this protest. These "*coalitions of interest shaped around the defence of traditional retailing practices*" ⁽⁶²⁾ advanced their cause in nearly every European country and often managed to achieve at least some positive response by the political system and the administration.

Given these adverse circumstances the impressive uninterrupted growth of the English consumer movement during the whole period appears much less a matter of course. Looking at developments in other countries, one might have assumed that the founding of a political party, which ended as an appendage to the Labour Party, should have provoked sharp divisions, closed formerly open doors and made membership a matter of political faith. The fact that the impact of openly taken sides in party politics, though it was clearly felt, nevertheless remained surprisingly limited, points to important differences between Germany and the UK - some of them located in the actual context of the interwar years, others going back to the prewar era. In these circumstances, it paid off that the English co-ops already represented an assertive, widely recognised movement when the Labour Party surged, so that they never appeared to be completely overshadowed as a movement in its own right as was the case in other countries. As a historical symbol of self-help and of the Victorian era co-ops in the UK embodied throughout the 20th century values that continued to have some appeal among conservative groups as well. ⁽⁶³⁾ This was aided by the long-lasting financial soundness of the movement. War, inflation and the depression of the early 1930s did not devastate the movement financially. So its main asset, its economic attractiveness, never got lost. In this respect the German case serves as a mirror, which can be used to set right the proportions and to direct the focus at the role of factors that were absent in the UK during the crucial interwar years. The starkly divergent trends in membership growth after 1924 were directly linked to the severity of the preceding crisis in Germany just as the financial dependency of German co-ops after 1933 must be attributed to a particularly severe Great Depression. In addition, no matter how hard the German movement tried, it never managed to get rid of its socialist affiliation so that membership continued to be viewed as being

closely connected to political convictions. Already by 1890 the liberal element in Germany's consumer co-operation, which had never been strong anyway, had evaporated while it still dominated in the UK at that time. Hence the German public came to know consumer co-operation mainly as an extremely dynamic part of a threatening socialist universe that would not dissolve into the wider bourgeois society but conquer and subdue it. The very idea that it might symbolise elements of the general national identity, as was the case in England, appeared simply out of question. After 1918 a different perspective on German consumer co-ops might well have been justified, given their resistance to socialisation, their struggles with the unions and their open hostility towards the communist party. At this stage, one has to say, that the socialist label was made stuck by groups, which had an interest in leaving it in place.⁽⁶⁴⁾ It was the already mentioned conservative coalition of interests, which had a neomercantilist solution in mind and erroneously welcomed the Nazis among their ranks that actually 'made' continuity in this respect. In ironic twist of fate, the effort to eradicate consumer co-operation in Germany once and for all resulted in a second chance - a chance the English movement, which never faced any comparable challenge and rupture, didn't get. Missing the chance meant that German co-ops had to face the commercial revolution with the same outdated structures as the English, but without the substance of the latter - a substance that was needed to absorb the impact of a grave mistake. As the concept of citizen consumership, which the consumer co-operatives represented, failed so early and so miserably in Germany, the gates were wide open for the customer citizen.⁽⁶⁵⁾

- (1) Among the first comparative studies in the German-speaking literature are L. WALDECKER, *Der Stand der Gesetzgebung über Erwerbs- und Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften in den wichtigsten Kulturländern bei Kriegsausbruch 1914*, München: Duncker & Humblot 1919 (= Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik; 151,3); H. CRUEGER, *Die Erwerbs- und Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften in den einzelnen Ländern*, Jena: G. Fischer, 1892; V. TOTOMIANZ, *Konsumentenorganisation. Theorie, Geschichte und Praxis der Konsumgenossenschaften*, 3. ed., Berlin: Struppe & Winckler, 1929; recent examples are J. BRAZDA and R. SCHEDIWY, *Consumer Co-operatives in a Changing World*, 2 vols, Genève, 1989; J. BRAZDA, R. SCHEDIWY, RÖNNEBECK, *Pioniergenossenschaften am Beispiel der Konsumgenossenschaften in Großbritannien, Schweden und Japan*, (= Wirtschaftshistorischen Reihe Bd. 4), Frankfurt: Lang Verlag, 1996; M. PRINZ, *Brot und Dividende. Konsumvereine in Deutschland und England vor 1914*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996; B. FAIRBAIRN, *Konsumgenossenschaften in internationaler Perspektive: ein historischer Überblick*. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss. Anfänge und Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003, p. 427-451; E. FURLOUGH and C. STRIKWERDA (eds.), *Consumers Against Capitalism? Consumer Co-operation in Europe, North America, and Japan, 1840-1990*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- (2) J.S. MILL, Two Methods of Comparison. In: *A System of Logic*, [1846], reprinted in A. ETZIONI and F. DUBOW (eds), *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods*, Little: Brown and Company, 1969, p. 205-213.
- (3) J. BRAZDA and R. SCHEDIWY, Consumer Co-operatives. In: *International Handbook of Co-operative Organizations*, Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, p.150-157.
- (4) The following numbers relate to the year 1960. In that year the market share of consumer societies within the general retailing sector was estimated to be in Germany (in %): 2.8; Belgium: 3.2; Denmark: 9.0; Finnland: 34.0; France: 2.7; GB: 11.0; Ireland: 3.0; Italy: 2.7; NL: 2.0; Norway: 14.5; Austria: 4.0; Sweden: 13.5; Switzerland: 9.7. See J. B. JEFFERYS, D. KNEE, *Retailing in Europe*, London, 1962.
- (5) For Austria see R. BLAICH, *Der rote Riese wankt ...: 1988 - Vision, 1995 - Realität; die Entwicklung der Konsumgenossenschaften in Österreich*, Wien: Tosa-Verl., 1995; R.

SCHEDIWIY, The Decline and Fall of Konsum Austria. In: *Review of International Co-operation*, 89(1996)2, p. 62-98.

(6) There was something like a life after death for a number of co-ops during the 1970s in the form of a so-called Co-op Group. The experiment which was heavily subsidised by the Trade-Union bank, Bank für Gemeinwirtschaft and ended in a much-heeded public scandal. Nowadays co-op in Germany is inextricably linked to scandal and shame. The co-op-scandal was the subject of price winning film *Kollege Otto - Die co-op- Affäre* (Das Erste, 1991). Whatever the artistic merits of the film, its content was rather badly researched - something that has gone completely unnoticed due to the general lack of historic interest in the German consumer co-operative movement.

(7) M. PRINZ, *Brot und Dividende [...]*, p. 44.

(8) E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen Konsumgenossenschaften*, Frankfurt: Knapp, 1971, p. 243 et seq.

(9) Though size for obvious reasons is not always an advantage, one may assume that - if the challenges are about the same - it will take longer to bring down a big and powerful movement than one that has been small and weak from the very beginning. Secondly, the chances that, at least, some elements within a larger movement may find a way to meet the challenges and continue to flourish - by accident, by an unpredictable combination of special local or regional conditions or an ingenious local leadership - depend to some degree on the substance available to realise different options. Thirdly, one may assume that in such a case it takes a minimum size for the remnants to survive.

(0) When comparing these figures, one has to bear in mind the different size of the respective population: 1871 UK 26 million, Germany 41 million; 1890/91 UK 33, Germany 49 million; 1910/11 UK 41 million, Germany 65 million. The difference in the overall population, however, was balanced by the fact that the UK was more urbanised. For the argument developed here, it is important to note that there was little change in the overall-population ratio. For the UK see G.D.H. COLE, *A Century of Co-operation*, George & Allen Unwin, [1944]; J. BIRCHALL, *Co-op: the people's business*, Manchester-N.Y.: Manchester U.P., 1994; P. GUERNEY, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, Manchester-N.Y.: Manchester U.P., 1996; J. SOUTHERN and J. TURNBULL, *More than just a shop, The Coop in*

Lancashire, Preston: Lancashire County books, 1994; two important - to my knowledge still unpublished - studies are J. SOUTHERN, *The Co-operative movement in N.W. England, 1919-39: images and realities*, (Dr. Michael J. Winstanley.), Lancaster Ph.D. 1996, on the interwar years; and J. BUTLER, *The Origins and Development of the Retail Co-operative Movement in Yorkshire during the 19th Century*, University of York, Ph.D. thesis, 1986. Butler undertook the tremendous work of reconstructing the social structure of an early village consumer co-operative.

(1) As an overview the introduction by H. J. TEUTEBERG (ed.), *Durchbruch zum modernen Massenkonsum. Lebensmittelmärkte und Lebensmittelqualität im Städtewachstum des Industriezeitalters*, Münster, 1987.

(2) The process of commercialisation made inroads in the German territories well before 1850 and some important developments can be observed even in the last third of the 18th century - a main topic of recent research see S. BRAKENSIEK, *Gemeinheitsteilungen in Europa: die Privatisierung der kollektiven Nutzung des Bodens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Akad.-Verl., 2000, but any direct comparison between the German States and England reveals huge differences. Certain aspects of England's lead in this respect may be traced back centuries, even to the Middle Ages as English scholars such as Richard Britnell have shown us convincingly, see R.H. BRITNELL (ed.), *A commercialising economy : England 1086 to c. 1300*, Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995; R.H. BRITNELL, *The commercialisation of English society, 1000 - 1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1993. Sumptuary laws and other controls of consumer behaviour were abolished ages before such changes took place in Germany. Early commercialisation did not just mean more options, freedom of choice etc., but was accompanied by the abolition of traditional practices and institutions protecting the consumer; E. P. THOMPSON, *The Moral Economy Reviewed*. In: E. THOMPSON, *Customs in common*, London: Penguin, 1993, 2. ed., p. 259-351; S. & B. WEBB, *The Assize of Bread*. In: *Economic Journal*, 14(1904), p. 196-218; A. S. C. ROSS, *The Assize of Bread*. In: *The Economic History Review*, (1956/57)2/9, p. 332-342. It's not only that the structures of modern consumer society and an environment favourable for collective commercial self-help were in a place earlier in England than in most other countries, some of the consumer grievances, too, seem to have appeared earlier than on the continent. These hints may help to understand why some forerunners

of consumer self-help in England have been identified already in the last decades of the 18th century and why a first wave of consumer co-operativism could flourish in the early 1830s while there was no trace of anything similar in the German States until the late 1840s. For more details see M. PRINZ, *Brot [...]*.

(13) See now the comprehensive study by U. SPIEKERMANN, *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft. Entstehung und Entwicklung des modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland 1850 - 1914*, München: Beck, 1999.

(14) A. STEINER, Von der Eigenfertigung zum Markterwerb der Kleidung. Ein Beitrag zur Kommerzialisierung des Wirtschaftens privater Haushalte in Deutschland im langen 19. Jahrhundert. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss. Anfänge und Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne*, Paderborn: Schönigh, 2003, p. 248-264.

(15) An indication, how deep the change went, are the figures on the annual wheat-price fluctuations. These fluctuations amounted to 7:1 at the beginning of the 19th century and came down to 2:1 after 1850.

(16) For further information on the Rochdale principles M. PRINZ, *Brot, [...]*, p. 67.

(17) I would assume that the symbolic power of Rochdale largely vanished after the turn of the century. The very fact that local shops could be created and run successfully by organised customers was known and accepted at that time. In the interwar years citing Rochdale within the movement served instead as a reminder to act cautiously on new investments and its financing, to stick to cash trading and to maintain a spiritual dedication beyond purely commercial interests. For the discussion see *The Present Application of the Rochdale Principles*, Studies and Reports, ICA, London, 1964.

(18) In order not to be misunderstood: among the rank and file of German consumer co-operatives in the 1870s and 1880s, there were several thousand peasants, self-employed artisans, independent shopkeepers. However, measured by their share of the work force these groups were heavily underrepresented. Apart from this there is a second aspect that still requires more scrutiny. There are some indications that the so-called raw-material co-operatives of the self-employed served to some degree as consumer co-operatives as well.

(19) Schulze was a member of the 'Reichstag' and so had the means to initiate legislation.

(20) Cit. T.W. GUINNANE, *A Friend and Advisor: Management, Auditors, and Confidence in Germany's Credit Co-operatives, 1889-1914*, Economic Growth Center Yale University P.O. Box 208269 New Haven, CT 06520-8269 CENTER DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 824, Yale University, May 2001, online available at: <http://www.library.yale.edu/socsci/egcdp824.pdf>, 3, visited on 22.01.2003.

(2) Compulsory auditing may explain why German consumer co-operatives in the 1870s and 1880s fared better than for instance Scandinavian consumer co-ops. N. F. CHRISTIANSEN, *Between Farmers and Workers: Consumer Co-operation in Denmark 1850-1940*. In: E. FURLOUGH and C. STRIKWERDA, *Consumers, [...]*, p. 226 et sequ.

(22) G. D. H. Cole, *Die britische Genossenschafts-Bewegung. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zu einigen Fragen der Neugestaltung des Handels*, Köln-Deutz: Bund-Verlag, 1954, p. 32.

(23) See C. STRIKWERDA, *Alternative Visions and Working-Class Culture: The Political Economy of Consumer Co-operation in Belgium, 1860-1980*. In: C. STRIKWERDA and E. FURLOUGH, *Consumers, [...]*, p. 67-92; J. PUISSANT (ed.), *La coopération. Un des principaux piliers sociaux de l'organisation politique belge*. In: *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, XXII(1991), p. 1-2 ; S. JAUMAIN, *Die Anfänge des Massenvertriebs in Belgien und seine Auswirkungen auf die Verbraucher 1880-1914*. In: H. SIEGRIST, H. KAEUBLE, J. KOCKA (eds.), *Europäische Konsumgeschichte: zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)*, Frankfurt/N.Y.: Campus-Verl., 1997, p. 681-703.

(24) Examples can be found in P. GÖHRE, *Die deutschen Arbeiter-Konsumvereine*, Berlin: Vorwaerts, 1910. Göhre gained his knowledge from participatory observation.

(25) On differences within the UK as reflected in the statistics, J.B. JEFFERYYS, *Retail Trading in Britain 1850-1950. A study of trends in retailing with special reference to the development of Co-operative, multiple shop and department store methods of trading*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, p. 17; the best account of English co-operative culture is P. GUERNEY, *Culture, [...]*, see espec. p. 125 et seq.

(26) Contemporary experts on international consumer co-operation, as Victor Totomianz, with a wide international overview saw in the tendency towards modernisation and centralisation a peculiar feature of the German movement. *"Hopefully the Germans despite their preference for everything generous and centralised will stop with their Co-operative concentration, when they*

recognise that the utmost centralisation in Co-operation will lead to state socialism." V. TOTOMIANZ, *Konsumentenorganisation* [...], p. 317.

(27) For France E. FURLOUGH, *Consumer Co-operation in France. The Politics of Consumption 1834 - 1930*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 250 et seq.

(28) It is important to note that this decision was made by the central government that turned out to be more liberal than the administrations of the different states. It took some time until most of the regional administrations followed suit. See H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift zum 25 jährigen Bestehen des Zentralverbandes deutscher Konsumvereine, 1903-1928*, Hamburg: Verlagsgesellschaft deutscher Konsumvereine, 1928, p. 164 et seq.

(29) This change of heart by the German government was of great importance because - in contrast to the English situation where consumer organisations until 1917 continued to operate in a more or less free market - W.H. BEVERIDGE, *British Food Control*, London: Milford, 1928; as overview P. DEWEY, *War and Progress, Britain 1914-1945*, London: Longman 1997 - German Konsumvereine were faced with a situation where, as mentioned above, rationing started at an early stage. In other words, the access to food was politicised in the Reich from the very start of the war, see A. ROERKOHLE, Die Lebensmittelversorgung während des Ersten Weltkrieges im Spannungsfeld kommunaler und staatlicher Maßnahmen. In: H.J. TEUTEBERG (ed.), *Durchbruch zum [...]*, p. 309-370; B. DAVIS, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I*, Berlin/Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000. If there hadn't been a change, German consumer co-operation would have been doomed in August 1914. There were indeed problems but they affected mainly the Wholesale Society not the individual local societies. These problems resulted from the effect that it was the cities and their magistrates who tended to operate as wholesalers during the war.

(30) On 29th August 1914, the Interior Ministry granted permission to public servants to acquire membership in co-ops belonging to the Zentralverband deutscher Konsumvereine. The co-ops grasped the opportunity and demanded the abolition of all similar restrictions. A war committee for the interests of consumers (Kriegsausschuss für Konsumenteninteressen) was formed in December 1914 in which the co-ops were represented. It was the first time that they participated in any official commission.

- (3) At the climax of the inflationary process, the German Wholesale Society assigned 100 of their employees solely to count the incoming banknotes, H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift, [...]*, p. 241.
- (32) U. KURZER, *Nationalsozialismus und Konsumgenossenschaften: Gleichschaltung, Sanierung und Teilliquidation zwischen 1933 und 1936*, Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus Verl., 1997.
- (33) H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift, [...]*, p. 241.
- (34) G.D.H. COLE, *Die britische Genossenschafts-Bewegung [...]*, p. 43 et seq.
- (35) G.D.H. COLE, *A Century of Co-operation [...]*, p. 375.
- (36) At least some of the increase of organised civil servants that appears in Table 4 is due to the amalgamation of different unions. Until 1920 most civil servant consumer co-operatives were members of the liberal federation. Most of them joined the formerly socialist Zentralverband which continued to stress its neutrality. Unfortunately the statistics do not allow to distinguish between white and blue collar workers. It is likely that there was a shift in favour of the former.
- (37) This was a conflict to be replayed with great vigour in England after 1945.
- (38) In a reaction to communist efforts to take control of local co-ops the Federation of German Consumer Co-operatives changed the statutes, see *Protokoll des zwanzigsten ordentlichen Genossenschaftstages vom 18. bis 20. Juni 1923 in Görlitz*, Hamburg, 1924; H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift [...]*, p. 239; E. FAIRBAIRN, *Rise [...]* p. 293.
- (39) It is significant in this context that the decision of civil servants' co-ops to leave the liberal union was caused by the move of the latter to grant membership to the co-operatives of small traders. The issue of class divided sharply the co-operative sector in Germany, see H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift, [...]*, p. 211.
- (40) On the issue of consumer-producer conflicts during the German inflation see M.H. GEYER, *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne, München 1914 - 1924*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.
- (4) Verordnung zur Anpassung der verbraucher-genossenschaftlichen Einrichtungen an die kriegswirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse. In: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, I(1941)22, from 28. February 1941. The National socialist version of events is given in: *Die Überführung der Verbrauchergenossenschaftlichen Einrichtungen in das Gemeinschaftswerk der deutschen Arbeitsfront GMBH. Abschlußbericht des Bevollmächtigten der DAF*. Stabsleiter des Reichs-

organisationsleiters Heinrich Simon, Hamburg (Ausweichstelle Lobeda Thüringen), Juli 1944. In: Archiv des Bundes der Konsumgenossenschaften. For a short summary of developments in Germany after 1933 as seen from an English perspective see G.D.H. COLE, *A Century of [...]*, p. 361-2. See also the remarks by H.-G. HAUPT, *Konsum und Handel. Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 2003, p. 158.

(42) For the UK G.D.H. COLE, *A Century of [...]*, p. 327; for Germany H.A. WINKLER, *Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus: die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik*, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972; for France E. FURLOUGH, *Co-operation [...]*, p. 268; for Italy V. ZAMAGNANI, Die langsame Modernisierung des italienischen Einzelhandels. Die Geschichte eines Sonderfalls in vergleichender Perspektive. In: H. SIEGRIST, H. KAEUBLE, J. KOCKA (eds), *Europäische Konsumgeschichte, [...]*, p. 705-916, p. 715; for the situation in Switzerland where the opening of new chain stores was prohibited in 1933 - the law was only repealed in 1945 - see S. BRÄNDLI, *Der Supermarkt im Kopf. Konsumkultur und Wohlstand in der Schweiz nach 1945*, Wien-Köln-Weimar, 2000, p. 55-56.

(43) G.D.H. COLE, *A Century of [...]*, p. 327.

(44) On the expectations of the future in the Weimar Republic M. PRINZ, Vor der Konsumgesellschaft. Pessimistische Zukunftserwartungen, gesellschaftliche Leitbilder und regionale Evidenz 1918-1960. In: *Westfälische Forschungen*, 48(1998), p. 512-555.

(45) F. TRENTMANN, Bread, Milk, and Democracy in Modern Britain: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain. In: M. DAUNTON and M. HILTON (eds), *The Politics of Consumption*, Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2001, p. 129-63.

(46) Gesetz zur Aufhebung des Rabattgesetzes und zur Anpassung anderer Rechtsvorschriften vom 23. Juli 2001. In: *Bundesgesetzblatt*, (2001)Teil I, 37, p. 1663.

(47) It seems that the Labour Front exaggerated the reports in order to achieve its goal, see U. KURZER, Konsumgenossenschaften im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland. In: *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 4/91, p. 429-453, especially p. 450, 451.

- (48) See B. FAIRBAIRN, Wiederaufbau und Untergang der Konsumgenossenschaften in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik 1945 bis 1990. In: *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 34(June 1998)2, p. 171-198.
- (49) According to E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen [...]*, p. 634.
- (50) As overview J. BRECHT, Finanzierungsprobleme und Finanzierungsaufgaben der Genossenschaften in heutiger Zeit. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 4 (1954), p. 70-88; for the UK J. A. HOUGH, Die britische Genossenschaftsbewegung in den Nachkriegsjahren. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 2(1952), p. 51-65, 54. Swedish co-ops were known to be especially independent financially see G. KELER, N. O. NÄSSTRÖM, Das Genossenschaftswesen in Schweden. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 2(1952), p. 285-300, 289 et seq.; E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen [...]*, p. 633 et seq.
- (5) It should be noted that within the contemporary European consumer movement the UK and, more so, the Swedish co-ops were regarded as pioneers of self-service.
- (52) See B. PRIESS, Erste Erfahrungen mit der Selbstbedienung im Handel. In: *Konsumgenossenschaftliche Rundschau*, 18/03/1950; E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen Konsumgenossenschaften*, Frankfurt/M.: Knapp, 1971, p. 572, 573.; M. WILDT, *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangelserfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren*, Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verl., 1994, p. 182, 183. There are similarities between the respective policies of German and Swiss co-operators, see S. BRÄNDLI, *Der Supermarkt im Kopf, [...]* p. 63 et seq.
- (53) E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen [...]*.
- (54) See M. PRINZ, Das Ende der Bescheidenheit und der Untergang der deutschen Konsumvereine in den 1960er Jahren. In: M. FRESE, J. PAULUS, K. TEPPE (eds.), *Die Bundesrepublik in den sechziger Jahren*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003, p. 587-614; K. DITT, Rationalisierung im Einzelhandel: Die Einführung und Entwicklung der Selbstbedienung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-2000. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der langeWeg [...]*, p. 306-348.
- (55) See A. VUKOVICH, Aktuelle Probleme der österreichischen Konsumgenossenschaften. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen* 3(1953), p. 270-276.

(56) For the English case see I. ZWEINIGER-BARGIELOSWKA, *Austerity in Britain. Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955*, Oxford: University Press, 2002.

(57) See E. HASSELMANN, *Geschichte der deutschen [...]*, p. 623 et seq.

(58) The abolition of the the so-called Department store tax 'Warenhaussteuer' in 1919 - see H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift, [...]* p. 203 - allowed the German co-ops to sell a much larger variety of products than before.

(59) In 1929, Vaan Totomianz, the historian of international consumer co-operation quoted his Belgian colleague, L. Bertrand, with the following notion, reflecting the self-perception of many contemporary co-operators: "*The Co-operative worker is more concerned than others about his household, his wife, his children, he behaves more decently, reads, is more interested in arts. To say it with one word, he emancipates himself intellectually and morally in the measure that his living-standard rises. Today the people is better than it was 15 or 20 years ago. That's undeniable.*" V. TOTOMIANZ, *Konsumentenorganisation, [...]*, p. 318.

(60) Locally the co-ops managed to be recognised as consumer representatives, one of the few examples was Hamburg, H. KAUFMANN (ed.), *Festschrift [...]*, p. 247.

(6) An excellent local history of the British Co-operative Party from its beginnings to the present time is available on the internet M. WALLACE, *An abridged history of the Chelmsford Co-operative Society Party*, at: http://website.lineone.net/~co-operative/Party/history_the_early_years.htm and at: http://website.lineone.net/~co-operative/Party/history_the_post_war_world.htm - visited 13.02.2003.

(62) V. DE GRAZIA, Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930 - 1970. Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem. In: S. STRASSER, C. MCGOVERN, M. JUDT (eds.), *Getting and Spending. European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 59-83

(63) One may take as telling example the defeat of the Tory government's attempt to introduce Sunday trading in 1986, which was only possible because of the defection of a large group of Tory MP's. The attack on the government's proposal was led by members of the Co-operative Party, see M.Wallace, *History [...]*

(64) It is quite telling in this respect that the de-facto economic integration of German consumer co-operatives into the retail sector was more marked than in the UK or Sweden! In 1926 German local co-operatives bought only a third of their goods from their own Wholesale Society (GEG) whereas the numbers for Finland were 55 % and for the UK 50 %, V. TOTOMIANZ, *Konsumentenorganisation, [...]*, p. 325. Obviously, the sharpness of the conflict cannot be explained by 'objective' conditions alone.

(65) L. COHEN, *A Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Knopf, 2003.

References

- AKEHURST, G., ALEXANDER, N., The Emergence of Modern Retailing, 1750-1950. In: *Business History* 40, (1998)4, p. 1-15.
- BERNHARD, P., Erste Erfahrungen mit der Selbstbedienung im Handel. In: *Konsumgenossenschaftliche Rundschau*, 18/03/1950.
- BEVERIDGE, W.H., *British Food Control*, London: Milford, 1928.
- BLAICH, R., *Der rote Riese wankt...: 1988 - Vision, 1995 - Realität; die Entwicklung der Konsumgenossenschaften in Österreich*, Wien: Tosa-Verl., 1995.
- BRÄNDLI, S. *Der Supermarkt im Kopf. Konsumkultur und Wohlstand in der Schweiz nach 1945*, Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 2000.
- BRAZDA, J., and SCHEDIWY, R., *Consumer co-operatives in a changing world: comparative studies on structural changes of some selected consumer co-operative societies in industrialized countries*, Geneva: Internat. Co-operative Alliance, 2 vols, 1989.
- BRAZDA, J. and SCHEDIWY, R., Consumer Co-operatives. In: *International Handbook of Co-operative Organizations*, Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, p. 150-157.
- BRAZDA, J., SCHEDIWY, R., RÖNNEBECK, ?? *Pioniergenossenschaften am Beispiel der Konsumgenossenschaften in Großbritannien, Schweden und Japan* (= Wirtschaftshistorischen Reihe Bd. 4), Frankfurt: Lang Verlag, 1996.

- BRECHT, J., Finanzierungsprobleme und Finanzierungsaufgaben der Genossenschaften in heutiger Zeit. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 4(1954), p. 70-88.
- BRITNELL, R.H., (ed.), *A commercialising economy : England 1086 to c. 1300*, Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995.
- BRITNELL, R.H., *The commercialisation of English society, 1000 - 1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1993.
- COHEN, L., *A Consumers Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Knopf, 2003.
- COLE, G.D.H., *Die britische Genossenschaftsbewegung. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zu einigen Fragen der Neugestaltung des Handels*, Köln-Deutz: Bund-Verlag, 1954.
- COLE, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation*, London: George & Allen Unwin, [1944].
- *The Co-operative Movement in Britain*, London reference Division. Central Office of Information, 1962 May.
- CRUEGER, H., *Die Erwerbs- und Wirtschafts-Genossenschaften in den einzelnen Laendern*, Jena: G. Fischer, 1892.
- DAVIS, B., *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I*, Berlin/Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- DE GRAZIA, V., Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930 - 1970. Comparative Perspectives on the Distribution Problem. In: S. STRASSER, C. MCGOVERN, M. JUDT (eds.), *Getting and Spending. European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998, p. 59-83.
- DEWEY, P., *War and Progress, Britain 1914-1945*, London: Longman, 1997.
- DITT, K., Rationalisierung im Einzelhandel: Die Einführung und Entwicklung der Selbstbedienung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-2000. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der lange Weg [...]*, p. 306-348.
- FAIRBAIRN, B., Konsumgenossenschaften in internationaler Perspektive: ein historischer Überblick. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der lange Weg [...]*, , p. 427-451.
- FAIRBAIRN, B., The Rise and Fall of Consumer Cooperation in Germany. In: E. FURLOUGH and C. STRIKWERDA (eds.), *Consumers against Capitalism? Consumer Cooperation in Europe, North America, and Japan, 1840-1990*, p. 267-302.

- FAIRBAIRN, B., Wiederaufbau und Untergang der Konsumgenossenschaften in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik 1945 bis 1990. In: *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 34(June 1998)2, p. 171-198.
- CHRISTIANSEN, F.N., Between Farmers and Workers: Consumer Co-operation in Denmark 1850-1940. In: E. FURLOUGH, C. STRIKWERDA, *Consumers [...]*, p. 221-239.
- FAIRBAIRN, B., The Rise and Fall of Consumer Co-operation in Germany. In: E. FURLOUGH and C. STRIKWERDA, *Consumers, [...]*, p. 267-302.
- FURLOUGH, E., and STRIKWERDA, C., (eds.), *Consumers Against Capitalism? Consumer Co-operation in Europe, North America, and Japan, 1840-1990*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- FURLOUGH, E., *Consumer Cooperation in France. The Politics of Consumption 1834 - 1930*, Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Gesetz zur Aufhebung des Rabattgesetzes und zur Anpassung anderer Rechtsvorschriften vom 23. Juli 2001. In: *Bundesgesetzblatt*, Jahrgang 2001, Teil I, Nr. 37 p. 1663.
- GEYER, M. H., *Verkehrte Welt: Revolution, Inflation und Moderne, München 1914 - 1924*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998.
- GÖHRE, P., *Die deutschen Arbeiter-Konsumvereine*, Berlin:Vorwaerts, 1910.
- GUERNEY, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930*, Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1996.
- KAUFMANN, H. (ed.), *Festschrift zum 25jährigen Bestehen des Zentralverbandes deutscher Konsumvereine, 1903-1928*, Hamburg: Verlagsgesellschaft deutscher Konsumvereine, 1928.
- GUINNANE, T.W., "A Friend And Advisor": Management, Auditors, and Confidence in Germany's Credit Co-operatives, 1889-1914, Economic Growth Center Yale University, P.O. Box 208269, New Haven, CT 06520-8269 CENTER DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 824, Yale University, May 2001, online available at: <http://www.library.yale.edu/socsci/egcdp824.pdf>, 3, visited on 22.01.2003.
- HASSELMANN, E., *Geschichte der deutschen Konsumgenossenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main: Knapp, 1971.
- HOUGH, J.A., Die britische Genossenschaftsbewegung in den Nachkriegsjahren. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 2(1952), p. 51-65.

- JAUMAIN, S., Die Anfänge des Massenvertriebs in Belgien und seine Auswirkungen auf die Verbraucher 1880-1914. In: H. SIEGRIST, H. KAEUBLE, J. KOCKA (eds.), *Europäische Konsumgeschichte: zur Gesellschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des Konsums (18. bis 20. Jahrhundert)*, Frankfurt/N.Y.: Campus-Verl., 1997, p. 681-703.
- JEFFERYS, J.B. and KNEE, D., *Retailing in Europe*, London: Macmillan, 1962.
- JEFFERYS, J.B., *Retail Trading in Britain 1850-1950. A study of trends in retailing with special reference to the development of Co-operative, multiple shop and department store methods of trading*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- KELER, G., and NÄSSTRÖM, N. O., Das Genossenschaftswesen in Schweden. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 2(1952), p. 285-300.
- KOLLEGE, O., *Die co-op- Affäre, Film, Das Erste*, 1991.
- KURZER, U., Konsumgenossenschaften im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland. In: *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, (1991)4, p. 429-453.
- KURZER, U., *Nationalsozialismus und Konsumgenossenschaften: Gleichschaltung, Sanierung und Teilliquidation zwischen 1933 und 1936*, Pfaffenweiler, 1997.
- MILL, J.S., Two Methods of Comparison. In: *A System of Logic*, [1846], reprinted in A. ETZIONI and F. DUBOW (eds), *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods*, p. 205-213, Little, Brown and Company, 1969.
- *Present Application, The, of the Rochdale Principles*, Studies and Reports, ICA, London, 1964.
- PRINZ, M. *Brot und Dividende. Konsumvereine in Deutschland und England vor 1914*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996.
- PRINZ, M., Das Ende der Bescheidenheit und der Untergang der deutschen Konsumvereine in den 1960er Jahren. In: M. FRESE, J. PAULUS, K. TEPPE (eds.), *Die Bundesrepublik in den sechziger Jahren*, Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003, p. 587-614.
- PRINZ, M., Vor der Konsumgesellschaft. Pessimistische Zukunftserwartungen, gesellschaftliche Leitbilder und regionale Evidenz 1918-1960. In: *Westfälische Forschungen*, 48(1998), p. 512-555.
- Protokoll des zwanzigsten ordentlichen Genossenschaftstages vom 18. bis 20. Juni 1923 in Görlitz, Hamburg, 1924.

- PUISSANT, J., (ed.), La coopération. Un des principaux piliers sociaux de l'organisation politique belge. In: *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, XXII(1991), p.1-2.
- PURVIS, M., Co-operative retailing in Britain. In: J. BENSON and G. SHAW (eds), *The Evolution of Retail Systems c. 1800- 1914*, Leicester: Leicester UP, 1992.
- ROERKOHLE, A., Die Lebensmittelversorgung während des Ersten Weltkrieges im Spannungsfeld kommunaler und staatlicher Maßnahmen. In: H.J. TEUTEBERG (ed.), *Durchbruch [...]*, p. 309-370.
- ROSS, A.C.S., The Assize of Bread. In: *The Economic History Review*, 2(1956/57)9, n. s., p. 332-342.
- SCHEDIWIY, R., The Decline and Fall of Konsum Austria (1996). In: *Review of International Co-operation*, 2, 89 (1996), p. 62-98.
- SPIEKERMANN, U., *Basis der Konsumgesellschaft. Entstehung und Entwicklung des modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland 1850 - 1914*, München: Beck, 1999.
- STEINER, A., Von der Eigenfertigung zum Markterwerb der Kleidung. Ein Beitrag zur Kommerzialisierung des Wirtschaftens privater Haushalte in Deutschland im langen 19. Jahrhundert. In: M. PRINZ (ed.), *Der lange Weg in den Überfluss. Anfänge und Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft seit der Vormoderne*, Paderborn: Schönigh, 2003, p. 248-264.
- STRIKWERDA, C., "Alternative Visions" and Working-Class Culture: The Political Economy of Consumer Cooperation in Belgium, 1860-1980. In: C. STRIKWERDA, E. FURLOUGH, *Consumers [...]*, p. 67-92.
- TEUTEBERG, H.J., (ed.), *Durchbruch zum modernen Massenkonsum. Lebensmittelmärkte und Lebensmittelqualität im Städtewachstum des Industriezeitalters*, Münster: Cöpppenrath, 1987.
- TOTOMIANZ, V., *Konsumentenorganisation. Theorie, Geschichte und Praxis der Konsumgenossenschaften*, 3. ed., Berlin: Struppe & Winckler, 1929.
- TRENTMANN, F., Bread, Milk, and Democracy in Modern Britain: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain. In: M. DAUNTON and M. HILTON (eds), *The Politics of Consumption*, Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2001, p. 129-63.
- U.S. Dep. of Labor, *Co-operatives in Postwar Europe*, Bulletin N. 942, Washington 1948.
- *Überführung, Die, der Verbrauchergenossenschaftlichen Einrichtungen in das Gemeinschaftswerk der deutschen Arbeitsfront GMBH. Abschlußbericht des Bevollmächtigten*

- der DAF. Stabsleiter des Reichsorganisationsleiters Heinrich Simon, Hamburg (Ausweichstelle Lobeda Thüringen), Juli 1944, in: Archiv des Bundes der Konsumgenossenschaften.*
- ZAMAGNANI, V., Die langsame Modernisierung des italienischen Einzelhandels. Die Geschichte eines Sonderfalls in vergleichender Perspektive. In: H. SIEGRIST, H. KÄELBLE, J. KOCKA (eds), *Konsumgeschichte [...]*, p. 705-916.
 - Verordnung zur Anpassung der verbraucher-genossenschaftlichen Einrichtungen an die kriegswirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse. In: *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1941, I, Nr. 22 vom 28. Februar 1941.
 - VUKOVICH, A., Aktuelle Probleme der österreichischen Konsumgenossenschaften. In: *Zeitschrift für das gesamte Genossenschaftswesen*, 3(1953), p. 270 - 276.
 - WALDECKER, L., *Der Stand der Gesetzgebung über Erwerbs- und Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften in den wichtigsten Kulturländern bei Kriegsausbruch 1914*, München [u.a.]: Duncker&Humblot, 1919 (= Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik; 151, 3).
 - WALLACE, M., *An abridged history of the Chelmsford Co-operative Society Party*, at: http://website.lineone.net/~co-operative/Party/history_the_early_years.htm and at http://website.lineone.net/~co-operative/Party/history_the_post_war_world.htm ; visited 13.02.2003
 - WEBB, S. and B., The Assize of Bread. In: *Economic Journal* 14(1904), p. 196-218.
 - WILDT, M., *Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft": Mangel-erfahrung, Lebenshaltung, Wohlstandshoffnung in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren*, Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verl., 1994.

Table 1: The Impact of War and Inflation on the Consumer Co-ops in Germany and England 1913-1924

Year	England			Germany		
	Societies	Members		Societies	Members	
		in 1000	Increase		in 1000	Increase
1913	1382	2878	100	1.598	2087	100
1914	1385	3054	106	1.563	2200	105
1915	1375	3265	113	1.514	2351	112
1916	1362	352	122	1.565	2673	127
1917	1366	3788	131	1.546	2830	135
1918	1364	3847	134	1.584	2889	138
1919	1357	4131	144	1.648	2958	141
1920	1379	4505	156	1.622	3206	153
1921	1352	4549	158	1.686	3407	162
1922	1321	4519	157	1.699	3816	182
1923	1314	4569	159	1.653	4102	196
1924	1314	4703	164	1.553	424	202

Source: Compiled and calculated from G. H. D. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, Unwin & Allen [1944], 371, 372; Hasselmann, *Geschichte*.

Table 2: Consumer Cooperatives in England and Germany 1835-1950

Year	England		Germany		England/Germany
	Reporting Soc's In () estimated numbers	Members of reporting Soc's in 1000	Reporting So'cs ⁴ In () estimated numbers of all societies	Members of Reporting Soc's in 1000	German Membership in % of English Membership
1835	3001	-	-	-	-
1852	1702	30	?	-	-
1857	2003	?	?	-	-
1864	3944	129	38	8	6,2
1865	417 (815)	149	34	7	4,7
1866	436 (839)	175	46 (111)	14	8,0
1867	577 (906)	172	49 (?)	19	11,0
1868	670 (956)	209	75 (318)	34	16,3
1870	749 (969)	250	111 (354)	46	18,4
1880	1.177	554	195	94	16,7
1885	1.148	747	162	120	16,1
1890	1.24	962	263	215	22,3
1895	1.417	1.417	460	292	20,6
1900	1.439	1.707	568	522	30,6
1910	1.421	2.542	1.458	1.494	58,8
1914	1.385	3.054	1.563	2.25	73,7
1920	1.379	4.505	1.622	3.125	69,4
1924	1.314	4.703	1.553	4.24	90,2
1930	1.21	6.403	1.251	3.733	58,3
1935	1.188	7.484	1.114	2.13	28,5
1938	1.085	8.643	1.016	1.954	22,7
1950	999(1949)	10.57	296	1.324	12,5

Cole, *Century*; Hasselmann, *Geschichte*.

Table: 3 Social Composition of German Consumer Cooperatives, 1913-1927

Year	All mem- bers in 1000	Self- employed in trade &industry	Self- employed in Agriculture	Professions, civil servants in %	White- and blue-collar workers	Farmh ands	Members without Profession (Retired etc.)
1913	1.542	5,5	1,8	3,4	79	2,5	7,8
1914	1.665	5,3	1,8	3,4	79	2,3	8,6
1915	1.762	5,6	1,9	3,8	77	2,2	9,6
1916	1.959	5,5	1,9	4,1	75	2,7	11
1918	2.140	5,6	2,2	4,6	72	2,1	13
1920	2.636	6	2,8	6,8	69	2,7	13
1922	3.026	6	3,1	8,2	67	3	13
1924	3.317	6	3,5	9,9	67	3	11
1926	3.141	5,6	3,3	9,7	66	2,9	12
1927	2.885	5,4	3,2	9,3	68	2,8	11

Source: *Festschrift zum 25jährigen Bestehen des Zentralverbandes deutscher Konsumvereine 1903-1029*, (ed.)
Heinrich Kaufmann, Hamburg 1928, pp. 340- 341

Table: 4 The Social Composition German Co-ops, 1913 -1927

Year	Self- employed in trade & in- dustry	Self-em- ployed in agriculture	Profes- sions, civil servants	White- and blue-collar workers	Farm- hands	Member s without Profession (Retired etc.)	All mem- bers
in 1000							
1913	85	28	52	1.221	38	120	1.542
1914	88	30	57	1.309	38	143	1.665
1915	98	34	67	1.355	39	169	1.762
1916	108	38	81	1.463	53	217	1.959
1918	120	46	98	1.547	45	284	2.14
1920	158	74	178	1.815	70	342	2.636
1922	183	94	249	2.016	91	392	3.026
1924	200	116	329	2.207	100	366	3.317
1926	177	103	306	2.087	91	378	3.141
1927	155	91	267	1.97	80	323	2.885
1913=100							
1913	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1914	104	107	110	107	100	119	108
1915	115	121	129	111	103	141	11
1916	127	136	156	120	139	181	127
1918	141	164	188	127	118	171	139
1920	186	264	342	149	184	285	171
1922	215	336	479	165	239	327	196
1924	235	414	632	181	263	305	215
1926	208	368	588	171	239	315	204
1927	182	325	513	161	211	269	187

Source: *Festschrift zum 25jährigen Bestehen des Zentralverbandes deutscher Konsumvereine 1903-1029*, (ed.) Heinrich Kaufmann, Hamburg 1928, pp. 340- 341.