

**THE COOPERATIVE  
MOVEMENT IN  
JUGOSLAVIA, RUMANIA  
AND NORTH ITALY**

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The Cooperative Movement in Yugoslavia, Rumania and North Italy by Diarmid Coffey

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**THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT  
IN JUGOSLAVIA, RUMANIA  
AND NORTH ITALY**

**During and After the World War**

BY

**DIARMID COFFEY**

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The following studies of the cooperative movement in Serbia and Rumania during and after the War are the outcome of an investigation undertaken by me at the instigation in the first instance and with the financial support of the Horace Plunkett Foundation Trust and the English Labour Research Department. The preparation of a report for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace enabled me to extend the time and scope of my investigation. I had originally intended to make a full inquiry into Italian cooperation, but I found that were I to attempt this I should have to devote six months or a year to Italy alone. The extraordinary number of cooperative organizations in Italy and the wide range of their activities are such that no one could attempt to speak with authority who had not spent a very long time in the country and who did not speak Italian almost as his native language. I therefore attempted only a cursory view of Italian cooperation and have appended a few brief and inadequate notes of what I saw in Italy.

My investigations in Jugoslavia and Rumania were far more fruitful, and I think I may claim to give a fairly comprehensive view of cooperative conditions in these countries. I have not seen any accounts of them which give as general a description as I have attempted, and therefore I hope that the reader will find matter which will interest him.

I had originally intended to return to Ireland through Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia, but the fates decided against this. My companion on the journey was an Irish agriculturist, Mr. A. Vere O'Brien, whose practical knowledge of farming was of great assistance to me. Unfortunately, he became seriously ill, which necessitated the curtailment of my plans. After a month in a hospital at Brasov (Cronstadt) he became well enough to travel again. But traveling in Eastern Europe was very difficult. The trains were so crowded that, with luck, standing

room in a corridor only was obtainable. Many persons traveled on the roofs of the coaches, and I have seen them climbing down and hanging on between the carriages while passing through a tunnel! There was only one good train from Rumania westward, the Simplon Orient Express, and as it passed through Jugoslavia we had reluctantly to abandon our visit to Hungary and Austria.

The reports were written under certain disadvantages arising out of the political situation in Ireland. My diaries, written in the form of letters, were seized by the British military authorities. Fortunately, my note-books were not discovered, and I have therefore been able to supply the technical details, but by the loss of my record of casual remarks and impressions my report has been deprived of much that would not only have made it pleasanter to read but would also have thrown light on the social conditions which influence cooperative movement in the various places I visited.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those who by their hospitality and kindness made it possible for me to learn much that would otherwise have been difficult to discover. I should particularly mention Signor Fortis of Milan, Dr. Costanzo of the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome, Signor Mami at Bologna, Signor Zanchetta at Treviso, MM. Galyer and Vukmir at Zagreb, the Secretaries of the Cooperative Unions at Ljubljana, Split and Sarajevo, and, last but not least in Jugoslavia, M. M. Avramovitch and Dr. Prohaska of the Union of Belgrade, to whom I owe more than I can well express. In Rumania the Director of the Union of Credit Societies and the Director of the Union of Agricultural Societies, and M. G. Mladenatz and M. Teodorescu, who accompanied me on visits to societies, were all of the greatest assistance and kindness. M. Lupu also gave me valuable help.

DIARMID COFFEY.

DUBLIN, IRELAND,  
*August, 1921.*



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## INTRODUCTION

The cooperative movement as a whole seems to have survived the war more successfully than many other forms of enterprise. In Central Europe reports show that, comparatively speaking, at least, the cooperative societies have made progress since the World War. In France and Switzerland all forms of cooperation are flourishing, and in the former there has been some cooperative effort for reorganizing the devastated areas. In the countries with which this report deals there can be no doubt that cooperation has demonstrated its efficiency and elasticity in meeting economic difficulties. Where private enterprise has failed, cooperation has been able to insure the fair distribution of supplies. It has kept the economic nation alive in many districts where other forms of trade have actually ceased to function.

This must largely be ascribed to the fact that the cooperative societies command the confidence of their members and are therefore regarded as of especial importance when rapid fluctuations in value encourage profiteering and speculative buying. The value of this confidence is shown by the fact that in Southeastern Europe not only did the Governments of Serbia and Rumania use their cooperative societies as the means of distributing essential commodities, but the Austrian and Hungarian Governments actually used cooperative societies formed by members of the subject races of their old dominions both for collecting agricultural products and for distributing manufactured goods.

The more particular reasons why cooperation has gained rather than lost by the economic catastrophe of the War are: (1) The increase in the cost of living has made the savings effected by cooperative purchasing of great importance to the vast bulk of the people of Europe. (2) The continued necessity of distributing has controlled necessities of life, such as bread, salt, flour and tobacco. (3) The general upset of international trade has made the procuring of the raw materials of agriculture (seeds,