

ARTICLES

The Cooperative as a Form of Education in the Theory and Practice of the Work of Women's Organisations in the Second Republic of Poland¹

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The work of the SSK was integrally and consistently a part of the social and economic life of the 1930s in the Interwar Period in Poland. It was clearly ideologically oriented. By uniting women and promoting their activity the association served a supportive and educational role for hundreds of Polish women and families. Although the scope of the work of the organisation was not particularly broad, through the realisation of the ideas and the implementation of the form of the cooperative, the association contributed to the increase of the level of life of numerous Polish women in its social, economic, and cultural aspects.

Key words: *the cooperative; women's organisations; the Second Republic of Poland; Women's Social Self-Help Association*

The cooperative as an idea and a unique form of social and economic activity has appeared for the first time in Polish lands during the times of the Partitions of Poland (mainly in the Prussian partition). During the Interwar Period, it has developed and matured, not only in its theoretical aspects, but also as an independent social movement, with ideas constituting its basis, as well as an independent sector of the economy (a third one, next to the private and to the public sector).²

¹ The expression "The cooperative as a form of education" has been borrowed from the title of a work by Professor Elżbieta Magiera *Spółdzielczość jako forma edukacji w szkolnictwie polskim Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)*. [The cooperative as a form of education in Polish schooling in the Second Republic of Poland]. Szczecin Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego 2011.

² Magiera, E. (2011). *Spółdzielczość jako forma edukacji w szkolnictwie polskim Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej (1918–1939)* [The cooperative as a form of education in Polish schooling in the Second Republic of Poland]. Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, pp. 9–59.

The Polish cooperative thought was strongly ideologically diversified. One of its currents was neutral and holistic, developed theoretically mainly by Edward Abramowski. In their concepts, the representatives of the current would stress the social, educational, and cultural aspects of the cooperative, apart from the economic one. What was emphasised was the influence that the cooperative had on the formation of such features, skills, and attitudes as cooperation, responsibility, self-governance, altruism, being active; that is, the traits of the “new type of social person”.³ The cooperative was to be “a school of social life, and contribute to the formation of a new society”.⁴ It was to be a school, where the education of the cooperative members “was to inspire them to be active, to be brave, to give them a sense of orderliness, to persevere, to socialise, that is, these traits which ought to characterise a cooperative member”.⁵

What had a decisive influence on the development of the cooperative movement in Poland from 1918 to 1939⁶ was the social and economic situation as well as social and political factors.⁷

The doctrine of state upbringing, which was promoted after 1926 by the political camp of the Sanation (in theory as well as pedagogical practice), included ideas aimed to “socialise a student, to prepare him to take up his civic duties and participate in the life of the state”. The cooperative upbringing was used, among other methods, to implement the aforementioned goals. The cooperative upbringing was meant to “reinforce pro-cooperative attitude characterised by cooperation, mutual help, independence, and being economically active”.⁸

The Polish cooperative movement of the Interwar Period was of a decisively social and political character, which is why it could be successful as an idea, an aim, a goal in the work of the various social, social and political, cultural and educational organisations, as well as women’s associations.⁹ Numerous women’s organisations would stress in their programmes the need to implement and develop the cooperative movement in order to raise the level of material,

³ Magiera, E. (2011). *Spółdzielczość jako forma edukacji*, op. cit., p. 95.

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 94–95.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 91.

⁶ In 1934 in Poland there were nearly 11 000 various forms of cooperatives (including: 3316 loan cooperatives, 2433 cooperatives of food producers, 1481 farming and trading ones, 913 cooperatives of milk producers, 210 workers’ and craftsmen’ cooperatives, 419 of various farmers, 166 of workers, 185 of mutual help, and 749 others). The cooperatives had, until 1934, 2 729 000 members. On the basis of: Steinowa, N. (1938). In “*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*” [Journal of the Main Board of the Women’s Social Self-Help Association], Issue 2, p. 10.

⁷ Magiera, E. (2011). *Spółdzielczość jako forma edukacji*, op. cit., pp. 50–53.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 103.

⁹ Ibidem, pp. 55–59.

economic, cultural, social, and political (civic) life of the masses of the society and women. They would lead a systematic educational and promotional work aimed to promote the ideas of the cooperative as well as theoretical and practical knowledge needed to establish and maintain cooperatives. The great number of publications issued by women's organisations,¹⁰ their lectures, public readings, cooperative courses, training courses, conferences, self-education of the members of the cooperatives increased the level of people's social and cultural lives; the leaders of many organisations would notice in the cooperative an essential social, educational, and cultural factor. The significance of the cooperative in the formation of the traits of character, individual and social morality, selflessness, the preparation of women for public life, increasing the importance and stature of women in the life of the family and the society, was emphasised.¹¹

The development of the cooperative movement, and the education connected with it, were dear (as aims) to the pro-Sanation women's organisations (including: Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet – ZPOK [Women's Civic Work Association], Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet [Women's Self-Help], Związek Pań Domu [Association of Homemakers], Towarzystwa Klubów Kobiet Pracujących [Society of Working Women's Clubs], Organizacja Przysposobienia Wojskowego Kobiet [Women's Military Training Association], The associations – Rodzina Wojskowa [Soldiers' Families], Rodzina Policyjna [Police Officers' Families]), who recognised the cooperative as a perfect form to realise their own ideological, social, and political aims. The majority of them would emphasise the importance of the cooperative in the society, ideology, and education. The cooperative was understood and treated as a unique form of education, thanks to which women could learn the social forms of work, solidarity, mutual help, and cooperation. The work in the various types of cooperatives was to inspire a sense of agency, the ability to take action, to be resourceful and independent, to organise one's individual and social economic life, as well as the willingness and readiness to help others.¹²

The Women's Social Self-Help Association

One of the pro-Sanation women's organisations which would promote and implement in their social and educational work the ideas of the cooperative was the Women's Social Self-Help Association (Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna

¹⁰ Some examples of journals of women's organisations: "Praca Obywatelska" [Civic Work] and "Prosta Droga" [Straight Way] issued by the Association of Women's Civic Work as well as "Biuletyn" [Bulletin] of the Women's Social Self-Help Organisation.

¹¹ Magiera, E. (2011). *Spółdzielczość jako forma edukacji*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹² Ibidem, pp. 89–90.

Kobiet – SSK). The association was established in 1935 out of the initiative of Zofia Moraczewska and her circle of members of ZPOK. Their inspiration was the conflict within the Main Board of ZPOK, growing since 1933, which was based in the disagreements between Moraczewska and the remaining leaders of the Association in their assessment of the political work of BBWR and their leaders (ZPOK was ideologically connected with this political movement). As a result of the increasing conflict on November 17, 1933 Moraczewska stepped down from her position of head of the Association, and following her defeat in the elections to the board in February 1935 she ultimately left the organisation.¹³ On April 13, 1935 she formed a new, independent women's organisation of a social and educational character – the SSK. During the Organizational Convention of the SSK in Warsaw on May 12, 1935 the form and the character of the organisation were defined, as well as its aims and the scope of its activity. What was particularly emphasised during the sessions was that the SSK was to avoid entering into political relationships. The organisation was to focus on, first and foremost, organising mutual help in various areas of social and economic life, self-education of its members, taking care of children, inspiring the spirit of entrepreneurship, and promoting women's cooperative work.¹⁴ The members of the Main Board of the SSK were also elected, among them: Zofia Moraczewska (head of the association until September 1939), Natalia Steinowa, Hanna Szaniawska, Janina Komornicka, Hanna Huszcza-Winnicka, and Kazimiera Żuławska.¹⁵ After the convention Moraczewska began her work on creating the structures of the Association. It was only in October 1935 that the organisation began its work.

¹³ *Zofia Moraczewska. Listy do siostry 1896–1933. Dziennik 1891–1895 (1950)*. Letters to her sister 1896–1933. Diary 1891–1895. Introduction and edition: J. Dufurat – P. Cichoracki. Wydawnictwo LTW. Łomianki 2018, p. 16.

¹⁴ Florczak, I. (2003). Zofia Moraczewska (1873–1958). *Kobieta-polityk II Rzeczypospolitej [Zofia Moraczewska (1873–1958). A woman and a politician of the Second Republic of Poland]*. In "ACTA UNIVERSITATIS LODZIENSIS, FOLIA HISTORICA 77", p. 140; Also: Chojnowski, A. (1996). *Moralność i polityka. Kobiecte lobby w Bezpartyjnym Bloku Współpracy z Rządem [Morality and politics. Women's lobby in the Non-Partisan Bloc of Cooperation with the Government]*. In A. Szwarc – A. Żarnowska (eds.) *Kobieta i świat polityki w niepodległej Polsce 1918–1939 [Women and the world of politics in independent Poland 1918–1939]*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, p. 175; Dufurat, J. (2013). *W służbie obozu marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego. Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet (1928–1939) [In the service of the camp of marshal Józef Piłsudski. The Women's Civic Work Association]*. Kraków–Wrocław: Avalon, p. 354.

¹⁵ Among the activists of the SSK there were also Helena Kozicka, Janina Duninowa, Janina Paprocka, Janina Kruk-Strzelecka, Sabina Różycka, Maria Rychterówna, Leokadia Śliwińska. See: Dufurat, J. (2013). *W służbie obozu marszałka*, op. cit., p. 354; Also: Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). *Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet [A diary. Women's Social Self-Help Association]*, Biblioteka Narodowa [hereinafter BN], zespół Archiwum Moraczewskich, sygn. Rps 11489 II, p. 70.

Until the end of 1936, the SSK established nearly 40 circles in Poland. In the spring of 1939, the organisation had about 2700 members, with the circles in Warsaw being the most numerous.¹⁶ In March 1937, in spite of the earlier declarations of avoiding political connections, the SSK made public their accession to the Camp of National Unity as a member organisation, which was decisive in defining the political face of the Association and its being a part of the government group until the outbreak of World War II.¹⁷

On October 4, 1936 in Warsaw the First Main Convention of the Members of the SSK took place.¹⁸ The *Ideological Declaration* was accepted, in which the aims and the tasks of the association were defined: "The aim of the SSK is to work for the good and greatness of the Republic of Poland. Our goal is to serve Poland with all our strength, to unleash Her unique creative powers, to thus build Her greatness. We are always ready to stand in defence of the State and to focus the strength of the society thereon (...). We firmly believe that our society can awaken within itself, with full awareness and fully willingly, a moral strength, which will unify and strengthen the entire nation, allowing the State to develop in all ways possible. In our conviction, that the condition of the creation of such strength, are healthy social and economic relations, and that it is born of a profound civic

¹⁶ *Protokół I Walnego Zjazdu Delegatek SSK z 04 X 1936r* [The protocol of the 1st Main Convention of the Members of the SSK], Archiwum Akt Nowych [hereinafter AAN], SSK, sign. 7, p. 40; *Sprawozdanie z działalności SSK za okres 1 VI 1938 - 31 III 1939* [Report on the work of the SSK from 01. 06. 1938 to 31. 03. 1939], AAN, SSK, sign. 5, p. 47; "Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet" (1936), Issue 8, pp. 3–19; Dufurat, J. (2013). W służbie obozu marszałka, op. cit., p. 355. According to Z. Moraczewska until the end of 1937 there were 30 circles of SSK. In: Kielce, Łódź Dąbrowa Górnicza, Sosnowiec, Dębica, Katowice, Radom, Białystok, Brześć nad Bugiem, Skarżysko, Łuck, Wilno, Pionki, Kraków, Lublin, Olkusz, Końskie, Poznań, Kalisz, Lubartów, Lwów, Milanówek as well as 8 circles in Warsaw. On the basis of: Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). *Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, op. cit., pp. 55–56.

¹⁷ AAN, Zespół SSK, vol. 32, p. 5; Also: Chojnowski, A. (1996). *Moralność i polityka*, op. cit., p. 176.

¹⁸ During the convention a new Main Board of the SSK was elected, with Zofia Moraczewska as head of the board. The members of the board were: Janina Komornicka, Hanna Szaniawska, Irena Szydłowska, Natalia Steinowa, Kazimiera Żuławska, Henryka Witkiewiczowa, Janina Kruk-Strzelecka, Franciszka Kutnerówna, Sabina Różycka, Janina Żbikowska, Antonina Siedlecka. Heads of Sections were also elected: Helena Kozicka (Women's Civic Self-Education Section), Matylda Szelestowa (Family Self-Help Section), Adela Domanusowa (Economic Self-Help Section), Ada Kalusińska (Finance and Revenue Section), Danuta Kobyłańska (Section of the Young), Zofia Moraczewska (Press the Propaganda Section); The Court of the organisation consisted of: Henryka Pawlewska, Kazimiera Grunertówna, Zofia Zawisza-Kernowa, Maria Rychterówna, Wanda Lorentzowa. "Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet" (1936) Issue 9, p. 5; Also: Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). *Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, op. cit., p. 37.

consciousness of the entire society, created for cooperation and responsibility for the fate of the State, we desire:

1. conscious obedience and civic solidarity,
2. equality of all citizens in their rights and their duties,
3. respect for human dignity,
4. a fair and just assessment of individual values and contributions,
5. a significant realisation of the constitutional women's rights.

We desire the creation of such conditions in Poland so that:

1. every person capable of work can find employment,
2. remuneration for work is fair,
3. the protection of labour is properly organised and observed.

We will aim to reform our political system in the spirit of social justice, to reform it in a well-thought-out, gradual, and consistent manner.¹⁹

According to the Statute, the main aim of the SSK was "the organisation for new members, in common effort, mutual help in the areas of economy, caretaking, and self-education".²⁰ To achieve this goal the following resources and tasks were to be employed: "finding and establishing new structures of paid employment for the members; organising legal and medical counselling for the members; organising care for children and youth; conducting cooperation in education and self-education in the form of lectures, public readings, and open discussions, as well as reading rooms and dayrooms for the members".²¹

In introducing the ideological assumptions and the aims and tasks the SSK was supported by the specialist sections, organised with the Main Board: Family Self-Help, Women's Civic Self-Education, Press and Propaganda, Economic Self-Help, Revenue and Finance, and Section of the Young.

The help and education work aimed for the family was conducted by the **Family Self-Help Section**. Its work was organised into 4 general directions: 1) providing pedagogical help for the members of the SSK; 2) providing medical help; 3) providing legal counselling; 4) organising summer camps for the members of the SSK and their children. The Section had a number of subsections: the pedagogical subsection, whose aim was to provide upbringing and education advice; the medical one, organising free medical counselling provided by specialists, including gynaecologists, paediatrician, laryngologists; the legal subsection, organising free legal counselling provided by female attorneys

¹⁹ Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet. Deklaracja ideowa [Women's Social Self-Help. Ideological Declaration], (1936). In "Nasza Praca. Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet", Warszawa, p. 2.

²⁰ Statut Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet [Statute of the Women's Social Self-Help Association], (Warszawa 1935). BN, sign.: ID 1935, p. 3.

²¹ Statut Stowarzyszenia, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

cooperating with the SSK; and the summer camps subsection, whose task was to organise and conduct summer camps for members of the SSK and their children.²²

The pedagogical subsection organised “Life Counselling Centres” with the local circles of the SSK, which were intended to “constantly keep watch over the private lives of the members, their concerns, pains, failures, and life problems; to always be able to find there clear advice, help, and moral support, or even intervention”²³ In the Counselling Centres women were educated in how to “rationally bring up children, how to educate them and where, how to organise married life so that it is not a hell of hopelessness, but a joyful privilege in life (...), how to keep the home clean, maintain personal hygiene, and to maintain normal married relationships when raising children”²⁴

The Women’s Civic Self-Education Section, led by Helena Kozicka, was organised into the subsection of public readings, as well as the subsections of culture and discussion meetings. Its main aim was to shape civic, pro-state social stances, raising the general level of culture, increasing legal and political awareness in line with the ideological assumptions of the SSK. To realise these goals lectures, public readings, and discussions were held, organised in the circles of the SSK by the public readings subsection. Public readings were organised on the history of Poland, social and economic problems, as well as the questions of hygiene, households, cooperatives, and women’s problems. The Section would also establish libraries in many circles, and conduct courses for illiterate members. Only in 1936 226 discussions were conducted, including 87 on historical subjects, 16 on geography, 27 on literature, 87 on social issues (including women’s problems), 40 on current events, and 9 on legal issues.²⁵

The Propaganda and Press Section, led by Zofia Moraczewska, dealt with forming ideas and political attitudes of the supervisory staff of the SSK, in line with the ideological direction of the Association. In the form of the so-called discussion evenings (discussion meetings organised weekly on the premises of the Main Board of the SSK in Warsaw) it was attempted to reinforce and “deepen the ideological unity” of the members of the organisation. “Starting with this

²² Szpilrajnowa, S. (1939). Sekcja Samopomocy Rodzinnej [Family Self-Help Section]. In “*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*”, Issues 3 and 4, p. 11; Also: Luiderówna (1936). Konieczność zwalczania pokątnego pośrednictwa prawnego [The necessity to combat amateur. In “*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*”, nr 9, pp. 6–7.

²³ Minchejmerowa, M. (1938). Zakładajmy Poradnie Życiowe dla Kobiet [Let us establish Life Counselling Centres for women]. In “*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*”, Issue 2, p. 3.

²⁴ Minchejmerowa, M. (1938). Zakładajmy Poradnie Życiowe, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁵ “*Nasza Praca. Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*” (1936). Warszawa, pp. 6–7.

assumption – Moraczewska wrote – we undertake the work of negotiating and crystalizing the ideas of our members, by the way, initiating discussions on the subjects of the state, education, self-government, society, economy, and women's problems (...) first and foremost we aim to form a uniform attitude among those who have been elected by the members to hold supervisory positions in the organisation (...), these discussions shall facilitate harmonious, unified work with our members in the Circles in Warsaw and to provide referees, who are so desired by the SSK Circles all over the country".²⁶ The scope of the tasks of the Section included also support for the press organ of the SSK, which was the monthly "Bulletin of the Main Board of the Women's Social Self-Help Association", published since November 1935.

One of the most proper forms of collective work (social/economic, educational) was the cooperative, perceived by the members of the SSK as "a forge of characters and a school of solidarity".²⁷ The leaders of the Association would publicly claim: "it is our wish to unite the masses of Polish women in the cooperative movement, which may become a lever of the future order, based in the brotherhood of common effort".²⁸

Education in the spirit of the cooperative movement as part of the SSK was realised by the **Economic Self-Help Section** and the subsections working as part of its structure: the subsection of women's vocational training, of vocational workshops, trade intermediation, and, most importantly, the cooperative subsection.

As part of the cooperative education, the Economic Self-Help Section advised to:

1. carry out psychological preparation of the members of the SSK as a necessary introduction to cooperative work (in schools and in the pedagogical lyceum),
2. lead, first and foremost, to the establishment of labour cooperatives, as a type of cooperative work that is the most suitable to the needs of the contemporary world of women, struggling under the burden of unemployment and poverty,
3. secure necessary funds by starting a cooperative bank of the SSK in order to distribute capital in the form of loans to the SSK cooperatives all over the country.²⁹

As part of the conducted cooperative education action, the cooperative subsection organised cooperative courses. During the first course in cooperative education for members of the SSK, which took place in Warsaw between October

²⁶ Moraczewska, Z. (1936). Nasze wieczory dyskusyjne i ich znaczenie dla organizacji [Our discussion evenings and their significance to the organisation]. In "Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet", Issue 9, pp. 17–18.

²⁷ "Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet" (1936), Issue 9, p. 3.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Moraczewska, Z. (1938). Sprawozdanie z konferencji kół SSK z 6 I - 7 I 1938 [Report from the conference of the SSK circles of 06-07. 02. 1938]. In "Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet", Issue 2, p. 1.

19 and 24, 1936 and was intended to increase the understanding and to promote the principles and ideas of the cooperative movement as well as presenting the directions of coordinated efforts, it was declared: "(...) to fully appreciate the idea of the cooperative, which all over the world as well as in our Poland is developing with impressive results – this means of raising the material and cultural level of broad working masses – our organisation in the programme of its civic work has placed the cooperative in the first position".³⁰ What was defined during the course were also the conditions of the popularisations and successfulness of the cooperative movement: "1) economic activity, the cooperative, ought to be free of politics, (...) there is no place for politics of this political party or other in the area of the economy; this area is "taboo" for the sake of the idea itself – in the cooperative there are no hidden aims, its own aim is great enough, it is important enough; 2) cooperative work ought to be characterised by ethics, (...) the ethics of the management, the purity of intentions and hands, because the public good, the social good, are also "taboo" and they are sacred; 3) the third main condition of the successfulness of cooperative work is professionalism, because life nowadays is too complex for it to be dealt with by dilettantes. Furthermore, it can be stated that the cooperative is an area of labour clearly calling for the participation of women: they may provide their care, thriftiness, meticulousness, and diligence".³¹

The fundamental goal of the Economic Self-Help Section was defined by the Statute as "organisation of self-help in the realm of the economy for its members, through common effort". It was attempted to achieve the goal by: establishing production and trade centres, founded on the ideas of the cooperative; conducting cooperative courses; women's vocational training and their preparation to work in the established cooperatives "adjusted to regional requirements";³² which, as Maria Gryckówna wrote – "constituted a perfect means of education, got women accustomed to economic resourcefulness, turning them gradually from passive individuals (...) to brave and resourceful citizens, full of faith in their own strengths and the willingness to provide active help to the organisers of economic life in Poland".³³

The Economic Self-Help Section was the most active in the Warsaw circles, together with its subsections. From June 1936 to the beginning of 1939 it would

³⁰ Paprocka, J. (1936). Po "Kursie Przystosowania Spółdzielczego" Samopomocy Społecznej Kobiet [After the "Cooperative Education Course" of Women's Social Self-Help]. In *Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, Issue 9, p. 15.

³¹ Paprocka, J. (1936). Po "Kursie Przystosowania Spółdzielczego", op. cit., pp. 16–17

³² Domanusowa, A. (1936). Samopomoc gospodarcza [Economic self-help]. In *Nasza Praca. Biuletyn Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, Warszawa, p. 12; Also: *Sekcja Samopomocy Gospodarczej*. (1936). In *Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, Issue 8, pp. 12–13.

³³ Maria Gryckówna, M. (1936). In *Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, Issue 3, p. 15.

organise, as part of the broadly understood economic help for its members, vocational training courses, specialist vocational workshops, trade centres, and trade intermediation centres. The subsection of women's vocational training, whose aim was to "educate staff and as many women as possible to work in various professions, on the basis of the principles of the cooperative"³⁴ conducted a number of specialist courses, mainly in hand and machine knitting, weaving, and tailoring. During nearly two years about 50 women received training in machine knitting, half of whom would find employment in factories in Warsaw, and 13 in the knitting workshop of the SSK. Courses in hand knitting were completed by over 100 women.³⁵ Similar courses were conducted in numerous SSK circles all over Poland. The vocational workshops subsection, in turn, led by Natalia Steinowa, established and started in Warsaw its own knitting workshop, lace production, shoemaking workshop, weaving workshop, embroidery workshop, as well as a breakfast buffet in the office of the Social Insurance Organisation. What would develop with particular success was knitting, shoemaking, embroidery production, as well as the production of socks and stockings. The demand for these products was organised by securing orders from various social organisations, in Warsaw as well as other parts of Poland, private individuals, and government institutions. For example: in order to secure orders for the knitted products the leaders of the SSK started a cooperation with, among others, the Ministry of Military Affairs, the Women's Military Training organisation, scouts, the Winter Relief Fund. The products were sold in military factories, factories belonging to the state monopoly, as well as the stalls set up by the association on city markets.³⁶

In the autumn of 1937 the cooperative subsection, ran by Natalia Heinowa, in agreement with the Labour Cooperative Association, organised the cooperative "Tailoring Emergency Service". As one of the largest Warsaw cooperatives, it would originally hire 15 persons, and by the end of the first half of 1939 nearly 30. The "Emergency Service" would mainly produce overcoats, ordered by, among others, the Winter Relief Fund for the "Winter Relief" action.³⁷ The "Emergency Service"

³⁴ Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). *Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, op. cit., p. 47.

³⁵ Domanusowa, A. (1939). *Sekcja Samopomocy Gospodarczej S. S. K.* In "*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*", Issues 3 and 4, p. 8.

³⁶ Domanusowa, A. (1939). *Sekcja Samopomocy Gospodarczej S. S. K.* op. cit., p. 9; Also: Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). *Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*, op. cit., pp. 51–53.

³⁷ Szwakopfowa, E. (1938). *Śląsk – śladem kursu spółdzielczego S. S. K.* [Silesia – on the traces of the cooperative course of the SSK]. In "*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*", Issue 2, pp. 18–19; Also: Steinowa, N. (1939). *Sekcja Spółdzielcza.* In "*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*", Issues 3 and 4, pp. 10–11.

as well as the other labour cooperatives of the SSK would formally and legally belong to the Revisory Association of the “Społem” Cooperative as an auditory and controlling institution.³⁸

The trade and trade intermediation centres were organised and run by the trade intermediation subsection. The activists in this subsection, led by Katarzyna Perczyńska, organised a shop/wholesaler at the offices of the Main Board of the SSK in Warsaw, which would sell products made by the SSK workshops from all of Poland. The wholesaler would also purchase products at wholesale prices from state factories. Cooperation in this department was initiated with, among others, textile factories in Łódź, the People’s Industry Market in Łuck, and factories in Sosnowiec. The procured goods were subsequently sold through the SSK circles and in “Społem” shops. The products made in the SSK workshops were presented at the Poznań Trade Fair at the stalls of women’s labour.³⁹

Actions of broadly understood economic help similar to those of the Warsaw SSK circles were undertaken SSK circles all over the country. For example, in Dąbrowa Górnicza courses in knitting, a weaving workshop, and a food shop were established and run; a canteen and a flower shop were in Kielce; knitting and handicraft courses in Lublin; a Low-Cost Handicraft Workshop, a laundry, sewing and tailoring courses in Lubartów; sale of food products made by members of the SSK circle conducted at their own stall in Łódź; workshops in slippers production, production of gloves for the military, underwear production, trade intermediation, and a fruit processing and juice production facility in Łuck; courses of sewing, tailoring, and handicraft in Olkusz; handicraft workshop in Poznań; courses of sewing, tailoring, knitting, and trade intermediation in Sosnowiec.⁴⁰ The SSK circle in Katowice would run a special tourist cooperative. In March of 1937 the “Przełot” cooperative was organised out of the initiative of Elżbieta Szwakopfowa as the “first cooperative Tourist House in Silesia.”⁴¹

³⁸ Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet, op. cit., p. 48.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 50–51.

⁴⁰ *Sekcja Samopomocy Gospodarczej*. (1936). In “*Biuletyn Zarządu Głównego Stowarzyszenia Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet*”, Issue 8, pp. 12–14; Także: Moraczewska, Z. (1940–1948). Pamiętnik. Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

⁴¹ Szwakopfowa, E. (1938). Śląsk – śladem kursu spółdzielczego S.S.K. op. cit., pp. 18–19; Also: Steinowa, N. (1939). *Sekcja Spółdzielcza*. op. cit., pp. 9–11.