



## RUSSIA AND THE ICA

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### *1. Motivation for attending the first ICA congresses*

Representatives of the Russian cooperation, who attended the first ICA congresses, were highly interested in foreign cooperation and thoroughly learned its experience, as key types of cooperatives in Russia were originally based on the models of Rochdale, Schulze-Delitzsch and Raiffeisen. As Russian cooperatives developed, the practice itself caused their participation in the international movement, and the Russian cooperative elite (V.N. Zelgeim, V.F. Totomians, etc.) highly evaluated ideological, ethic and practical significance of the international cooperative movement. For instance, one of the leaders of the Russian cooperation I.F. Zherebyatyev (member of the ICA Central Committee) was personally acquainted with the leaders of French and English cooperation, and had an opportunity to learn the layout of warehouses and the way wholesale societies worked in London and Manchester, to get acquainted with activities of European societies and unions. He shared impressions with his colleagues at general meetings, made a comparative analysis of foreign and domestic cooperative movement and recommended to introduce foreign experience into practice while building cooperation in Russia.

### *2. Added value*

The first years associated with the ICA were both productive and encouraging for the Russian cooperation, since the Alliance acted as the highest authority to discuss controversial issues of theory and practice, and as a platform to get acquainted with cooperative movement, where Russian cooperators represented by Centrosoyuz (ICA member since 1903) got practical experience.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the influence of Bolsheviks fighting for ideas of the world communist revolution was increasing in different bodies of the ICA. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century representatives of Centrosoyuz and the Soviet bloc have played a prominent role in the activities of the ICA and in the ICA congresses, using them as a platform to influence the cooperative movements of other countries and for communist propaganda. Membership in the ICA allowed Centrosoyuz to extend contacts with cooperators from developing countries and maintain mutually beneficial international cooperation. In the 1960s-1980s Moscow Cooperative Institute provided internships to thousands of cooperators from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The ICA has always been needed primarily in order to have its supporters in other countries. To contribute to the development of the cooperative movement and to put this interaction into practice requires both a unique cooperative spirit and the participation of as many active and educated people with a cooperative mindset as possible.