

“A commitment to solidarity is an open-ended contract”

Sunday 23 June 2024, by [L'Anticapitaliste](#), [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 21 June 2024).

Interview. Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF) is well known to Fourth International activists for its rich and abundant documentation on its website. It is also a concrete solidarity association. Pierre Rousset tells us about this adventure, which began over twenty years ago.

***L'Anticapitaliste:* Could you describe your association?**

Pierre Rousset: [Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières \(ESSF\)](#) is an international solidarity association that has forged special links in Asia. Our bilingual website (French and English) is nonetheless multi-thematic and general, even if Asia, part of Europe and France occupy a more important place than other regions. The year 2005 represents a “founding shock” in our history. The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 was truly devastating, and convinced us that we needed to step up financial aid to our Asian sister organisations.

In October 2005, I visited northern Pakistan and Pakistani-occupied Kashmir, which had been hit by a violent earthquake. Our local partners were among the first to rebuild permanent homes, just as winter was approaching. This experience taught me a lot: our role is to support locally-based progressive organisations that are able to make informed decisions about concrete priorities, and to implement them in close consultation with the people concerned, helping them to self-organise themselves. We have moved from one-off solidarity campaigns to a policy of ongoing support for our partners in Pakistan, Indonesia, Mindanao (Philippines) and Bangladesh.

We have gone from occasional solidarity campaigns to a policy of ongoing support for our partners in Pakistan, Indonesia, Mindanao (Philippines) and Bangladesh.

Back in 2005, we knew that there would be a succession of so-called natural disasters (which can also be man-made), armed conflicts in which civilians would pay the price, and recurrent repression of left-wing activists. Twenty years on, we're still doing it. A commitment to solidarity is an open-ended contract.

What has kept you going?

The initial impetus, first of all, and the support we have received. I'm obliged to talk here about my

background. In 2005, I had already been an activist for 40 years. For a long time, I was a member of the leadership of the Fourth International, where one of my main responsibilities was to liaise with a wide range of Asian organisations. I was also for a time a member of the International Council of the World Social Forum, as well as the Asia-Europe People's Forum, and I was involved in many solidarity committees in France. During the 1999-2004 legislature, as part of the LCR delegation, I worked in the European Parliament for the GUE/NGL group (of which Francis Wurtz, leader of the PCF, was then president) and for the World Parliamentary Forum - a good part of my activities there were Asian.

In fact, the forerunner of today's Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières was an association serving MEPs (hence its name). Once the legislature was over, we 'inherited' it and refounded it as an international solidarity association, with the blessing of my comrades from the Fourth International who helped us in many ways, while respecting, I would stress, the association's independence. It was an interesting experience that has enabled Adam Novac to join us in 2019 and leave his mark on our development.

Two figures to illustrate the work we've done: since 2005, we've raised almost 500,000 euros, all of which has been sent to our Asian partners (we cover the running costs of the website and the association ourselves, and none of us are paid in any way). We have developed our website beyond what we had imagined: it now has 70,000 pages - thanks to Arnaud, our webmaster. Recently, we have been increasing the number of translations into French (thanks to Pierre Vandevoorde) and we are also benefiting from the richness of the ["Entre les lignes, entre les mots"](#) blog, which offers unparalleled documentation.

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A website like ours enables us to work actively with a wide range of movements, whose positions and analyses we can reproduce. It provides a wide range of documentation and can be used to serve many causes outside ESSF's own area of responsibility. Networking with other sites, we have been able to make a very active contribution to the international campaign in support of the "Women, Life, Freedom" uprising, in response to an appeal from the association Solidarité socialiste avec les travailleurs en Iran (Socialist solidarity with the workers in Iran, SSTI) and with the investment of Alain Baron. We can receive funds and pass them on when, as in this case, they need time to reopen their own bank accounts. We can significantly increase our coverage of a crisis situation, such as the Ukraine and Palestine today. All in a spirit of solidarity: we defend all victimised populations, regardless of the power or regime that oppresses them. For us, this is the very foundation of internationalism.

Is solidarity ever more necessary?

We are living in a terribly paradoxical time. The "polycrisis", the global crisis, is a fact of life whose devastating effects are already evident. It is at this moment that the established political and economic powers are cancelling the meagre measures that had been taken to limit global warming and are criminalising environmental movements. Their aim is to destroy old ties of solidarity and

prevent the development of new ones.

To a large extent, it is in the field of solidarity, our solidarity, that the future will be decided. We have to face up to these challenges together, whether at local, national or international level. Over the decades, we have become part of a vast informal network of "support points" on different continents that share the same perception of emergencies and the same concept of solidarity.

In this collective score, we have a particular responsibility: to ensure the continuity of support for our Asian comrades at a time when international attention is polarised by Ukraine and Palestine. The situation in South and South-East Asia is dramatic. This part of the world is feeling especially brutally the consequences of climate chaos. I would therefore like to thank once again all those who contribute to our Asia Solidarity Fund.

Interview by the editors of *l'Anticapitaliste*



To send donations to our Asian partners

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93100 Montreuil

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P.S.

- Traduit par Pierre Rousset avec l'aide de DeepLpro.