

## **The Three Ages of Conflict in Voluntary Associations**

### ***Emmaüs* and French Solidarity Associations since 1945**

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**The history of *Emmaüs*, a major movement against homelessness made famous by its charismatic leader, Abbot Pierre, is representative of postwar voluntary solidarity associations in France. By describing the stages of its development, Axelle Brodiez-Dolino proposes a typology of conflicts in the voluntary organizations sector.**

Although *Emmaüs*' organization chart has been greatly simplified since the early 2000s, anyone looking at it for the first time would be astonished by its complexity. There are three branches (community, social action and housing, and solidary economy and integration). The first consists of seven "families" of communities, now evened up in size; the second consists of five very large associations<sup>1</sup> and thirteen little ones; and the third contains no fewer than 37 "integration committees," 24 "integration structures," 15 "Le Relais" ("Relay") structures, and 24 textile platforms. And an even larger number of organizations nurtured in Abbot Pierre's fold are now free standing; among the best known are ATD Fourth World, Artisans du Monde, The Food Banks, People's Solidarity Networks, and the Envie Network (social and professional

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<sup>1</sup> Association *Emmaüs(-Paris)*, Fondation abbé Pierre pour le logement des défavorisés, *Emmaüs-Habitat*, SOS-Familles, Confédération générale du logement.

integration through reutilizing domestic appliances). This multi-faceted development poses many problems, but it has transformed *Emmaüs*—which started out as a very small-scale association: a few suicidal, violent or depressed men working on landfills in the Paris region alongside an atypical priest—into the largest solidarity organization in France, admittedly far behind the Red Cross with its quasi-public status, but ahead of *Secours Catholique* and *Médecins Sans Frontières*.<sup>2</sup>

One of Abbot Pierre's watchwords was "Go ahead, do what you can," established as a rather Christian and apostolic model of problem-solving. Coming down from the Father to his disciples, it was meant to be an invitation to each activist to set out to find his own way. To adapt Albert Hirschman's terminology that identifies three ways of resolving underlying conflicts (exit, voice and loyalty<sup>3</sup>), the originality of *Emmaüs* from 1954 up to the 1990s consisted of developing a middle way between voice and exit—namely, internal exit—and this explains the proliferation that is now evident in its organization chart.

However, by its atypicality, the confederal nature of *Emmaüs* shows that it is only one model of conflict processing. To mention only organizations within the voluntary sector, while the *Secours Catholique*, very centralized and under the Vatican's influence, is still rather opaque,<sup>4</sup> the situation of the *Secours Populaire*<sup>5</sup> on the other hand has a clear strategy of avoiding open conflict; this strategy is a legacy of the communist culture of loyalty and, if the need arises, exit.<sup>6</sup> So if there is dissension—as usual, between certain departments and the head office, or between certain individuals — it is mostly silent, even in written communications. And

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<sup>2</sup> On the history of *Emmaüs*, see my *Emmaüs et l'abbé Pierre*, Paris, Presses de SciencesPo, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> In the absence of accessible archives, there has been no thesis devoted to the *Secours Catholique*. However, to learn more about the history of the organization (without however entering into the thorny issues of conflicts) see Luc Dubrulle, *Monseigneur Rodhain et le Secours catholique: Une figure sociale de la charité*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 2008; Jean Colson et Charles Klein, *Jean Rodhain prêtre: Le temps des grandes réalisations et du développement mondial, 1946-77*, tome II, Paris, Éditions SOS, 1984; Christophe Henning, *Vous, c'est la charité! Biographie de M<sup>gr</sup> Jean Rodhain*, Paris, Éditions du Sarment, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Axelle Brodriez, *Le Secours populaire français, 1945-2000: du communisme à l'humanitaire*, Paris, Presses de SciencesPo, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> These terms refer to the different strategies that can be implemented by those involved in situations of conflict in an organization, strategies highlighted by Albert O. Hirschmann, *op. cit.*

if by chance it should erupt, it ends in an external exit, with no margin for internal adjustments other than marginalizing the complainant. The threefold communist culture of “percolating down” (not upwards or horizontally, which would allow expression of the conflict), of subsuming individuals in the collective, and therefore of denigrating internal “voicing,” allows the organization to maintain its monolithic façade. This has consequences that are atypical in the voluntary sector: Julien Lauprêtre, parachuted into place by the Communist Party in 1954, promoted to General Secretary in 1955 and President in 1981 (with the change in the association’s by-laws), is still the head of the organization in 2012.

Excluding this rather extreme case, associational conflict is often unpublicized, and leaves little in the way of written records, so it is difficult to understand historically. When it does make an appearance, it is often seen through an ideological lens, because that seems to be the only respectable way of seeing it: the split between *Médecins Sans Frontières* and *Médecins du Monde*, embodied by charismatic and telegenic personalities like Bernard Kouchner and Rony Brauman, was one of the very few in which the stature of the personalities appeared to add something to the ideas.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, association archives sometimes reveal goings-on that are much more complex, and often less respectable, more protean, and resulting in a tangle of causalities. So in this article, my intention is firstly to open the “black box” of a specific case (*Emmaüs*), to improve our understanding of the origins of a real conflict culture, of its base, and of the attempt to exit from it; and then to put this case into perspective in order to shed more light on the place and the role of conflict in contemporary French solidarity associations.

The winter of 1954, when *Emmaüs* was organizationally baptized by its growth and its media attention, was also the moment of a founding conflict and of the genesis of a culture of internal autonomy. This culture reached its peak in the 1960s-1970s, when conflict changed from being something to be struggled through to being taken on board as almost routine, although it also became more ideological and institutional. However, since the 1980s the organization has tried without much success to exit from this heavy legacy. Interestingly, this periodization seems,

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<sup>7</sup> Pascal Dauvin, Johanna Siméant & C.A.H.I.E.R., *Le travail humanitaire: Les acteurs des ONG, du siège au terrain*, Paris, Presses de SciencesPo, 2002.

for one thing, to reflect the three ages of the development of voluntary associations—childhood/structuring (founding conflicts), adolescence/maturation (ideological conflicts related to a nascent professionalization), and adulthood/institutionalization (avoidance of conflict and preference for compromise). It also seems to match the quite synchronous histories of other voluntary associations.<sup>8</sup>

## I. THE STRUCTURING PERIOD AND FOUNDING CONFLICTS (1940s-1950s)

Although the birth of an association involves bringing people together, it can also generate clashes and defections. Sometimes this happens in a hazy way; for example, historians of the *Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul* cannot decide who should be considered the “true” founder: the charismatic student Frédéric Ozanam or Emmanuel Bailly, with his experience in catholic works.<sup>9</sup> Other times it happens in a more open way. For example, the *Secours Catholique* had a double gestation. On one side there was Father Braun, Armand Marquiset and André Aumônier, who in 1944 created the *Secours Catholique International*, and on the other there was Bishop Rodhain and his *Comité International de l’Aumônerie Catholique*. The two organizations competed over the territory and had partly different views, and they opposed each other until the Vatican came down in favour of Rodhain, the French hierarchy having shown itself unable to decide between the two.<sup>10</sup> Although the situation at *Emmaüs* might seem simpler, with its single and undisputed founder, actually a real culture of exit developed there.

### **Ethic of Conviction versus Ethic of Responsibility**

After the “catacombs period”—the years of the first companions, with harsh living conditions and isolation (1949-1953) — the call of February 1<sup>st</sup> 1954 and the “uprising of

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<sup>8</sup> With few exceptions, the organizations prominent in the field in France today were born in the 1940s-1950s – for example, *Cimade* (1939); *Secours Populaire*, *Secours Catholique* and *Petits Frères des Pauvres* (1946); *Emmaüs* (1949); *ATD-Quart-monde* and *CCFD* (1961) – whereas few associations born after 1960 have now been highly developed, apart from the ones organized by French doctors (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, *Médecins du Monde*).

<sup>9</sup> Mathieu Bréjon de Lavergnée, *La Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul au XIXe siècle: Un fleuron du catholicisme social*, Paris, Cerf, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Luc Dubrulle, *Monseigneur Rodhain et le Secours catholique...*, *op. cit.*

kindness” could have ushered *Emmaüs* into a glorious and prosperous era; instead they gave rise to the “black years” of exacerbated, protean conflicts that remained hard to heal for some decades.

For in 1954 there was superimposed onto the founding generation—the first companions with their marginal profiles and criminal records—a very different cohort that soon took over the reins of the organization, Abbot Pierre being overburdened, often ill or absent for lectures or visits in France and elsewhere in the world. The Board of Directors of the new *Association Emmaüs* that was created in March 1954 included journalists, lawyers, notaries, big businessmen and financiers (including the Directors of the department store BHV and of Lazard Bank), government advisers, members of the French Economic and Social Council, trade union leaders, and so on. There was a radical clash not only of social worlds but of two ideas about action: the first cohort wanted to perpetuate the original adventurous spirit and flexible organization, and had a strong penchant for commando actions that were borderline legal; the second, in contrast, wanted to limit the moral and financial scandals that were spreading geographically, to recruit solid activists and to establish rigorous, even professionalized management. It was centrifugal logic against centripetal logic. Weberian terminology perfectly captures what was happening here: a protean conflict between an “ethic of conviction” and an “ethic of responsibility.”<sup>11</sup> Underneath this there was also a clash between two types of legitimacy: on one side, that of the precedence and predilections of Abbot Pierre; on the other, that of competence and social prestige.

### **The Inability of the “Father” to Arbitrate**

As it happened, Abbot Pierre, not focused on leadership tasks, did not bring himself to decide between these two sides; he was torn between his affection for his first protégés and the original spirit on the one hand, and on the other his awareness of the necessity of firmly establishing a work that was threatening to become shambolic.

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<sup>11</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated (1930) by Talcott Parsons, London, Routledge, 2001.

More than that, he was simply unable to decide, partly (as we have seen) because of the incapacity caused by his absences and his disinclination to manage tensions, but also because of an impossible situation, for the organization's conflicts were tangled up with a factor that was central but unmentionable, Abbot Pierre's own private life: "the experience of sexual desire and its very rare satisfaction."<sup>12</sup> In a pre-conciliar society and Church, this was just not sayable; probably the only ones who knew about it were a narrow tip of the *Association Emmaüs*, a few journalists, ecclesiastical higher-ups, and the intelligence service of the French police. Therefore, the new management of *Emmaüs*, in addition to being entangled in ideological, institutional and personal conflicts, had to manage the problem of the "person of Abbot Pierre," without being able to explain the reasons why. Thus, in late 1957, with the complicity of the Catholic hierarchy, the management was led to place the founder in a Swiss psychiatric clinic—an action seen by the first companions as a real parricide—and, fearing that a scandal would break, to remove all substance from the *Association Emmaüs*, in order to transform it into a simple ectoplasm. This is the origin of the early autonomization of the principal activities, in the form of limited liability companies (for building social housing) and *loi 1901* (non-profit) associations (newspaper, communities, housing unions, etc.).

### **Internal and External Exit**

These painful events produced a variety of different attitudes. "Voice" being impossible, those wanting *Emmaüs* to be viable found themselves holding the reins of the organization in a position of paradoxical "loyalty," since their position was in fact unfaithful to the person of the founder. Those remaining fully faithful to the Abbot opted for the most part for internal exit by creating new structures. For example, Paul Desort, a key person in *Emmaüs* from its beginning, developed itinerant communities with their epicentre in Normandy; this was a symbolic as well as a geographical anti-centralization, going against the Paris headquarters and the main bastions of management thinking. Still others chose external exit, either individual or collective. For example, IRAMM (*Institut de recherche et d'action contre la misère mondiale*), then a gestating branch of humanitarian development, painfully tore itself away in 1957.

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<sup>12</sup> Abbé Pierre with Frédéric Lenoir, *Mon Dieu... pourquoi? Petites méditations sur la foi chrétienne et le sens de la vie*, Paris, Plon, 2005, p. 26.

The creation of ATD Fourth World is an atypical case of external exit, because it is not much related to this tangle of problems. It took root in the slums of Noisy-le-Grand, where those not rehoused in 1954 were crammed together in appalling conditions. The arrival in 1956 of Father Joseph Wresinski, with his dynamic and innovative anti-aid ideas, was a turning point. This time, with opposition motivated not by the person of Abbot Pierre but by *Emmaüs'* disastrous management, “voice” became possible; its actualization led to the 1961 split and the creation of an independent association.

## II. MATURATION AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS (1960s-1970s)

For every organization where we have had access to the archives, regardless of its ideological cast,<sup>13</sup> the 1960s-1970s are marked off by the context (the prosperity of the “Thirty Glorious Years” that reconstructed the forms of poverty and precarity; the opening to humanitarianism in emergencies and in economic development; “the 1968 moment”<sup>14</sup> and the “Catholic crisis”<sup>15</sup>), which introduced conflicts that had more ideological substrata. Added to this in almost every case was the problem of a nascent professionalization, with new clashes on the definition and place of activism.

### The Politicization of the Religious

Though they are often seen as archetypes of contemporary de-ideologization and of the abandonment of traditional structural meta-narratives (religious or political), in fact almost all humanitarian and solidarity organizations have roots in religion. Often charitable at the outset they underwent a politicization that was a source of tension in the 1960s-1970s.

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<sup>13</sup> *Secours Populaire* (Communist), *Emmaüs* (Catholique), *Cimade* and *Mission Populaire* (Protestant).

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, *Le moment 68: Une histoire contestée*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Denis Pelletier, *La crise catholique: Religion, société et politique en France (1965-1978)*, Paris, Payot, 2002.

That was what happened with the *Mission Populaire* (MP) and the *Cimade*,<sup>16</sup> advanced “social wings” of French Protestantism in agreement on the resounding text *Églises et pouvoirs* (“*Churches and Powers*”) published by the Fédération Protestante de France in 1971.<sup>17</sup> For both of these associations, the 1960s-1970s were years of deep “leftist” politicization, with a new willingness to take a radical approach to East/West and North/South relations of domination. From this came a new approach to the Bible, looking through the lens of human equality, and of liberation from relations of domination. From this politicization there also arose rapprochements with Marxism, which manifested themselves internationally *via* “theologies of liberation,”<sup>18</sup> as well as nationally *via* the Union of the Left and solidarity with immigrant workers, seen as emblematic of exploitation. This development, albeit prominent, was not general in all associations, which from then on became places where there was a coexistence, though also a confrontation, among activists of various descriptions, ranging from traditional local Protestants also engaged in diaconal work, to Catholics, to non-Christians and nonbelievers, *via* Protestants who had doubts or had actually broken away; from followers of the French Communist Party to those of the “Second Left;” and from advocates of politicization to those who took refuge in relying on faith alone.

This passage from identifying with charity to identifying with left-wing politics also appeared in Catholic organizations: CCFD (*Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement* [Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development], created in 1961),<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> On the *Mission Populaire*, see Jean-Paul Morley, *La Mission populaire évangélique 1871-1984: les surprises d'un engagement*, Paris, Les Bergers et les Mages, 1993; and at the local level, Axelle Brodiez, *Le Picoulet: Un siècle d'histoire, de l'œuvre missionnaire protestante au centre social*, unpublished report, 2008. On the *Cimade*, see my communication, “La Cimade entre religion et politique (1939-1995), ou les substrats idéologiques de l'humanitaire,” in a book edited by Dzovinar Kevonian to be published in 2012 by Presses universitaires de Paris-Ouest.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Baubérot, *Le pouvoir de contester. Contestations politico-religieuses autour de 'mai 68' et le document 'Eglise et pouvoirs'*, Genève, Labor et Fides, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> See especially Michaël Löwy, *La Guerre des dieux: Religion et politique en Amérique latine*, Paris, Éditions du Félin, 1998, and Olivier Compagnon, “L'Amérique latine,” in Jean-Marie Mayeur, Charles and Luce Piétri, and André Vauchez et Marc Vénard (eds.), *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, tome XIII, Paris, Desclée, 2000, pp. 509-577.

<sup>19</sup> Denis Pelletier, “1985-1987: une crise d'identité du tiers-mondisme catholique?” *Le Mouvement social*, no. 177, October-December 1996, pp. 89-106. On the early days of the CCFD, see the works of François Mabilie.



*Frères des Hommes* (in 1965),<sup>20</sup> FASTI (*Fédération des associations de solidarité avec les travailleurs immigrés* [Federation of Associations for Solidarity with Immigrant Workers], in 1967), and others. Abbot Pierre himself, who no longer directed the French *Emmaüs* structures, and who was considered *persona non grata* by some in the association, also opted for a kind of internal exit, when he threw himself into the development of *Emmaüs* outside of France, with the creation of *Emmaüs International*. Here too there were conflicts between groups advocating the charity conception (Switzerland, Canada, Japan and elsewhere) and those favouring acceptance of politicization, mainly in Latin America (liberation theologies) and Sweden (Marxism); between the two, the silent majority opted for the compromise position favoured by the founder.

### **Nascent and Controversial Professionalization**

Added to this was the issue of nascent professionalization,<sup>21</sup> as with the *Mission Populaire* (MP) and the *Cimade*, both of which entered the second half of the 1970s in open crisis. Indeed, in the 1960s-1970s these two Protestant organizations had growing numbers on their payrolls—resulting in a reversal of the traditional balance of power favourable to elected staff (because of the entry of permanent staff into management)—and an increasingly precarious financial balance, in the end bringing these organizations to the brink of collapse. Although this pressure was contained in the MP, it broke into the open at the *Cimade*, with a strike (1977) and then a lawsuit by two former members of the team (1978-1980) in which the organization was finally successful. The tension having broken out, it had the saving virtue of acting as a regulator, leading to the departure of the most hostile people, and a new cohesion built around less radical lines.

Professionalization was also dissensual in *Emmaüs*. It had been accepted from the outset by the advocates of the “ethic of responsibility,” giving birth in 1958 to the *Union centrale des communautés Emmaüs* (UCC: *Central Union of Emmaüs Communities*); it later appeared

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<sup>20</sup> Sabine Rousseau, “Frères du Monde et la guerre du Vietnam: du tiers-mondisme à l'anti-impérialisme (1965-1973),” *Le Mouvement social*, no. 177, October-December 1996, pp. 71-88; Michel Christolhomme, *La soif de servir. Armand Marquiset, 1900-1981*, Paris, Fayard, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> This article is too short to go into the sociological debates about professionalization. For some of its aspects, see Axelle Brodiez, “Gérer sa croissance: le cas des associations de solidarité et humanitaires depuis les années 1940,” *Entreprises et histoire*, no. 56, September 2009, pp. 73-84.

increasingly inevitable to partisans of the “ethic of conviction” in the *Union des communautés et amis d’Emmaüs* (UACE: Union of the Communities and Friends of *Emmaüs*, created in 1962). Hence in the 1970s, in the context of the revival of communitarian utopianism, and the proliferation of commitments, splits in UACE gave birth to two new “families” of communities: “Liberty” (favouring small communities and anti-authoritarian ideas) and “Fraternity” (developing on the contrary very large communities focused on non-salaried workers, in a utopia of equality between hosts and guests). There were some communities that refused to adhere to one of these four sets; in the mid 1990s a change in the by-laws compelled their affiliation, finally giving birth to three families: “Independents A” (which was to become “Sharing”), “Independents B” (“Welcoming and Living”) and the Federation of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

### **Personal Conflicts and Clashes between Egos**

Missing in this account of two types of casualties is a significant part of what is fought over in many associations, in personal, territorial and ego conflicts. At *Emmaüs*, although the ethic of responsibility trend extends to important figures only locally, the ethic of conviction has no dearth of outsized egos resentful of hierarchical subjection. While UACE’s Liberty (with communities situated mainly in the Paris region), Fraternity (Poitou), and groups in the North certainly each have their own political, religious and community views, they are nonetheless and above all creations respectively of Paul Desort, Henri Le Boursicaud, Yves Godard and Father Léon, the regional charismatic substitutes for the absent Abbot Pierre. And this had the blessing of the latter, who saw in it not a threat to his authority—which in France was now only symbolic and tutelary—but a handy device for resolving conflicts: internal exit made it possible to retain in *Emmaüs* strong and creative personalities who otherwise would defect.

These ego clashes and territorial disputes also have less mentionable motives—which at the time were not mentioned—such as the embezzlement committed by Abbot Pierre’s first right-hand man, whose opaque management made it possible for him for a long time to spend *Emmaüs* funds to pay for his gambling addiction, mistresses, and purchases of jewelry for them.

### III. INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PROBLEMATIC CONFLICT (Since the 1980s)

The years 1977-1985 were pivotal for the associations studied here. They saw the passing of some of the founders: Bishop Rodhain (*Secours Catholique*) in 1977, Armand Marquiset (*Petits frères des Pauvres* and *Frères des Hommes*) in 1981, Father Wresinski (*ATD*) in 1988. This prospect was also looming at *Emmaüs*, with Abbot Pierre revealing that he had Parkinson's disease in 1982, the same year that his faithful secretary Lucie Coutaz died. These years also marked the high point of ideological conflicts, which sometimes left these associations battered and then induced in them very clear desires for peaceful settlements.

#### **Institutionalization, Managerialization and Monolithism**

With the growing budgets (subsidies by the French state, Europe and local governments; growth in private giving, thanks to a favourable fiscal policy; and corporate sponsorships) and media coverage (of activities but also of scandals, such as at ARC [*Association pour la recherche sur le cancer*] in 1995), managerial amateurism and fantasies became unsustainable. Increasingly audited<sup>22</sup> and summoned to produce ever more detailed accounts and reports, solidarity associations hastened to professionalize their head offices after having given attention to their local offices in the 1960s-1970s. This did not take place without recurring tensions between elected activists and professionals, each of these claiming different kinds of legitimacy. In some associations, such as *Secours Populaire*, the problem was got around by the presence of activists (often communists) in strategic salaried positions, which made it possible to reconcile the two approaches. At the *Fondation Abbé Pierre* (with more socialist leanings), the resolution occurred because of the maintenance of a skilful balance between firm professionalization and highly visible tribune-like activist roles.

Meanwhile, the necessity of presenting a well-managed public image led to high-profile presidents (for example, Geneviève Anthonioz-de Gaulle at ATD-Forth World from 1964 to 2001, Martin Hirsch at *Emmaüs France* from 2002 to 2007, and Patrick Peugeot at the *Cimade*

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<sup>22</sup> By the *Cour des comptes* [Court of Auditors], the *Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales* [General Inspectorate of Social Affairs] and others.

since 2006), corresponding to more monolithic façades. At the end of 1985 the *Emmaüs* groups were stamped into producing a new organization that works simultaneously as an umbrella, a conciliator, and an interface: *Emmaüs France*. After that, the 1990s-2000s were a time of colossal discussions about simplifying the organization chart (federation or confederation? two or three branches? federal or regional structures? etc.) and making everyone “get into line”—hence the recent dissolution of the “seven families” of communities, and a decreasing tolerance of strong personalities.

In this context of institutionalization, any internal conflict may indeed resound externally as something disreputable; hence there arise strategies to avoid and to quell conflicts. In fact, for the last couple of decades, compared to the 1940s-1970s, conflicts in associations have appeared remarkably few in number. Conversely, those that do break out get noticed, for example those that rocked the *Emmaüs Association* at Paris, especially the two big strikes of 1991 and 2010. With the number of salaried staff rising from around thirty in the mid-1980s to more than five hundred, almost exclusively on the basis of public subsidies, the association has experienced an exponential growth in which activity generates the means and the payroll, which in turn generate more activity—thus, there has been a circle (whether it has been virtuous or vicious is not clear), with intermingled tugs between professionalization and activism, as well as between outsourcing and governmental “goading.”

### **Final Conflicts Related to the Founder**

Also appearing on the scene in the 1980s-1990s were the last conflicts surrounding the founder, which were reminiscent of the first ones. In 1990-1994 Abbot Pierre supported the activities (from the *Place de la Réunion* to the *Rue du Dragon*) of DAL (*Droit au logement* [Right to Housing]), a small and media-savvy activist organization devoted to defending homeless and undocumented people.<sup>23</sup> Here the old man returned to his first commitments: the housing theme, squats, commando actions, radical political language, defending right against law. In contrast, the institutionalized organizations of *Emmaüs* favoured responsibility and

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<sup>23</sup> On the origins of DAL, see Cécile Péchu, *Droit au logement: Genèse et sociologie d'une mobilisation*, Paris, Dalloz, 2006.

compromise, and stigmatized the distribution of roles—the spotlight and political speeches going to DAL and Abbot Pierre, leaving to *Emmaüs* the difficult and less visible “after-sales servicing” role of assisting and resettling mobilized families. In the Garaudy affair in 1996—Abbot Pierre getting stuck in his support for a friend’s book which denied the Holocaust, without actually having read it—the stakes were different but the reaction repeated the methods used in 1957-1958, only this time the Abbot was exiled not in a Swiss clinic but in an Italian monastery.

In other conflicts, the division was within *Emmaüs*, for example during the creation of the *Fondation Abbé Pierre*.<sup>24</sup> The only organization in *Emmaüs* to carry the name of the founder—also the only one to rely on donations, in a movement claiming to live off its work—the *Fondation* was nevertheless promoted by the Habitat branch of *Emmaüs* and supported by the eponymous founder. It gave *Emmaüs* a media boost in the field of housing, which had become gradually downplayed over the decades. Its first years were then a period of a partial and difficult takeover of the organization by *Emmaüs France*.

## CONCLUSION

Conflicts can be profoundly revealing in history, making apparent the nodes of tension, the clashing cultures and their evolution. In the 1960s-1970s, after an association childhood characterized by founding conflicts, came a phase of maturation, more ideological and/or related to professionalization; then, since the 1980s, came a phase of maturity, and a (pious) wish to avoid conflict. There will presumably be a fourth and final stage, that of old age and decay (which cannot be discussed here, since the associations in this study are today in their prime of maturity). Although conflict often seems mostly painful and harmful, establishing historical perspective nevertheless shows its virtues, as a catalyst to change, and for rebalancing and reweighting after organizational paroxysms. It is thus in part preservative, a sign of life but also quite simply a sign of internal democracy.

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<sup>24</sup> Created as an association in 1987, it became a foundation in 1992.