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The Gift as Colonial Ideology

Marcel Mauss and French Colonial Policy before and after the Great War

As Lygia Sigaud has claimed, among interpreters of *The Gift* there is a "general indifference to Mauss's preoccupations with rights and obligations"[1] – despite the fact that Mauss conceived of his essay as part of a broader exploration of the evolution of contractual law, the rules of commerce, and the making of international solidarity, which stems from the globalization of trade and finance. In so doing, Mauss continued his uncle's exploration of the "noncontractual elements of contracts,"[2] but at the same time he displaced his uncle's focus when studying the origins of solidarity. In contrast to Durkheim, who distinguished between a "mechanical solidarity," which he observed in "archaic" societies characterized by the absence of a division of labor in the sphere of production, and an "organic" solidarity, which he observed in societies with a higher level of division and complementarity between the various productive forces,[3] Mauss focused on the sites of exchange of goods and "prestations" to distinguish between various forms of international or intersocietal solidarity. With this move from production to exchange, Mauss no longer postulated that solidarity assumed the existence of a tightly bounded society within which individuals experienced solidarity.

After reading *The Gift*, Mauss's British colleague, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), had sensed – although he misunderstood it – the radical change of perspective from Durkheim to Mauss, when writing to Mauss in 1925 that:

> I have read your admirable article in AS [*L'Année sociologique*] proofs with great interest. Remarkably enough, I have come to very similar conclusions in working on the problem of law (now in print) . . . But as you no doubt realize, both you and I give the *coup de grâce* to Morgan's concept of clan unity – also emphasized by Durkheim. If *reciprocity* is the keynote of primitive sanction, it really relegates *solidarity* at best to the second rank. Your article disposes of 90% of [Durkheim's] *Division du travail social*.[4]

While Mauss would have certainly disagreed with Malinowski that the analysis of solidarity was anything different from the analysis of reciprocity, and that the former should be restricted to the analysis of "in-group solidarity" (as in studies of "clan

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unity"), it was true that his approach to solidarity (or what I would call "out-group solidarity") was different from Durkheim's perspective. Mauss was primarily interested in understanding an international process – or rather, an "intersocietal" phenomenon, as sociologists like Mauss claimed that not all societies had reached the national level of development – which he characterized as a system of gift exchange.

The idea that sociologists and anthropologists could study intersocietal solidarity, and that the latter could take many forms, not all of which corresponded to how solidarity was understood and experienced by modern nations, was in fact related to another little-known aspect of Mauss's essay, which is the relation between Mauss's reflections on the gift exchange and the changing contours of the new imperial ideologies that French colonial administrators delineated after 1919 when attempting to reform the relations between the French metropolis and its colonies. Until now, commentators of *The Gift* have paid little attention to the colonial context which foregrounded Mauss's reflections on international solidarity.[5] But now that we can read Mauss's manuscript *The Nation*,[6] thanks to the transcription conducted by Jean Terrier and Marcel Fournier, we can better understand how Mauss's reflections on solidarity related to debates about French interwar colonial policy, and the relationship between European solidarity and centrality on the one hand, and the search for global peace and progress on the other hand.

By looking at Mauss's analyses of systems of reciprocal exchanges in the colonial context, this chapter questions whether, and how, Mauss refined his analysis of contemporary international politics when the latter diverged from his (optimistic) normative model of gift exchange. In 1925, Mauss proposed a bold conclusion at the end of *The Gift*: that most systems of reciprocal exchanges of "prestations" lead to the recognition of a duty to give back, and thus increase the sense of solidarity between exchanging partners. But at the time Mauss published *The Gift*, the rise of anti-Semitism, which was associated in Germany with a discourse that targeted the reparations provisions of the Versailles Treaty, indicated that he might have been too optimistic. In this broad context, Mauss took a step back to understand how contemporary politics of international solidarity diverged from his normative model of gift exchange, and what hidden variable could explain the differences between predicted outcomes – that gifts between the exchanging partners are always repaid and that they strengthen international solidarity – and observed reality.

This chapter shows how Mauss reevaluated his normative and theoretical model of the gift to deal with the biggest international issue of the time: the relationship between European and imperial solidarity. In *The Nation*, Mauss provided a general framework for understanding the positive and negative effects of the reciprocal exchange of prestations between sovereign peoples in the context of the French interwar Empire. In many ways, this geographical refocus – or rather, this geographical extension – of Mauss's anthropology of the gift to the whole world led the solidarist thinkers, like Gide, Thomas, Jaurès, Oualid, and the longtime Minister of

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the Colonies, Albert Sarraut (1872–1962) to tackle one key issue which Mauss had not addressed in his 1925 essay: How do societies understand the contractual obligations stemming from gift exchanges when they present highly disparate levels of development (or in Mauss's terms, of "integration")? Must such contractual obligations be reciprocal, as Mauss claimed in *The Gift*? Or do societies across various levels of integration understand such obligations in different ways? Could the exchange of gifts accelerate the race to war, economic exploitation, and military occupation? Or could it still work as a buffer to prevent war and disintegration from erupting in this context?

By answering these questions, this chapter demonstrates how Mauss's anthropological writings in *The Nation* contributed to nuance his original vision on gift exchange published in *The Gift*. It proceeds as follows. First, it shows how Mauss's writings echoed those of influential interwar colonial reformers like Albert Sarraut and other "progressive" apologists of the French Empire, who sought to reform the Colonial Pact in the interwar period, and it traces the origins of their interwar reflections in the prewar criticisms raised by Albert Thomas, Jean Jaurès, and Charles Gide, among others, against the abuses of colonial subjects by the chartered companies. It centers in particular on the criticisms raised against the chartered companies in Congo which were voiced by the French Committee for the Protection and Defense of Indigenous Populations, in whose activities Mauss participated in the 1900s,[7] and by Mauss's socialist colleagues, like Jean Jaurès and Albert Thomas. Looking at these prewar debates gives an important insight into the socio-historical genesis of key concepts used by Mauss in *The Gift* (like "prestations," "gifts," or "generosity," "contractual gifts") and found in political discourses on colonial reform. It also highlights the continuities between the prewar and interwar struggles between intellectuals and colonial administrators in the colonial field: André Gide's famous 1927 denunciation of the exploitative practices of the chartered companies in the French Congo finds its origins there.

Then, the chapter shows how Mauss's reflections in *The Nation* inspired the doctoral students he gained after the creation of the Paris-based Institute of Ethnology. The preoccupation of Mauss's students for the effects of varying levels of integration on the working of gift exchanges was driven by the French Empire's colonial expansion, and the new reformist mandate that Mauss gave to the ethnologists and colonial administrators who came to work under his supervision. Mauss's students were sent to the colonies and other non-European contexts to assess the validity of his model of gift exchange when exchanges circulated within and across societies characterized by various levels of integration. Looking at the political and administrative battles in which Mauss's students were involved in the colonial field leads to the following conclusion: Mauss's model of gift exchange gave these young reformers a powerful theoretical incentive to treat as an empirical question – whether the French Empire had a positive effect on the integration of colonial societies – what many orthodox colonial administrators considered as a matter of

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unquestionable principled belief – that, indeed, it did have a positive influence. Mauss's influence led them to question the main assumption under which colonial administration operated, or at least, to doubt its universal validity. But it did not go as far as to encourage them to rebel against the French presence outside of Europe; far from it.

1 SOLIDARIST COLONIALISM: THE INTERWAR DEFENSE OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE

Before the Great War, France's President of the Council Georges Clemenceau had famously claimed that the French dream of colonial expansion was a mirage that distracted from France's military reconstruction and future revenge against Germany. Many intellectuals agreed, like Maurice Barrès (1862–1923) and Déroulède (1846–1914), who lamented that the Republic's colonial project consisted in replacing the "two sisters" of Alsace and Lorraine that France lost after the 1870 defeat with "twenty servants."[8]

But after the experience of the Great War, most French politicians had turned themselves into public apologists for colonialism. The French socialists in particular no longer saw in empire a dangerous terrain of war: this had been a serious concern, especially for Jean Jaurès, after Germany and France had clashed over the occupation of Morocco. But since the defeat of Germany in 1919, they believed that colonial expansion would go hand in hand with a permanent stabilization of national frontiers in Europe.[9] As Raoul Girardet writes, the colonial expansion "had given back on the promises placed in it"[10] during the Great War: not only did 30,000 Berbers fight for France in the Great War, as Maurice Barrès had predicted in 1911,[11] but about 1 million soldiers came from overseas to defend the French trenches against the German advances – and out of these million soldiers, which included the famous "Black force"[12] made up of colonial regiments from Senegal, one-fifth (more than 200,000) were killed in combat.

In the 1920s, among the left-wing parties, only the Communist party was thus clearly opposed to colonialism on principled grounds, and consistently denounced the socialists like Blum as "lackeys of imperialism," when the latter said, for instance, that he refused "to confuse the movement of liberation of oppressed peoples with the proletarian emancipation movement"[13] – a statement Blum made during the 1920 Congress of the SFIO, during which the communists seceded and formed their own party. From the opposite side of the political spectrum, only the most racist fraction among right-wing nationalists, such as Charles Maurras (1868–1952), continued to criticize France's engagement with non-European "races" outside of Europe in the interwar period.[14]

Policymakers and colonial reformers who reorganized the field of colonial practice in the 1920s believed that colonialism was not in itself an evil, but a force for good, especially if it accelerated the national integration of the colonial society and

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its future integration in a world of interdependent nations. They found much hope and promise in the fact that the Great War had dramatically intensified a sense of imperial solidarity among the metropolitan population and political parties: in particular, trade with the colonies had also dramatically increased after 1919. Where it corresponded to less than 13 percent of general foreign trade in 1913, twenty years later it had doubled, reaching almost 27 percent in 1933.[15]

Among these administrators and public intellectuals who came to dominate the French colonial field, the influential Minister of the Colonies, Albert Sarraut (1872–1962), publicized his views in two widely influential books: one published in 1923, and another in 1931, the year of the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris. Sarraut, who had spent the war as Governor General of Indochina, held the position of Minister of the Colonies from 1920 to 1924 (and from 1932 to 1933), as well as Minister of Interior from 1926 to 1928 (and from 1936 to 1938), during which period he was in charge of domestic affairs in Algeria (as Algeria fell under the Ministry of the Interior). Albert Sarraut and the colonial reformers like Marcel de Coppet (1881–1968), a friend of the Gides (particularly André, the novelist and nephew of Charles), wanted to turn the French Empire into the leader of a new solidarist experiment in colonialism.

As Sarraut wrote in two chapters, titled "The Colonial Obligation of France" and "The French Colonial Doctrine," based on lectures he gave in the mid 1920s before students of the Colonial School,[16] the French people were uniquely positioned to help non-European societies reach what US development theorists like Walt Rostow would later call a more "advanced stage of development."[17] Sarraut asserted that "Frenchmen are altruistic; their genius reflects a taste for the universal; their humanity, their sense of right, fairness and beauty foment the altruistic conceptions which they develop well beyond the national confines to expand to humanity as a whole their dreams of justice, solidarity and fraternal goodness." As he added, "Christian or secular, soldiers for the King or Republic, Frenchmen feel the obligation to give and to give oneself so that they can bring the lights of civilization to races less fortunate than theirs."[18] When Sarraut found evidence of brutal and egoistic exploitation in France's colonial history, it was only due to the "trial-and-error"[19] nature of France's colonial advancement, rather than French official state practice, which, to him, was interspersed with numerous examples of altruistic gifts and counter-gifts on both sides.

Sarraut's apology of French colonialism, which he mixed with calls for a policy of "generosity," explicitly asserted the moral superiority of French colonialism over that of the British and German: for him, what fundamentally distinguished the French national character from the Anglo-Saxon character was the rejection of the ideology of racial purity and superiority held dear by the latter.[20] As he told the students of the Colonial School, the colonial contract should no longer be characterized by an "act of force,"[21] as in the beginning of colonial expansion, but it had to become a "fact of law," almost a "total social fact" in Maussian language.

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In contrast to German law scholars like Carl Schmitt who rehabilitated the theory of *terra nullius* to justify why the European powers could claim a right to rule overseas territory,[22] Sarraut slayed the idea that the benefits that France should derive from the colonial relations derived exclusively from a right of first occupation – the act of "taking"[23] recognized at the Berlin Congress of 1885 in which the European great powers divided colonial possessions in the Congo – or that the duration during which that right should be exercised depended upon the commercial benefits that the metropolis could derive from the exploitation of the colony's riches.

Of course, this call for an altruistic form of colonial gift exchange represented a great departure from the French nineteenth-century justification of colonialism, which started with the loss of Haiti in 1825 and the subsequent invasion and pacification of Algeria after 1830, paid for by Haiti,[24] and which King Charles X justified with the necessity for France to extract from Algeria the agricultural products (cacao, sugar, etc.), which France could no longer extract from the lost colony of Saint Domingue. This economic motivation, as well as a military strategy that did not rule out extermination against the Regency of Algiers and the troops of Abd El Kader, had been associated with some problematic episodes in French colonial history, so did Sarraut timidly acknowledge, but this time of ruthless colonialism was over.

With the end of the Great War began a period of "reciprocal gifts" between the French metropolis and the colonies, as Sarraut believed: if the reality of colonial relations still proved the contrary, at least, the idea of a new colonial "contract" was widespread in the discourses of colonial high administrators as well as academics and colonial administrators. One can think of the writings of Hubert Lyautey (1854–1934), the famous General who pacified Northern Madagascar in the 1890s, and then the frontier between Morocco and Algeria in the early 1900s; or those of Georges Hardy (1884–1972), a friend of Lyautey and a former ENS student who defended a PhD thesis in history on the *mise en valeur* of Senegal; or in the public speeches of Hardy's successor as Director of the Colonial School, Robert Delavignette (1897–1976), who also worked with Lyautey and the Museum of Ethnology team on the organization of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition which celebrated a century of French colonialism in Africa.[25]

For these colonial reformers, progress in the European administration of the colonies could be made if the metropolis adopted a "giving colonialism"[26] truly inspired by the principles of a coherent solidarist doctrine. The gift, conceived in solidarist terms as an implicit contract between two political societies,[27] which were engaged in reciprocal exchange of "prestations," created obligations and duties for both. Applied to the colonial doctrine, the recognition of contractual rights meant that certain acquired colonial rights like property rights or the right of first occupation – those rights based on purely "dogmatic fictions," against which Sarraut opposed "living, positive and productive right"[28] – should be disregarded. Colonial powers had instead the obligation to pursue a "higher utility," as peoples

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everywhere had "a superior right which is the total right of the human species to live a better life on this planet, a life fuller of material and spiritual riches, which can be best achieved thanks to the solidary collaboration between races."[29] Against that "total right," the right of "first occupation" held no power, as a "right that prevents humanity from benefitting from its right of universal progress is not a right: no race, no people, has the right to egoistically cut itself off from the universal movement of life . . . as the whole of humanity has the right to live off the totality of natural riches dispersed on the globe."[30]

For Sarraut, since 1919, the French state no longer understood the colonial contract as an absolute "right of the most powerful" but as a "right of the most powerful to help the least powerful"[31] to extract the most of a territory's natural and human reserves for the benefit of all, including first and foremost those least powerful, but also other European nations. In fact, Sarraut explicitly related the development of the colonies with the making of a European order based on the Versailles Treaty in which European nations would cooperate with one another for the development of all. As Minister of the Colonies in 1920, he proposed a plan, which was rejected by the Parliament, in which aid to the colonies would be financed by the German reparations payments.[32] Of course, his plan was imperiled by the failure of the Germans to pay reparations in the 1920s, with the effect that grants-in-aid were not extended to the colonies, at least until 1930, when the French Parliament finally let the colonies float loans for a total of 5 billion francs – a decision, which as William Cohen writes, had the unwanted and unanticipated effect that the servicing of colonial debts soon "used up an excessive proportion of their budgets."[33]

Even if the record, in purely financial terms, proved that the French Republic had not been particularly generous with its colonies, as the indebted colonial treasuries (rather than the metropolis) paid a major share of administrative costs in French Africa, and the cost of economic development devolved to the colonies themselves to a greater extent in the French Empire than in the British one,[34] most French colonial administrators and intellectuals with a stake in the colonial field argued the contrary. Mauss was no exception. When he wrote *The Nation*, Mauss was a little bit less disingenuous than Sarraut in his analysis of French colonial history, as he pointed to specific moments when the French had spread racist ideologies, from Napoleon's time in Saint Domingue to the early twentieth-century practices of the French concessionary companies in the Congo,[35] but he remained in general an apologist of the French ability "to give" to its colonial subjects so as to create some form of positive solidarity.

Forever an optimist in his writings, Mauss was not far from agreeing with Sarraut that the French "honor derived from the fact that," against the ideology of racist superiority and the mercantilist inspiration of the Colonial Pact exemplified by the early British colonial enterprise (which doomed those peoples whom Sarraut called the "inferior races"[36] to an everlasting specialization in raw material extraction and

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agricultural labor), France was the first colonial power to understand the "human value of retarded races and its sacred obligation to respect and develop such human value."[37] The French interwar experiment in colonialism would prove that the "inferior races" could slowly join France in the joint management of all human affairs (not just raw material extraction but also industrial manufacture) without losing their singularity. For Mauss, there was reason to believe that a positive process of development had taken place under the experience of late French colonialism: as he wrote in *The Nation*, "whatever the crimes of imperialist colonization, it pushed away Barbary, war, slavery, and misery in important parts of the globe." He added, "it [is] still better for a Moroccan to be governed by Frenchmen than by warlords, for the Arab to be under the British rather than Ottoman tutelage."[38] But was it, really? It is an understatement to say that contemporary historians strongly disagree with Mauss's assertion.[39]

2 THE NATION: MAUSS'S SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ABOUT FRANCE'S COLONIAL DESTINY

Mauss's biased perspective on the French Republic's experience with colonialism may be evidence of the association between anthropology and colonial apology – or an attempt to civilize colonialism to ensure its long-lasting presence – which has been condemned by postcolonial scholars like Talal Asad.[40] But before drawing any conclusion, it is worth pausing to try to understand Mauss's singular contribution to the debate about France's colonial destiny.

Reading Mauss's unpublished manuscript *The Nation* in parallel with Sarraut's essays, one cannot but be impressed by the complementarity of views between scholars and politicians involved in the colonial field on the issue of whether French colonialism could be characterized in terms of gift exchange between the metropolis and its colonies, and the related question of whether it had been good for the social, political, and economic development of the colonies. But whereas *The Gift* formulates an unequivocally optimistic view on the ability of gift exchanges to create solidarity between nations, the unpublished work which Marcel Mauss spent most of his time writing in the 1920s – the manuscript of *The Nation* – was much more careful when assessing the relationship between the two. What colonial administrators like Sarraut took as a matter of principled belief – that French colonialism was altruistic and beneficial to the colonies – Mauss considered an empirical question, which could be answered differently depending upon the various contexts in which the French Empire had extended its tentacles.

During the 1920s, as Jean Terrier and Marcel Fournier assert, if "Mauss insisted on the fundamental openness of societies, the porosity of social boundaries, and the circulation of goods and ideas . . . as exchanges express the 'constitutive mix [*mélange*] of all things, values, contracts and men,'"[41] Mauss considered that these exchanges of reciprocal "prestations"[42] between societies could have both negative

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and positive effects, depending on the types of "borrowings" (*emprunts* in French) that circulated from society to society (whether the latter concerned civilizations, techniques, aesthetics, religions, or legal forms),[43] and the structural elements present in the context of exchange. In *The Nation*, Mauss questioned whether colonialism (whether altruistic or not) had actually created political solidarity and community out of contractual exchanges across and between societies. The answer was unclear to him, or rather, not as clear as he had wanted it to be in *The Gift* – or as Sarraut, Lyautey, and other colonial apologists had claimed.

To answer this question, Mauss first needed a scale, a ranking, an index, or some form of benchmark that would allow him to decide whether colonial societies had moved up or down the ladder of development – or "integration" – as a result of gift exchanges between the French metropolis and themselves. In *The Nation*, Mauss thus proposed a general comparative and historical framework that allowed him (and later his students) to rank societies according to a gradation of neighboring "degrees of *integration*,"[44] so as to identify those systems of gift exchange which helped the exchanging partners move to a tighter degree of integration (a positive outcome, for Mauss), and those which harmed such integration (a negative outcome).

At the lowest level of integration, Mauss found what he called, after Durkheim, "poly-segmentary societies":[45] some of which lacked a permanent organization, and, like Melanesian or aboriginal Australian societies, only gathered as a whole during totemic ceremonies to celebrate rituals; some of which actually did present a slightly higher level of integration, as they benefited from permanent but not centralized political structures that checked the centrifugal forces of clans and extended families, like in the "tribal societies" of the North American or African continents (Sioux, Iroquois, or Bantu).

At the highest level of integration, Mauss placed the "nation," which characterized societies where intermediary bodies no longer buffered relations between individuals and the state, and where a strong sense of territorial boundaries limited the desire for imperial expansion. Such a conception of the nation conceived as a daily plebiscite, in the words of Ernest Renan (1823–1892), was quite in line with the French Republican definition. Not surprisingly, Mauss found that only two Western countries could claim the title of nations: France and the United States. In these two nations, "the two poles in the continuum of social beings, individuals and the society, symbolized by the state, face one another,"[46] and individuals only recognize the authority of the law of their own nation-state. Apart from France and the United States, Mauss asserted that even if "the surface of the globe [had] been vascularized"[47] by an explosion of exchanges between formally equal nations which were all members of the League of Nations, most political societies organizations could not be called nations in the proper sense.[48] In *The Nation*, Mauss "warned his contemporaries that there is a missing echelon in the ladder that the League of

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Nations placed upon the wall of history" to reach world peace: that of the "nation, which most societies [had] not yet arrived at."[49]

To these two poles of social organization, Mauss added an intermediary stage: "empires," where the force of integration had deepened (compared to tribal societies) under the increased presence of a central political authority, but not to the point of creating a centralized nation of individuals united by a common national consciousness as well as by their willingness to use the state as a means of political and social reform. Under the category of empires, Mauss listed "societies of Muslim law, Chinese law, Hindu law,"[50] as well as Tsarist Russia, ancient Greece, Egypt, Mexico, Germany, and colonial societies.

With this typology, Mauss thus proposed a vision of colonialism that was completely in line with the interwar version of the French colonial ideology. Indeed, the latter distinguished colonial societies by their different levels of integration. In turn, their level of integration left them more or less close to (national) autonomy, and determined their right to be decolonized or not. As Mauss had already written to the Minister of the Colonies in 1913, self-rule should be postponed to a more or less distant future, depending on the nature of colonial societies: he recognized that "populations in Algeria and the Tonkin could, to some extent, develop and prosper by themselves," but that "those in New Caledonia, the Congo, and elsewhere are completely dependent on our benevolent tutelage."[51] How colonial societies scored on the Maussian Index could thus affect the lives of millions.

But Mauss's typology of levels of integration could also be used to evaluate critically the effect of colonialism on colonial societies: Mauss judged whether the exchange of prestations between a metropolis and its colonies had positive (true gift) or negative (fake gift) effects by observing whether the exchange of prestations moved the colony closer to the model of the nation, in which individuals united around the celebration of a centralized authority within their society, or whether it led to the further fragmentation of societies and economic systems. Those systems of gift exchange which encouraged the formation of a national consciousness and the organization of national conglomerates were, for Mauss, those which had a positive influence on exchanging societies, whereas those that thwarted such process of national unification – including in the economic domain – were those which had a negative influence.

Mauss's implicit assumption was that "intersocietal" exchanges (rather than the organization of labor within closed societies) are the main drivers of history, responsible for how societies with varying degrees of integration co-evolved sometimes in tandem, sometimes in a contrapuntal manner. [52] For instance, Mauss claimed that the potlatch represented the trading practice and the specific understanding of customary contractual obligations by which poly-segmentary tribal societies had moved up to the level of quasi-empires,[53] as in the case of the large Native American empires, which Mauss's student Jacques Soustelle later studied in his doctoral thesis.[54] Thus, Mauss put forward a view of the potlatch radically opposed to that

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of British colonial administrators who had passed laws in Canada prohibiting Native Americans' exchange practices and defined harsh incarceration charges and fines against those guilty of practicing the potlatch – alleging that when Native Americans practiced the potlatch, they destroyed valuables, and thus violated central Protestant principles of individualistic wealth accumulation and capitalist discipline. What the Protestant missionaries abhorred, Mauss glorified.[55]

Still, Mauss found that systems of reciprocal exchanges did not always move exchanging societies closer to the national model of integration. Before the Great War, Mauss realized profoundly the destructive potentialities of the colonial project: as he had already written in 1902 to the Minister of the Colonies, "in order to be humane, colonial administration needed to respect and use local beliefs and practices so as to avoid a brutal confrontation" in the colonial encounter, "which he believed should only very gradually change the economic and technological regimes in place."[56] Mauss wrote that colonization could be "a hazardous project, costly in time and money, which ends up producing a disaster in civilizations as old as ours, and whose morality is as respectable as ours, and whose artistic forms are sometimes superior to ours."[57] This point is why he believed that the French Republic would fail its colonial subjects if it did not use as many people as possible ("missionaries, doctors, administrators, colonizers and indigenous *savants*")[58] to protect the living memory of these subjects and their culture, by collecting local artifacts to be displayed in museums, for instance.

In the non-European context, Mauss also found that the "privately owned chartered companies, working under the protection of European states, have monopolized the extraction of coal, rubber and oil" and had inhibited the ability of colonial exchanges to move colonies up the ladder of integration, "leading to a great resentment among the smaller nations."[59] These chartered companies did not help colonial societies coalesce around a central legitimate authority with which the local populations (of both European and non-European descent) could identify. On the contrary, Mauss wrote in *The Nation*:

> The Colonial State often appears to acquire the entirety of the product of the soil of the colonies, or the labor of the natives for a very small sum of money, or for nothing, or by raising taxes among the natives . . . The French colonies have long applied this principle to appropriate the means of import and export of the colonies exclusively to the benefit of their own capitalists, thus securing a place under the sun for them. There are some ugly things in the modern world.[60]

Mauss thus initiated in *The Nation* a normative reflection, which was absent from *The Gift*, but which was connected to the denunciation by colonial reformers of the old Colonial Pact between the colonial state and the chartered companies, whose exploitative practices (especially in extraction of raw materials like rubber) could lead to mass extermination or political rebellion if they brutally extracted all the social and natural resources of the French Empire. What we may call the

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"monopoly colonialism" of the chartered companies was an essential component of the "Colonial Pact," whereby the colonial subjects consumed metropolitan industrial products and extracted raw materials for the benefit of concessionary companies that had been awarded by the metropolis an exclusive monopoly over large portions of the colonies. Mauss found that the latter were thus maintained in a state of economic dependence due to their overspecialization in agriculture or raw material extractive economies.[61] Rather than opening colonial economies to the opportunities of global markets, Mauss criticized the fact that the colonial monopolies that flourished under the French state's authority produced effects that ran contrary to the "mandates" that the League of Nations had endowed to the French and British Empires after the Great War: e.g. to create, through cultural, social, and economic exchanges, the conditions through which colonial subjects could arrive at a developed stage where they could be given the authority to rule themselves in interdependence but also independence from the metropolis.[62]

At last, closer to Europe, Mauss accounted for the breaches in the recognition of reciprocal duties made manifest with the question of German reparations by the various levels of integration reached by different political societies in Europe, the relative newness of the collective experience of national consciousness in Europe, and the "permanence of dynasties of German descent" in German political life, which might still be influenced by "the traditions of the police state that characterized the Austrian or Russian model" of state formation.[63] Mauss found that the "persistence of upsetting elements" within European nations, like Germany, whose territorial boundaries and financial duties had been explicitly written in the Versailles Treaty, could explain why the German state had not benefited from its participation in a network of European neighboring nations to grow an open national consciousness.

In *The Nation*, Mauss thus focused on trade and financial forms of exchange as the main factor responsible for the development or contraction of a national consciousness within various historical – both European and non-European – contexts. This was a fine and ambitious intellectual program, which nonetheless failed to challenge the colonial mindset of the colonial administrators who glorified French colonialism. Indeed, by blaming mostly the chartered companies and the Anglo-Saxon or German imperial experiences, Mauss avoided raising the possibility that the French Republic bore an essential responsibility for the destruction of colonial societies – whether the state had put in place formal structures facilitating the economic exploitation of the colony, the establishment of settlers or the total annexation and assimilation of colonial subjects.[64] Mauss's perspective completely failed to take into consideration whether imperial state structures (and specific forms of constitutional organization) played a role in the maintenance of exclusion and fragmentation within colonial societies; and whether colonial societies should immediately declare their political independence or not. Mauss even wrote that he regretted that many political scientists and legal theorists, like Max Weber (whom

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he did not hold in high esteem),[65] confused the two notions of state and nation, and that they privileged the study of the former over the latter: for Mauss, the questions which related to political status (the constitutions and treaties through which sovereignty manifested itself) had less importance in asserting the positive or negative effects of colonialism than the question of the contractual ties and social obligations that stemmed from the organization of international economic exchanges between peoples.[66] As Mauss wrote in the introduction to *The Nation*, he did not consider the study of "problems of sovereignty, of the Constitution, of democracy, of the evolution of legislative or administrative powers,"[67] or the historical study of diplomacy and treaty-making practices, with emphasis on "secret, or rather, purely diplomatic and anti-democratic" practices of contracting,[68] to be relevant for the comparative study of various forms of national consciousness.

In this respect, his views strictly belonged to the interwar era, during which it was next to inconceivable that such an apparently robust colonial edifice as the French Empire of 100 million subjects could be destroyed in the near future; or that the decision to grant independence to France's colonies could come either from the colonial subjects themselves or from a quasi-supranational organization like the League of Nations. In fact, the political priority that Mauss assigned to the League of Nations was to bring its member states closer to one another, so that the League could become an association of "*neighboring nations*,"[69] in the scale of integration. Of course, Mauss admitted that there was nothing natural in this convergence: no superior law of history dictated that nations would move closer to each other as a result of increasing exchanges between them. As Mauss wrote in *The Nation*:

> it is clear that modern nations will not be able to reach a sufficient stage of internationalism necessary to guarantee a mutual peace until they succeed in giving one another material proof of relative disinterestedness [*désintéressement relatif*], in exchanging mutual services of all kinds, economic in particular. Perpetual peace, to the extent possible, can only be established among equally good and serviceable (if not idealist) nations, which agree to sacrifice a reasonable portion of their interests for one another.[70]

This was a dream worth pursuing still, and Mauss believed that the French nation could start implementing it with its colonial possessions.[71]

3 MARCEL MAUSS IN THE CONGO: THE LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY STRUGGLE OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMITTEE AGAINST THE CHARTERED COMPANIES

While the case of Marcel Mauss's relation to colonialism hardly falsifies Tal Asad's claim that the development of anthropology as a comparative science was deeply tied to the colonial mindset, the analysis of Mauss's ideas on the power of chartered

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companies also complicates it. In *The Nation*, Mauss condemned the chartered companies and their despicable practices of forced labor implemented without any state sanction, their dishonest financial tendencies which consisted in setting any cost they incurred against the budget of local governments, and the moral corruption that they entertained among the Parisian editorialists, politicians, and speculators who united to defend their role in the Colonial Pact. Indeed, Mauss saw in the "private appropriation, under the authority of the great [European] states, of many basic commodities necessary for the life of other nations (coal, oil)"[72] a deeply problematic development associated with modern industrial forms of colonialism. All of these factors led to the destruction of a spirit of national solidarity, both in the colony and in the metropolis.

That Mauss rehabilitated the normative model of gift exchange in modern political thought at the same time as he struggled against the power of the chartered companies may seem paradoxical to historians of political ideas. Indeed, since Harry Liebersohn's *The Return of the Gift*,[73] we now know that the circulation of gifts as the preferred mode of colonial governance was denounced precisely by those late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British philosophers who opposed the gift-giving practices of the chartered companies, like the East India Company.[74] Thus, it may appear surprising that the "return of the gift"[75] to theories of good government found its way through the writings of twentieth-century anthropologists who denounced precisely the same chartered companies.

This paradox, however, can be explained by Mauss's prewar involvement in the debate over the French chartered companies operating in the Congo. Their abuses were blatant in the case of the Congo, about which Mauss had collected secondhand information since 1900 in the context of his participation in a small but influential organization called the French Committee for the Protection and Defense of Indigenous Populations (hereafter, the Indigenous Committee), founded in 1892, which had ties with an associate organization, the Franco-Swiss League for the Protection of Indigenous Populations in the Congo, chaired by the novelist Anatole France, whom Mauss consulted on the topic of forced labor.[76] It was Mauss's participation in the Indigenous Committee that led him, maybe for the first time, to work alongside Charles Gide.[77]

In 1906, the Indigenous Committee addressed a letter (co-signed by Mauss) to the Minister of the Colonies, protesting the decision made by the General Government in the Congo "to reduce the productive capacity of the indigenous populations to two-thirds of the productivity of workers in the French concessionary companies."[78] For Mauss and other members of the Indigenous Committee, the decision revealed the complicity of the French administration in the Congo with the repressive policies of chartered companies whose only goal was to force the local population to work for them, whatever the costs for the region. The Indigenous Committee also denounced the French officials' toleration vis-à-vis the worst examples of forced labor and mass killings that were performed by the chartered companies in these

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regions. Indeed, the companies routinely organized "hostage camps"[79] of women to force their husbands into accepting deforestation labor, which men otherwise refused to perform.[80] This horrible practice, which led to the death of thousands of women due to malnutrition in the camps, was so widespread that it triggered an official investigation, led by the delegate of the Minister in the Congo, Savoyan de Brazza (1850–1905), who documented a wide range of mistreatment of colonial subjects by the chartered companies operating in the Congo. Mauss collected evidence from Brazza's secretary, Félicien Challaye (1875–1967), another ENS student close to Charles Péguy, who published regularly in Péguy's *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* – until the latter distanced himself from Jaurès and Mauss in 1906. Later, in 1911, Challaye continued to investigate and denounce the complicity of the Paris-based editorialists, industrialists, and politicians with the worst exploitative practices of chartered companies in the context of the N'Goko Sangha scandal,[81] providing arguments for the socialist parliamentarians gathered behind Jaurès – as described below.

In fact, their campaign against "chartered companies" and "trusts" operating in the Congo was truly transnational, as it involved many intellectuals and colonial officers across Europe who were revolted by the situation they witnessed on the ground: the British official Roger Casement (1864–1916) may have been the first to denounce officially the exploitation of the Congolese populations by the "trusts," whose only motivation was the appropriation of short-term gains at the expense of a long-term developmental strategy. The report on the Congo he wrote in 1903 contributed to the creation of the Congo Reform Association, which developed branches in the United States (1905), Switzerland (1909), France (1908, created by Challaye), Italy (1908), and Germany (1910).[82]

Thus, even if the association between gift exchange and the positive development of solidarity seemed to be unambiguously positive in *The Gift*, Mauss and some of the solidarist thinkers with whom he was associated in the Indigenous Committee were deeply aware that the exchange of "prestations" could be negative as well as positive, depending on other contextual elements, and specifically the motivations of the chartered companies in charge of developing the concessions.

In fact, the word "prestations," which Mauss used as an anthropological concept in his 1925 essay, was used by that very same Committee to refer to the labor practices that the chartered companies required from colonial subjects: in a letter signed in 1901 on behalf of the Indigenous Committee by Paul Viollet (1840–1914) – a historian of ancient law (from the Gauls' legal system to medieval customary laws) who long served as the librarian of the Paris Law school, where he met many specialists in colonial law – and addressed to the Minister of the Colonies, the Indigenous Committee asked the minister to "formally prohibit that any corporation in charge of public work in the colonies pay workers with another currency than the legal money"; that "any in-kind payment (especially in alcohol) would be strictly prohibited"; that the word "forced labor" [*corvée*], which brought up so many bad

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things, be replaced by the word "*prestation*" (or in English, "requisition"); and that "women could no longer be requisitioned for digging and earthwork" so as "to limit the number of abuses that have proliferated in Guadeloupe, New Caledonia, Indochina,"[83] and in the French parts of the Congo. In contrast to "forced" labor, the exchange of "prestations" had to have a "voluntary character." This did not mean that it should adopt the exact same contractual form as a "wage," but that its logic should not be purely exploitative – and that some "giving back" should be realized in the broader colonial context. In many ways, we find here the earliest trace of Mauss's famous definition of the "reciprocal prestations" discussed in *The Gift* in which Mauss stressed their "voluntary character, apparently freely given, yet coercive and interested."[84]

In this context, the same socialist thinkers who, a few years before, had stood against the accusers of Alfred Dreyfus, like Jean Jaurès and Albert Thomas (who later tried to use his influence as the first director of the ILO to prohibit forced labor in the early 1930s),[85] expressly related the fight for Dreyfus and the fight against forced labor. As a result, in 1906, the League of Human Rights (Ligue des droits de l'Homme), which they had created during the Dreyfus affair, declared itself to be the "tutor of the rights of the indigenous populations,"[86] and worked to publicize their campaign against chartered companies.

While Charles Gide and Marcel Mauss remained private in their condemnation of the chartered companies from the Indigenous Committee to the Minister of the Colonies, Jaurès and Thomas took a much more public stance, especially during a scandal that involved the N'Goko Sangha Company,[87] which had obtained a concession in the French Congo in 1899. The N'Goko Sangha case exposed the reality of colonial administrative practices, which was all the more unfortunate in the region where Mauss claimed, in a 1913 letter to the Minister of the Colonies, that the colonial subjects needed most a benevolent and enlightened colonial administration: the Congo.[88]

The socialists first rebelled by denouncing the commercial and labor policies of that company on the ground. As the French local administrator in Gabon had written in 1908 to his governor in a letter transmitted to Albert Thomas, the existing system of exchange between chartered companies and local colonial subjects in the Congo did not benefit the latter at all, largely because of its reliance on in-kind payments, which did not follow any useful function. At the time, the company paid its local colonial workers with overpriced "gun powder, which was the main currency used by the *Pahouins* to pay the bride's dowry," and "which was under the exclusive monopoly of the Company":[89] this situation thus allowed the company to fix whatever price (calculated in hours worked for the company) it wanted for that good, whose sale was in fact prohibited by other European chartered companies in the Congo region, as it had the obvious disadvantage of arming local populations – even if it also allowed them to build families.[90] Echoing the demands made by the Indigenous Committee, Thomas proposed that the French state should impose the

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"obligation for companies to pay indigenous populations in cash and money" rather than in kind.[91]

Mauss's socialist friends in Parliament also criticized the financial montages that the French investors organized in order to make the colonial subjects pay for the oppressive practices which were imposed upon them and from which they suffered. In so doing, they prefigured in part Mauss's distinction between exploitative short-term practices driven by utility-maximizing private agents and the logic of honor found in the exchange of real (as opposed to fake) gifts.[92] Jaurès criticized in Parliament the short-term logics of economic exploitation in the colonies and the financial hypocrisy of the colonial apologists who indebted future generations of colonial subjects by having them pay for these colossal and unwanted projects. As Jaurès said in 1911, France's financial policy with the colonies "consists in hiding the real costs of France's colonial policy by multiplying threefold, sometimes fivefold the taxes levied on local populations, and by accumulating local debt, paid at interest rates which are highly profitable" to the French capitalists, "so as to fund large expenses in big public construction works – the construction of roads and railways which serve no apparent function when much more needed irrigation systems are neglected – whose costs are placed on the accounting books of local governments."[93]

With the N'Goko Sangha Company, the financial scandal took an even more extreme form, as the company obtained a formidable sum of money (to be paid by future generations of colonial subjects) thanks to an arbitration procedure denounced by Thomas, Jaurès and others. Indeed, the company, acting like a modern-day vulture fund – like those which recently sued the country of Argentina in New York courts after the restructuring of the Argentinian debt through an obscure clause known as *pari passu*[94] – asked the general government of French East Africa to pay reparations for its failure to enforce the monopoly over the exploitation of rubber. This monopoly had been extended to the company in the French Congo in 1899. Less than ten years later, the company lawyers claimed that the company had suffered from the exploitation of latex trees by German companies located in the same territory, in violation of its rights of exclusivity,[95] due to the French state's 1908 swap of large territories granted to the company in the Congo and Cameroon with the German state. Indeed, they claimed that, after failing to secure the border between the French and German territories in the Congo and South Cameroon, the French colonial administration had let German factories return on the N'Goko Sangha company's territory after 1905, and that the German companies had proceeded to even greater forest destruction in retaliation for the (undelivered) threat of legal proceedings by the company in Germany.[96] Thus, in 1910, the N'Goko Sangha company requested the formidable sum of 6 million francs in reparations from the French state, including 1.5 million for torts suffered before 1905 and 4.5 million for torts suffered after the swap of lands in Congo and Gabon. The arbitration tribunal, where André Tardieu sat as the company representative

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and Martial Merlin (1860–1935), Governor General of French East Africa, represented the French state, found a compromise by awarding to the company 2.3 million francs, which were placed on the accounts of the general government of French East Africa.[97]

For the socialists sitting in Parliament, the arbitration case was a grotesque travesty of the reality of the colonial practices on the ground. The fact that such a company could receive reparations from the French government in East Africa meant that the colonial subjects were exploited twice: first by being coerced into almost-unpaid forced labor, and second by forcing their children to reimburse the debt created by the local government's payment of reparations to the company. As Marcel Labordère (1870–1946), an economist, trade cycle specialist, and a friend of Thomas, wrote to the latter, the arbitration of the N'Goko Sangha case was a complete setup from the start. The N'Goko Sangha Company extracted wealth and profit from legal action against the state and from the organization of public campaigns which hid the fact that the company had failed to fulfill its developmental obligations. Indeed, when the French state first gave compensation to the company in 1905 (by giving concessionary rights on millions of hectares in Gabon in exchange for the de facto loss of forests in Congo), the company had the choice to "either [accept] the gift as it was" and knowingly decide to fight the German economic competition in the new Gabonese territory by investing economically, or to use the new territory, where there was a known German presence, as an opportunity to "seek even more profit by means of further legal action against the State."[98] By choosing the latter strategy, the company not only proved to be ungrateful (as it did not consider the economic potential of the millions of hectares on which it had gained concessionary rights), but it also proved to be extremely deceitful, as from the start it had planned to use "an arsenal of legal means which, conveniently deployed by a reserve of friendly forces, could help it make profit in the vast field of reparations claims at the expense of the national interest."[99] This strategy was twofold: first, the company abandoned its claims in German courts,[100] where it lacked the support of powerful voices to pressure the courts to obtain a favorable settlement; second, it moved to the French courts where it counted on "friendly forces"[101] within the Colonial Party. These influential voices included Victor Augagneur (1855–1931), the Governor of Madagascar in 1904 and then Resident-General in Tunisia who has long been a socialist member of Lyon's municipal Council, before turning into the apostle of massive investment in rail and road construction work.[102] It also included legal experts such as Henry Berthélemy (1857–1943), a colleague of Augagneur at the municipal Council of Lyon, who served as legal expert in the N'Goko Sangha arbitration case.[103] It also comprised the powerful voice of André Tardieu, who wrote positively in the press about the arbitration procedure in which he took part to protect the private interests of the company.[104]

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For Jaurès, these conflicts of interest, which were characteristic of Tardieu's multipositionality for instance, combined with "the lack of parliamentary control of arbitration procedures," proliferated in "colonial affairs in general."[105] Indeed, before becoming a leading voice in the reparations debate, Tardieu was a parliamentarian and an editorialist at *Le Temps*, as well as representing the company in the arbitration procedure. In the very critical words of Jaurès, he helped chartered companies "earn money by stealing from the State's budget rather than by making profit out of its economic activities."[106] This multipositionality at the intersection between the metropolitan and colonial fields of power – that characterizes the way "*compradores*"[107] operated in Europe as well as in many other countries from the Global South – turned ministers into "the servants of obscure and occult forces" which "organized the hunt for reparations"[108] by predatory companies who lived off colonial taxes (present and future).

The announcement of the award granted by the arbitration tribunal to the N'Goko Sangha Company so much infuriated Albert Thomas, who sat on the Budgetary Commission of the French Parliament, and Maurice Viollette (1870–1960) – a young solidarist from the radical socialist party, whom Mauss had known before the war, and who later served as Governor General of Algeria in the interwar period before he became Léon Blum's Minister of Interior in 1936 – that both Thomas and Viollette asked for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to annul the whole arbitration procedure.[109] For them, the scandal implicated too many French politicians within the Colonial Party, whose practices were reminiscent, at least to Albert Thomas, of the worst manipulations revealed during the Dreyfus affair. Indeed, noticing that "the N'Goko Sangha company had presented secret documents which were not communicated to the State" during the arbitration procedure, Thomas wrote that the "State had been condemned to pay a sum which it didn't owe, based on secret documents, just like in the Dreyfus affair."[110]

These prewar scandals are particularly interesting because they clearly illustrate the stark differences between the singular position that French anthropologists occupied in the metropolitan and colonial fields of power, compared to anthropologists in other European countries. For instance, British anthropologists and colonial administrators who were members of the London Anthropological Society, wore double hats as ethnographers and propagandists of the dubious financial instruments by which concessionary companies were financed to develop far away territories in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.[111] As Marc Flandreau has recently showed, the London-based development of learned societies, which operated in the shadow of the London stock exchange, provided colorful description of distant tribes to future bondholders of concessionary companies in charge of administering these new subjects, and certified the claims of these companies before a gullible public. In this context, British ethnographers and anthropologists found a new social purpose, far from the disinterested pursuit of knowledge in the academic chapels of higher learning: British ethnography and anthropology were then used to certify

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the financial worth of colonial projects sponsored by London-based learned societies, where stock brokers, investors, and indeed anthropologists met and discussed the worth of various ethnicities for developmental (and thus financial) purposes.[112]

In contrast, French anthropologists who gathered around Mauss remained armchair academics, who didn't claim to know such distant territories as the Congo, but who used the social capital and access to media that they had accumulated during the Dreyfus affair to fight against the avatars of the British anthropologists, propagandists, and financial crooks who operated from Paris. Marcel Mauss and his socialist friends in Parliament fought against the chartered companies who claimed to develop regions when in fact, their only source of revenue was the extortion of French taxpayers under threat of litigation. Even if neither Jaurès, nor Thomas, nor Mauss contested the principle that France had a civilizing mission in the non-European world,[113] and that the exchange of gifts was a priori a useful way to think about the economic development of, and political solidarity between, the metropolis and the colonies, they denounced the reality of colonial practices on the ground that involved a perversion of gift exchanges. Their fight against vulture funds and their sponsors, agents, and other propagandists operating from the national parliament and Paris-based press organs, thus demonstrates an important difference in the way anthropology developed in London and in Paris.

4 THE INTERWAR FIGHT AGAINST THE FRENCH CHARTERED COMPANIES IN THE CONGO

In the pamphlets, addresses and letters written by French socialists before the Great War, these words – "gift" or "prestation" – functioned as positive markers of the French mission in Africa: what these public intellectuals placed in the pillory was the failure by chartered companies to uphold the ideas of honor that had justified why such companies had been granted public powers in the first place. As Thomas explained in the National Assembly in 1911, chartered companies like the N'Goko Sangha Company should lose their concessionary rights when it was blatant that they failed to honor their promise to invest in developing the region – the counter-gift that chartered companies had to give back in exchange for their concession, to live up to the ideals of altruistic colonialism (and the very reason "why the French state granted concessions to these companies in 1899").[114] Indeed, "concessions were meant to encourage chartered companies to effectively administer large territories"[115] in the absence of state and military support. That chartered companies behaved like the worst capitalists showed that they did not understand how gift exchange between solidary societies should be practiced – which may be one reason why Mauss undertook to describe such "ideal" rules of gift exchange in his 1925 essay.

After the Great War, such intrepid proposals actually found their way in Mauss's manuscript *The Nation*. Indeed, anticipating the wave of nationalization of French private companies that followed the Second World War in France – when, as in the

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case of the car manufacturer Renault, the decision to nationalize the company was a sanction against the collaborationist behavior of the owners and top management – Mauss also advocated the nationalization of chartered companies which did not honor their debt to the metropolitan and colonial societies.[116] He wrote eloquently in favor of the creation of socially and democratically controlled monopolies (wholesales) in charge of the administration of the vast sectors of the economy presently controlled by the chartered companies.[117] Such nationalization could pave the way toward harmonious development if it followed certain rules.

First, the notion of "nationalization" needed to dissociate the "nation" from the "state." The nationalization that Mauss advocated differed from the "state socialism" embodied by the Bolshevik Revolution, as nationalization was not purely state control of capital, but rather the "social" control of capital. Second, "the term nationalization implied that only societies having reached the national stage in the life of societies could logically and practically decide to nationalize something."[118] Third, the term "nationalization is associated with the ideas of organization, justice and legality which are absent from the term of socialism."[119]

Apart from the fact that the last sentence represented quite an extraordinary statement from someone who had claimed to cofound the SFIO, one can remark that Mauss mentioned these ideas of legality and justice, but he did not explicitly discuss the question of whether a just compensation would need to be paid to the private holders of capital at the time of the nationalization. For him, a private chartered company should indeed lose its right to exploit the soil in distant colonies if they failed to exploit to the fullest extent the resources of colonies in an altruistic fashion, as Albert Thomas had claimed was the case of chartered companies that behaved like the N'Goko Sangha Company – e.g. exploiting the French legal system and the colonial subjects, without any regard for the collective good of either the metropolis or the colony.

When the reality defied this utopia, the solidarists, socialists, and other colonial reformers gathered around Sarraut, Mauss, and Blum did not hesitate to denounce the power of "trusts" and other chartered companies after the Great War. As Sarraut was writing his book, *Colonial Grandeur*, and Mauss *The Nation*, the exploitative practices of the chartered companies had not disappeared – far from it. The extractive companies which operated in African colonies – in Senegal, extracting peanuts; in the Ivory Coast, cocoa and coffee; in Eastern Africa, rubber and cotton – requested unrealistically high production quotas, which local French administrators obtained by imposing forced labor and higher taxes as well as harsh sanctions in case of noncompliance. This Stakhanovist system most often led to direct wealth destruction: for instance, in the late 1920s in the Ivory Coast, African colonial subjects went to British-controlled Gold Coast to buy the cotton that they were required to, but could not, produce, so as to avoid being sanctioned.[120] Thus, the battle against private interests still raged among the French colonial reformers

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interested in jump-starting the economic development of colonies, especially in Africa.

In fact, the same network of solidarists and socialists who had denounced the practices of the N'Goko Sangha Company before the war continued to denounce similar abuses by the chartered companies that continued in the Congo. In the mid 1920s, Charles Gide's nephew, the novelist André Gide, traveled to the Congo with his companion Marc Allégret on invitation by the local governor, Marcel de Coppet, who became the leading advocate against the exploitation of colonial subjects by the large extractive companies: this time, the target was the Compagnie forestière Sangha-Oubangui, whose stocks were ornamented with the orientalist drawing of a young Black Amazon and elephants' ivory tusks, as represented in this book's cover. This was the last French chartered company, whose privilege extended until 1935. If we believe Gide's report, rather than representing the young and proud Congolese girl standing with a spear in her hand, as if ready to defend her territory, a more realistic representation would have showed her back broken by long hours spent collecting and transporting the rubber for the company.

André Gide first published in 1927 his famously critical report on the Congo's French chartered companies, as articles in *Le Populaire*, the journal edited by Léon Blum (Gide's best friend in high school), which by the late 1920s reached more than 100,000 readers, and then as a book – which Blum reviewed extensively in two articles published in *Le Populaire*. Like Mauss and Sarraut, Gide refrained from attacking the principles of human solidarity which, according to them, inspired French colonial policy in the interwar period: he lauded many colonial administrators like de Coppet who advanced French civilization and engaged in honest exchanges with local populations, whose living standards they helped raise by abolishing unpaid prestations in the form of forced labor.[121] He limited his denunciation to the abuses he saw perpetrated against local populations by exploitative capitalistic endeavors (in the form of forced labor, mass repression against the evasion of absurdly high taxes, etc.),[122] and by judicial trials against local populations trying to escape forced labor: in particular, he denounced the chartered company in charge of building the railway, the Compagnie forestière Sangha-Oubangui, for systematically relying on forced labor (imposed on women especially) to generate more profits. Thus, Gide's denunciation, written by a Nobel laureate in literature, was framed in the exact same terms as found in the letters sent by the Indigenous Committee before the war, or in the parliamentary attacks against the N'Goko Sangha Company expressed by Thomas.

Interestingly, Gide also remarked that the conditions of forced labor were disguised in the same language of "prestations"[123] which the Indigenous Committee had advised the Minister of the Colonies to use, and that Mauss used in his essay on *The Gift* to identify gift exchanges. Gide was not the only one to condemn the inflated level of "prestations" that the French administration in the Congo required from the colonial subjects yearly: in 1919, as William Cohen writes, "it was estimated

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that in order to collect enough rubber to yield the tax money designated as prestation, the inhabitants had to work between sixty and one hundred and twenty days a year, depending on the area in which the rubber was collected."[124] Thus, even if the administration no longer used the word "*corvée*," but had followed the recommendation of the Indigenous Committee to the Minister of the Colonies to use "prestation" instead, the practice had not changed much compared to the 1900s. And although they explored both the negative and positive aspects of reciprocal relations known as "prestations," albeit through different formats, neither Gide nor Mauss were completely unaware that such reciprocal exchanges of gifts and counter-gifts conceived as free prestations could hide the most coercive and exploitative practices.[125] The notions of reciprocity, solidarity and gifts were indeed ambivalent, as Mauss had remarked in *The Gift*.

In response to André Gide's pamphlets, the administrator general of the Compagnie forestière Sangha-Oubangui replied in an open letter, also published in Blum's journal, *Le Populaire*, that his company, having renounced some of the privileges of a chartered company after the Great War, could not be held responsible for the failure to administer justice in the Congo. Those to blame were not the company officials, but the local chieftains and their associates in a corrupt and understaffed administration.[126] To him, decades of understaffing in the French administration, and the continuation of barbaric local mores, which included anthropophagy and the starving of prisoners taken during local feuds, were responsible for the poor state of law and order in the Congo region, his letter alleged.[127]

Still, whatever the Compagnie spokespersons said, Gide had targeted forms of brutality in the French Empire that had long been covered up by the French administration and that remained, at least in the Congo, well entrenched in the colonial field of practices. The arbitrariness and brutality of the administration of justice in the Congo, were not a surprise to colonial reformers. The French administration, in particular under the government of Martial Merlin (Governor General of the French Government of Eastern Africa), "had satisfied itself with the decision to send to this colony all the administrators deemed unfit in other colonies,"[128] according to contemporaries of Mauss and Gide. As William Cohen writes about the Congo, "no matter how inefficient or brutal, most [French] administrators were considered good enough for service in the Congo: that colony was the receptacle for administrators unwanted in other French territories."[129] At the Colonial School, where Mauss started teaching ethnology exactly when Gide published his pamphlet, it was well known that colonial administrators sent to the Congo lacked the basic training in colonial administration, not to mention ethnology.

To be fully understood, Gide's intervention needs to be contextualized in the struggles that divided the colonial field at the time, and the attempts to not only change the training of future administrators, but also the current economic, social,

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and political direction of the developmental projects undertaken by the colonial administrators in Africa. Gide had decided to visit the Congo and Chad after Marcel de Coppet had encouraged him to expose the continued practices of forced labor of private companies: De Coppet met Gide with Georges-Henri Rivière (Mauss and Paul Rivet's assistant at the Museum of Ethnology), after being introduced by the novelist Roger Martin du Gard (1881–1958), his best friend from military service.[130] He invited Gide to observe (and criticize) the construction of the Congo-Ocean railroad, a project launched by Victor Augagneur in 1921.[131] The two colonial administrators had long expressed many doubts, divergences and outright criticisms about their colonial ambitions. Before the Great War, Marcel de Coppet had worked for Augagneur when the latter was the Governor General of Madagascar. There, he saw that Augagneur's policy of massive investments (paid for by local taxes and debt) obligated local populations into forced labor (generally conceived in terms of a tax), which depleted the local labor markets of a substantial portion of its labor force, thus impeding growth prospects in the colony.[132]

After the Great War, which he spent in Senegal recruiting thousands of Senegalese soldiers whom he sent to the French trenches,[133] de Coppet worked as Sarraut's press manager before returning to Eastern Africa, specifically Chad, where he could again observe the effects of Augagneur's policy (which included the building of a railway), which he publicly criticized for its heavy reliance on forced labor. When, after Blum became Prime Minister in 1936 and named de Coppet Governor General of French Western Africa, it was Marcel de Coppet who ordered his governors to abolish forced labor in the developed regions of their colonies, and to institute instead a tax to finance further public works.[134] De Coppet was one of the few registered socialists, who had long sided with Thomas, Blum and Blum's Minister of the Colonies, Marius Moutet (1876–1968), whom Mauss had met shortly after the Dreyfus affair, when Moutet was a lawyer for the League of Human Rights,[135] active against the power of the chartered companies.

Denunciations of the chartered companies were thus articulated in the 1920s by colonial administrators well endowed with what George Steinmetz calls "colonial capital," which they acquired through experience in the colonial service in Madagascar or West Africa, but also through networks of ties developed with the *écrivains-voyageurs* like André Gide, or editors like Jean Paulhan (1884–1968) at Gallimard (who worked with de Coppet in Madagascar before the Great War, and who succeeded to André Gide as Gallimard's most influential editor in the 1940s and 1950s), as well as politicians like Albert Thomas and Léon Blum. The ideology of "altruistic" colonialism thus distinguished its promoters from the traditional colonial economic elites, who only saw in the colonies an opportunity to obtain raw materials at a cheaper price. As Mauss did in *The Nation*, or as Thomas did in Parliament, Sarraut blamed these speculators and merchants (especially private chartered companies) for their egoistic understanding of commerce: as he wrote,

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the latter should be made to understand that "the distant possession is no longer a simple enclave [*comptoir*], a reserve of riches, a market opportunity for the conquering nation, which comes to grab spices and sell its merchandises by pressuring the local populace which it exploits without limitation."[136]

This coordinated push against the exploitative practices of French chartered companies thus gained momentum around the time Gide published his essay, and it even found some relays in the Geneva-based international organizations where French socialists had gained an important voice. After Albert Thomas, then Director General of the ILO, read André Gide's first drafts, he wrote to Gide that he would "be happy to help him crush a number of adventurers he had already fought against."[137] After circulating Gide's essay at the ILO, Albert Thomas acknowledged that the section titled "Indigenous Labor" of the ILO read "[Gide's] essay with passion,"[138] and that in publishing it, Gide had done a great service to the cause of indigenous emancipation. He noticed that there was still a widespread belief among students of the Colonial School in Paris that "forced labor serves a pedagogic mission"[139] by socializing indigenous populations in the hardships of industrial labor. Later, Thomas tried to prohibit "forced labor" at the 1930 ILO conference on the topic, but France's opposition prevailed against its complete prohibition. Thus, it was not until Blum was finally elected prime minister in 1936, that forced labor was eventually prohibited in France by the law of June 17, 1937, which was prepared by Blum's Minister of the Colonies, Marius Moutet.

Before concluding on this episode, I can hardly resist mentioning that, with his uncommon sagacity, André Gide also explored the ambivalence of reciprocal bonds known as prestations in his novels – a little-known facet of his literary work, which shows that fights in the colonial field had ramifications in the French literary field as well. Indeed, in his novels, Gide consistently explored the darker sides of reciprocal attachments, the poisonous qualities of gifts that Mauss had also underlined in *The Gift*, and which seem to have fascinated him. For instance, in his novel *The Counterfeiters*, published in 1925, which André Gide dedicated to Roger Martin du Gard (de Coppet's best friend, who later became de Coppet's father-in-law after de Coppet married his best friend's daughter), Gide deployed various intrigues which showed how the solidarity between the characters of his novel (young boys and old men, mostly) could be negative for their morality and overall destiny: such negative solidarity could take the form of a dirty secret, like the secret attraction of an older man for younger boys, or the sudden revelation of an illegitimate ancestry, or the participation in a criminal group like a ring of counterfeiters.[140] It was as if André, the son of a law professor in Paris who died at a relatively young age, subverted the notion of solidarity that his uncle Charles had theorized and made the founding block of his progressive agenda for the Republic.[141]

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5 HOW MARCEL MAUSS'S STUDENTS FOUGHT POLITICAL BATTLES IN THE COLONIAL FIELD

But now, back to Mauss, and to his writings on imperial solidarity and gift exchange. One riddle which still remains in need of an explanation is why, despite the fact that Mauss's interwar writings generalized his reflections on the question of gift exchange that he published in his 1925 essay, he didn't seek to publish this manuscript *The Nation*: could he have possibly feared political repercussions?

One possible interpretation of his discretion may be that he did not want to jeopardize the creation of the Institute of Ethnology that he was in the process of establishing at the same time as he published *The Gift*. The year 1926 was not a random date for the creation of the Institute, as it corresponded to the victory of left-wing parties that Mauss had helped win the election thanks to his numerous op-eds on the reparations question in *Le Populaire*.[142] At last Mauss's two-decade-long efforts were rewarded. The creation of the Institute finally gave Mauss an instrument that enabled him to gather facts through his students' primary fieldwork, as well as to train colonial administrators to better appreciate the cultural context in which their actions took place. The Institute of Ethnology, funded thanks to taxes levied in the French Empire, was France's first university training in ethnology, and it directly targeted colonial administrators. As Alice Conklin writes, "this new [ethnological] science was supposed to serve" the empire: according to the Minister of the Colonies, Edouard Daladier, who agreed to fund it, the Institute would improve the "training of colonial administrators from the Colonial School"[143] created in 1889, which had never successfully provided highly skilled administrators for the empire. As Mauss wrote in 1925, when presenting the newly founded Institute, "the Institute serves the French Colonial Governments and Protectorates and provides them with information about (French and foreign) missions, with studies of indigenous races, as well as collects documents, artifacts and thereby contributes to the study of social facts."[144]

Mauss hoped that the creation of his Institute would deeply affect the kinds of methods that he and his students could rely on in their academic writings: for ethnology to be relevant to the administration of colonial subjects, ethnology had to change and become grounded on strong ethnographic field methods. Mauss's prewar essays on sacrifice and the origins of contractual law, which he published with Henri Hubert in *L'Année sociologique*, reflected the poor advancement of ethnographic methods in France. In these essays, the two friends explored "how the sacrifice-gifts first emerged, when offerings to Gods were presented as gifts," and how they changed "when the bloody aspects of the sacrificial rites gave a penal character to the sacrifices, and turned the sacrifice-gifts into expiatory sacrifices."[145] Mauss and Hubert mostly based their findings on their reading of the Bible and the Veda,[146] and on the application of philological methods, which Mauss had studied under the supervision of his PhD adviser, Sylvain Lévi, the famous Indologist. At that

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point, and up until the mid-1920s, Mauss and Hubert lacked the capability to collect primary documents and stories, which is why they mostly discussed the work of another philologist, the British historian of religion, James Frazer and his comparative history of sacrifice, *The Golden Bough*.[147] The French colonial administrators' lack of interest in the pursuit of ethnological knowledge before the Great War forced Mauss to rely on such philological analysis of ancient texts or on secondhand analysis of ethnographic facts, which he read in the Anglo-American ethnographies which he reviewed in *The Gift*.

The year 1925 thus marked the moment when Mauss secured the centrality of his position in a European space of science (ethnology), situated at the intersection between the logic of colonial administration and the comparative study of gift exchanges. The creation of this Institute in 1925 made it essential for Mauss to publish *The Gift* and to keep *The Nation* unpublished for the time being: in his famous article, Mauss reviewed the scholarly production of the Anglo-American and German ethnologists[148] – such as Franz Boas's work on the Kwakiutls and Richard Thurnwald's study of gift-giving practices in the Solomon Islands[149] – whom he identified as the community of peers with whom he intended the young French doctoral students in his future Institute to converse. Publishing such a comprehensive survey, filled with references from various national ethnographic traditions on gift exchange, had the additional advantage of illustrating the scientific spirit of cosmopolitan solidarity among men of science and claiming a new role for French sociology and ethnology as co-leaders in the field of ethnology with the German and Anglo-American ethnologists.

Through Mauss's work of citation, discussion and debate, which he displayed in *The Gift*, Mauss sought to invite Euro-American ethnologists, whose ties had sometimes been severed by the Great War, to engage in close collaborative enterprises in the advancement of this new research program: the comparative analysis of gift exchanges which he developed in *The Nation* and which provided him with a collective research program that the doctoral students of the newly founded Institute of Ethnology could adopt to conduct single-case ethnographies. His students would ask and provide answers to the following questions: Were colonial practices a positive force for the development of a common political consciousness within the colonies? Did they foster the expression of concrete forms of solidarity between and among groups? Or did they have mostly negative effects on the solidarity within groups and across exchanging parties, mainly, the French metropolitans and the colonial subjects? But when answering these questions, they would have to weigh the benefits of academic discretion over political intervention.

In many ways, the mandate that Mauss had received when obtaining funding from the French government for his diverse endeavors (Institute, Museum, and the Chair of Sociology he obtained in 1931 at the Collège de France), was fulfilled perfectly, as one can see from the careers of some his students in the colonial field. Mauss sought to ground his students in both ethnography and colonial

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administration in a deeper appreciation of each other's comparative merits. He sought to influence the colonial administrators he advised, by grounding their colonial practice on a more humanistic understanding of the diversity of human experiences, to implement a solidarist colonial policy based on the rejection of the Colonial Pact – which was possible only if his students reached high positions in the ladder of colonial administration.[150]

Bernard Maupoil (1906–44, killed in 1944 in a slave labor camp in Germany) was a good example of how Mauss taught colonial administrators, who either came from the Colonial School, and discovered ethnology thanks to Mauss's seminar, or who used their free time as colonial officers to conduct doctoral research under his supervision. Maupoil was posted in Dahomey in the mid 1930s, where he conducted an ethnographic study of geomancy,[151] thus advancing ethnological research at the same time as he used that research to claim better knowledge (and thus better administration) of the local populations, despite the hurdles placed by the administration to his ethnographic work.[152] After 1936, Maupoil worked as a civil administrator in French West Africa under the orders of the Governor General Marcel de Coppet, whom he lauded for the freedom the latter gave him to conduct fieldwork "to study the 'Fa', the God of destiny in Southern Dahomey."[153]

The careers of the ethnology students that Mauss took under his supervision were thus, not surprisingly, protected by the same colonial administrators who battled since the beginning of the century against the interests of the chartered companies that Mauss denounced in *The Nation*, and that Gide had targeted in his essay. But in order to secure their jobs in the colonial administration, Mauss advised his students to carefully avoid voicing "negative views on colonization, and especially the capitalist form of colonialism,"[154] which, as he cautioned Maupoil in a letter, could only harm the scientific integrity of their findings – as well as their careers in the colonial service and the Institute's reputation. As Mauss added, his words of advice toward some of the criticism expressed by Maupoil against French colonial interests in Western Africa "did not reflect a substantive disagreement," but rather, the necessity to "keep some discretion"[155] over one's political views. This prudence was all the more necessary for Maupoil in that, with the exception of Marcel de Coppet, his superiors in the French administration held the time he spent doing ethnographic research against him. In 1934, for instance, he was re-affected in the bush, far from his original fieldwork, which illustrated the mistrust that the colonial administration still showed toward the officers who conducted ethnographic research.[156]

Mauss gave the same advice to Richard Le Cœur, his favorite student, the son of a colonial family in Morocco whose career spanned academic and colonial fields, and whom Mauss later wanted to appoint as his successor at the EPHE.[157] But unfortunately, Le Cœur, who joined the Free French forces during the Second World War, was killed in 1944 on the battlefield during the campaign of Italy. In fact, Le Cœur was not critical of French colonialism: the last section of his dissertation

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concluded with a chapter on Lyautey's protectorate policy, which Conklin describes as quite baroque: it included poems and ended with a hagiography of Lyautey's policy of "love" in Morocco,[158] which Mauss claimed was a great accomplishment.[159] Still, Le Cœur's first dissertation draft included some more critical remarks on colonialism, especially as he studied the relation between the evolution of European colonialism in the interwar era and monetary evolutions in Europe (focusing on the difference between the franc and the mark). After reading his student's reflections, Mauss insisted that his thesis should not appear too Marxist in inspiration, and that Le Cœur should also pay attention to the cultural and pragmatic factors associated with the "colonial mentality."[160] As he wrote to his student in 1938, "there are many other things that capital exports in the act of colonization," so Le Cœur should "keep Simiand and take away Marx"[161] from his theoretical tool kit. This shift would also have the advantage of limiting the criticism of French colonialism in his final dissertation. Mauss was consistent: he wanted his students to reform colonialism from within not from outside.

To help a cadre of young French ethnologists to conduct empirical research and investigate the effects of colonial practices on the local peoples (or populations) administered by the French colonial state in West Africa, Mauss also needed the resources to pay for his students' costly ethnographic trips. As head of the Institute, he encouraged Franco-British scientific collaboration, such as that between his student Maurice Leenhardt (1878–1954), for whom he obtained a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation (for which he served, along with Charles Rist, as the contact person in France),[162] and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), to do ethnographic research together in New Caledonia. Maurice Leenhardt, a Protestant pastor stationed in New Caledonia from 1902 to 1921, was a good example of the missionaries who took classes with Mauss: as Conklin writes, Leenhardt had "struggled for years in order to understand Kanak concepts of the sacred in order to render Christian terms into vernacular idiom more truthfully,"[163] and it was thanks to Mauss's dedication that his student's thesis was published after his return to Paris in the late 1920s.

Mauss also used his network of friends among British anthropologists – like Charles Seligman (1873–1940) – to ask, for instance, the British colonial administrators for collaboration and free passage for the French ethnographers who sought to do ethnographic fieldwork in African territories under British control.[164] For instance, Mauss's other student, Bernard Maupoil, not only conducted fieldwork in French West Africa, but also secured from the British colonial administration the right to interview the Yoruba in British-controlled colonies to finish his dissertation.[165] Already in the 1920s, US funding and Anglo-American scientific exchange were key to the development of French social sciences: nothing much has changed since then.

To find resources for his students' ethnographic "voyages," Mauss's entrepreneurial spirit did not stop at the border of the academic world. In large part thanks to the

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Museum of Ethnology – later renamed Musée de l'Homme – the students whom Mauss and Rivet trained there also tapped into the economic resources of the art collectors to fund their research trips. The ties that Mauss had developed in the world of high finance were recycled to place these young French ethnologists on Europe's map of art collectors, museums, and ethnologists working in the colonial societies.[166] The conversion of social and economic capital into ethnographic capital was most apparent when Mauss helped his student, Marcel Griaule (1898–1956), a specialist on Abyssinia and Ethiopia who graduated from the Institute of Ethnology in 1927, to raise the funds for a fact-collecting mission that would start in Dakar and end in Djibouti, thus crossing Africa from west to east, and traversing mostly French but also British territories.

Mauss spared no energy for this mission: Griaule was deeply thankful for the "effective but silent" mobilization that Mauss conducted on the side of foundations, as Mauss, with the help of Charles Rist,[167] raised about 300,000 francs from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1931.[168] Mauss also lobbied his socialist friends (Renaudel in particular) to pass a law appropriating funds for the Dakar–Djibouti Mission, which allowed Griaule to leave (with Michel Leiris as secretary) for Dakar in 1931.[169] In these endeavors, Mauss joined forces with David David-Weill of the Lazard Bank, which had become a major shareholder in the car company of André Citroën,[170] which sponsored ethnological missions and other car explorations in unchartered territories.[171] Griaule's enterprise, although criticized by some of Mauss's other PhD students, like Bernard Maupoil, produced an extraordinary amount of data in the form of art, files, photographs and other artifacts: in December 1931, Griaule reported to Mauss that his short trip through the Dogon territory had allowed his mission to send to the Museum of Ethnology 2,000 objects, 1,500 photographs, 695 meters of shot film, 40 recordings and more than 2,400 ethnographic files on the Dogon people alone.[172] As he told Mauss, "this mission is an industrial factory."[173]

A few years later, Mauss told his student Bernard Maupoil that he was proud of Griaule's mission, and that with such a success, "Africa cannot really complain of the task performed by the Institute of Ethnology,"[174] which had allowed Europe's community of ethnologists (and more broadly, the European public of the new Musée de l'Homme created in 1937) to access a wealth of information on Africa's traditions and cultures, and thus to realize how rich those traditions were. Whether the African populations from which these artifacts were taken away agreed or not was another matter. Furthermore, as Maupoil wrote to Mauss, Griaule's mission had made manifest the contradiction between the two goals that the Institute of Ethnology pursued: gaining credibility for ethnography within the ranks of the colonial administration, and attracting the attention of the broader public. As he wrote, "the Griaule mission didn't leave a good impression in Dahomey,"[175] where Maupoil was stationed, and Michel Leiris's *Afrique fantôme*, in which the young secretary of Griaule's mission criticized colonial society, was a disservice to ethnology.[176] Indeed, its critical tone reinforced the prejudice in which ethnological

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missions were held among colonial administrations – thus making Maupoil's task much more difficult.[177]

The emphasis on European solidarity through colonial expansion, Franco-British ethnological data-collection missions and the display of artifacts in ethnological museums prepared Mauss's students to play a key role in the organization of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition in Paris (visited by more than eight million people, with more than thirty million tickets sold). The International Colonial Exhibition, which marked the one hundredth anniversary of the French colonization of Algeria, was the apex of this outreach campaign, as it sought to internationalize its audience. The Minister of the Colonies, delivering the opening remarks at the Exhibition, as well as Hubert Lyautey, the organizing force behind the Exhibition, insisted that the colonial ideal marked a profoundly European phenomenon which united nations of Europe and the rest of the world in a common destiny. For the organizers of the Exhibition, the "colonial œuvre" offered European citizens a guarantee against the coming of a new war, both in colonial territories, and in Europe, as the increased trade between the French and British metropolises and their respective colonies decreased the conflicts between European powers. France's colonial project could really be a truly European project, and Mauss's ethnological science a truly cosmopolitan endeavor at the service of a more humane French colonial project. As Lyautey wrote in 1931, "the world now sees with clarity that it is through colonial action that it can realize the notion of human solidarity."[178] Lyautey was a figure admired and loved by Mauss's inner circle, in particular by Max Lazard, who appreciated that Lyautey had been one of the rare Dreyfusards within the ranks of the military: they also appreciated that he had forced peace upon various Moroccan tribal sheiks in 1912 through a policy of repression and "gift" or "love," as expressed in his deceiving language.[179]

As Alice Conklin remarks, the interwar generation trained by Mauss and Rivet at the Institute of Ethnology thus not only "failed to condemn French colonial rule"[180] but actively participated, along with Mauss, Rivet, Lyautey, de Coppet and other colonial administrators in publicizing the French solidarist colonial project. Jacques Soustelle comes to mind as another good example of a doctoral student of Mauss who tried to apply ethnological lessons to the colonial context. Soustelle was also a kind of "heir" endowed with colonial social capital, as, although from a modest family with a Protestant background, early on he married Georgette Fagot, the daughter of a close collaborator of Victor Augagneur at Lyon's municipal Council, before Augagneur left Lyon to become Governor of Madagascar in 1904 and then Resident-General in Tunisia.[181] On a scholarship from the ENS, it was Soustelle's wife who first met Marcel Mauss, who was teaching at the Collège de France and the Institute of Ethnology at the time. Mauss introduced them to Rivet, then head of the Museum of Ethnology, for whom the couple worked until they later moved to Mexico, where Soustelle conducted research on the Lacandons, considered to be long-lost descendants of the Mayas.

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Even though Soustelle's work may seem more distant from the realities of colonial administration in West Africa than that of Maupoil and the other Africanists like Le Cœur, as France had no possession in Central America, Soustelle still gave his work some resonance in the field of colonial administration. After the proto-fascist riot in front of the French Parliament that left fifteen dead in February 1934, Mauss, Rivet and Soustelle participated in the creation of the Watchfulness Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals in March 1934. They were among the first signatories, and as such, they negotiated with other signatories, like the philosopher Alain, or the physicist Paul Langevin (Mauss's colleague at the Collège de France), the exact wording of the declaration against "a fascist dictatorship" and "against the power of the banks, trusts, and armament manufacturers who want to subvert the Republic, the true Republic which is embodied by the people, the working, suffering, and thinking people which seeks its emancipation."[182] Jacques Soustelle also participated in the foundational meetings at Langevin's place, where he met numerous communist intellectuals, including some who introduced him to Soviet ethnography – a completely "outdated ethnography"[183] – which convinced him that fascist perils needed to be addressed, but that the communist tool kit was useless in the battle of political ideas.

Soustelle's activism was strongly influenced by Mauss. When Blum was elected prime minister in 1936, Mauss wrote to Blum advising that the government should invest in the creation of "centers of propaganda in Italian and German" so as "to fight against the fascist propaganda" that had, as Durkheim had already noticed during his wartime experience, an incredible and "pathological influence on collective representations,"[184] not only in the metropolis, but also in the colonial field. If Mauss failed to convince the socialist prime minister, his advice resonated with Jacques Soustelle.[185] Soustelle later recalled that the realization that Hitler's Germany was preparing a European war, and that the French intellectuals should do something about it, came to him as he saw an unending line of trains moving heavy armament across Germany while he traveled with Mauss across the Third Reich in 1938, as the professor and his student were on their way to a conference in Copenhagen.[186] One year later, in 1939, Soustelle created a center of counter-propaganda in Mexico, where he remained posted at the onset of the war.

Like Maupoil and others, Soustelle used the comparative framework that Mauss developed in *The Nation* and in his seminars to study how colonial exchanges could lead exchanging societies closer to, or further away from, the highest levels of integration where the imperial nation was supposed to lead its colonies. In 1936, based on his research findings in Mexico, Soustelle argued that the French colonial administrators in Africa should take inspiration from land redistribution plans he observed in Mexico[187] to capitalize on the presence of benevolent socialists in Blum's government during the 1936 Front Populaire and expand the social benefits granted by the metropolis to its colonial subjects. For him, it was important to associate together the struggle against the fascists and the reform of colonial administration.

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As these battles of ideas between socialism and fascism took to the colonial context after the mid 1930s, Mauss also used his ties to his doctoral students, some of whom served as colonial administrators, especially in the West African colonial field, to get information from the field and report back to various associations including the League of Human Rights, which he had helped create in the context of the Dreyfus affair. The collection of documentation they gathered included information on the colonial companies' abuses.[188] For instance, Bernard Maupoil, who, by 1935, had taken the presidency of four tribunals in Senegal, denounced in a letter to Mauss the collusion between some fascist elements in the colonial administration and a happy few from both the metropolitan and colonial society, who appropriated large benefits from the exploitation of forced or cheap labor. He decried the impunity of the Governor General in Senegal and his main associate, "a freed and self-enriched slave who exploited the peasants," over the vast portion of land that his mafia controlled, and whom the League of Human Rights left alone, as the "negrophiles"[189] there did not want to admit that exploitation could be performed by local black businessmen as well as metropolitan companies. Maupoil thus urged Mauss to see his friends in the League to denounce these abuses.[190]

In the mid 1930s, as tensions grew between left-wing and right-wing colonial administrators, Maupoil kept Mauss informed of the cabals which divided the field of French colonial administration between socialists (close to Marcel de Coppet, whom Blum elevated to the rank of Governor General of French West Africa when he became Prime Minister) and conservatives and fascists, who followed Jacques Doriot (1898–1945), a former communist who formed a new populist party in 1936.[191] As Maupoil wrote to Mauss in 1937, the fascists had the support of the son of the former Director of the Colonial School, Maurice Delafosse: because of Delafosse *fils*, who worked for the Governor General in Dakar, it was no longer rare to meet "Franco's men" cruising in the streets of the capital of Senegal and agitating against the socialists.[192]

At the time, one of the main issues of contention between socialists and conservative administrators in West Africa was the future of the Office of the Niger, which was in charge of developing the valley of the Niger River thanks to a large public works irrigation program. This Office had been set up by de Coppet, then Governor General of French West Africa (before being sent to Madagascar a year later as Governor General), and in 1928, the Government of French West Africa had already spent 400 million francs for the program, in addition to the 300 million that it had raised in France – creating a debt that continued until 1986. Marius Moutet, Blum's Minister of the Colonies, had strongly supported de Coppet's vision and his preference for irrigation work rather than road construction – the latter had been Augagneur's trademark. But despite great progress on the ground, as Maupoil wrote to Mauss, the Office of the Niger could no longer find capital in the metropolis in 1938.[193]

After 1934, with a sick wife – his former secretary, whom Mauss married in January of that year, at age 60, and who was permanently injured in a failed suicide attempt

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three weeks after their wedding,[194] – Mauss had less time and energy to participate in these political battles to reform colonial administration, even if he still followed his students' initiatives, and continued to follow the socialist party internal politics from afar.[195] With Blum's electoral defeat in 1938, the incoming conservative government intended to close the Office of the Niger, and to Maupoil's dismay, the metropolitan socialist newspapers – some of which were controlled by the powerful colonial interests in Lyon's municipal council, where Augagneur, who was carded as a socialist, still had a lot of influence – paid little attention to the effort of colonial reformers who wanted their economic policies to benefit their colonial subjects: as he wrote to Mauss, even the socialist press, in particular *Le Populaire*, was no longer interested in reporting the attacks that the "big trusts" organized against the "colonial administrators who risked their career by adhering to the socialist party."[196] Maupoil and Mauss agreed that it was a lost opportunity to show how ethnologists could help colonial administrators succeed in creating the political conditions necessary for the economic take-off of the colonies, but the resistance they encountered in the colonial field, coupled with Mauss's waning forces, was stronger than expected.[197] Little did they know that the beginning of the Second World War would soon shatter their existence and the world in which they had lived, where they (wrongly) assumed that ethnology could be put to the service of an enlightened and human colonial administration in West Africa.

6 A MIXED LEGACY IN THE COLONIAL FIELD IN WEST AFRICA

Both *The Gift* and Mauss's unpublished manuscript *The Nation* aimed at placing the theoretical focus of anthropology on transnational circulation and transfers – or, in Maussian terms, "intersocietal" contacts, a term he preferred, as he emphasized that not all societies (almost none, in fact) had attained the status of "nation." In *The Gift*, Mauss proclaimed unequivocally that the exchange of goods, prestations, and reciprocal services was the safest way to ensure the solidarity between exchanging societies. But *The Nation* started where Mauss's reflection in *The Gift* ended, as Mauss developed further his ideas on the destructive aspects of the colonial encounter. In *The Nation*, Mauss listed the practices that prevented such a reciprocal exchange of prestations from having positive effects on both exchanging parties, especially, but not exclusively, for the colonial subjects. Still, his criticism was limited to the power of the chartered companies operating in Africa to provide colonies with fake rather than true gifts: a lamentable fact which he criticized on behalf of a policy that the philosopher Alexandre Kojève would later call the program of "giving colonialism,"[198] in a lecture delivered at the invitation of Carl Schmitt after the Second World War.

In this unpublished manuscript, Mauss thus paid much more attention to the obstacles that could explain why the exchange of reciprocal prestations could go

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wrong and fail to bring about the kind of international solidarity Mauss wished to see within Europe and between Europe and the rest of the world. But he focused almost exclusively on the monopolies and concessions granted to chartered companies (especially in the exploitation, trade and administration of raw materials like rubber), in which he saw a transient organizational form that could either morph into national monopolies – and thus avert colonial wars – or could continue to exploit the social and natural resources of the French Empire, leading to rebellion, fragmentation, and violence, and even to the collapse of the Republic, which was not protected from the peril of fascism. Mauss's focus on big trusts and private companies may be where his theory of international relations and international solidarity was limited as well as prescient.

Indeed, Mauss's perspective was limited to the extent it endorsed the French colonial mindset of the interwar era: Mauss almost completely missed the colonial oppression and exploitation organized by the state itself (and the army in particular) when looking for the sources of obstacles to the political development of colonial societies. In the 1930s, Mauss helped his colleagues and students to denounce practices of forced labor or other gross abuses against local populations by forwarding information to the League of Human Rights, but in general, he advised them to remain cautious. In the nebula of public intellectuals, colonial administrators, and policymakers, which included, among others, Léon Blum, Marius Moutet, Albert Thomas, Marcel de Coppet, Charles and André Gide, who lobbied the French government and international organizations like the ILO to ban the existence of forced labor, Mauss was a timid voice. Mauss cannot claim a large part of responsibility for the victory that Léon Blum's government experienced when it finally abolished forced labor, even if his students and colleagues consistently lobbied against it. And the socialists' victory was short-lived, as the fascists and conservatives gained power in the ranks of the administration of Senegal and other colonies of West Africa. Not surprisingly, as the Second World War broke out, it was Félix Eboué (1884–1944), then Governor of Chad, who rallied the government of East Africa to the government in exile of General de Gaulle, whereas the governors of Senegal and West Africa in General pledged allegiance to Vichy and Marshall Pétain, who sided in favor of collaboration with the Nazis – while de Coppet, named Governor of Madagascar, made the tragic mistake of not siding in favor of de Gaulle.

One may thus ask whether Mauss's teachings and writings failed to prepare his students and the colonial administrators under his supervision to support the movements in favor of political independence which emerged during and after the Second World War in the French colonies and in Algeria. This is the key question that the next chapter will explore in further detail, although the evidence must be treated as suggestive rather than conclusive: indeed, many of his students were killed during the war, and one cannot predict how an entire cohort of ethnology students would have reacted to the rise of anti-colonial movements in Indochina or Algeria, had they survived.

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But even so, Mauss's anthropological perspective on international economic relations may have been prescient, considering the postcolonial fights for economic independence led by the newly independent states after their political independence. In the 1970s, the themes that Mauss had addressed in *The Nation* seemed to come back at the center of debates on global governance and gift exchange: the last section of *The Nation*, which ignored the question of political independence but called on new states to nationalize chartered companies, promoted the policy that French Algeria would ultimately follow when its governments decided in 1971 to "nationalize" the oil and gas extraction trusts operating in its territory. Could these decisions and the associated calls for a "new international economic order"[199] expressed in the 1970s by Algeria and other Third World nations be then interpreted as the last trace of Mauss's influence in international relations? Chapter 6 will answer this question, by showing how anti-colonial scholars and policymakers in Algeria addressed the question of economic independence, although in a different way than Mauss had anticipated.

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