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(1984)

**“THE NORTH : UTILITARIAN
CONSCIENCE OF THE SOUTH ?
(A parallel between science,
technology and society)”**

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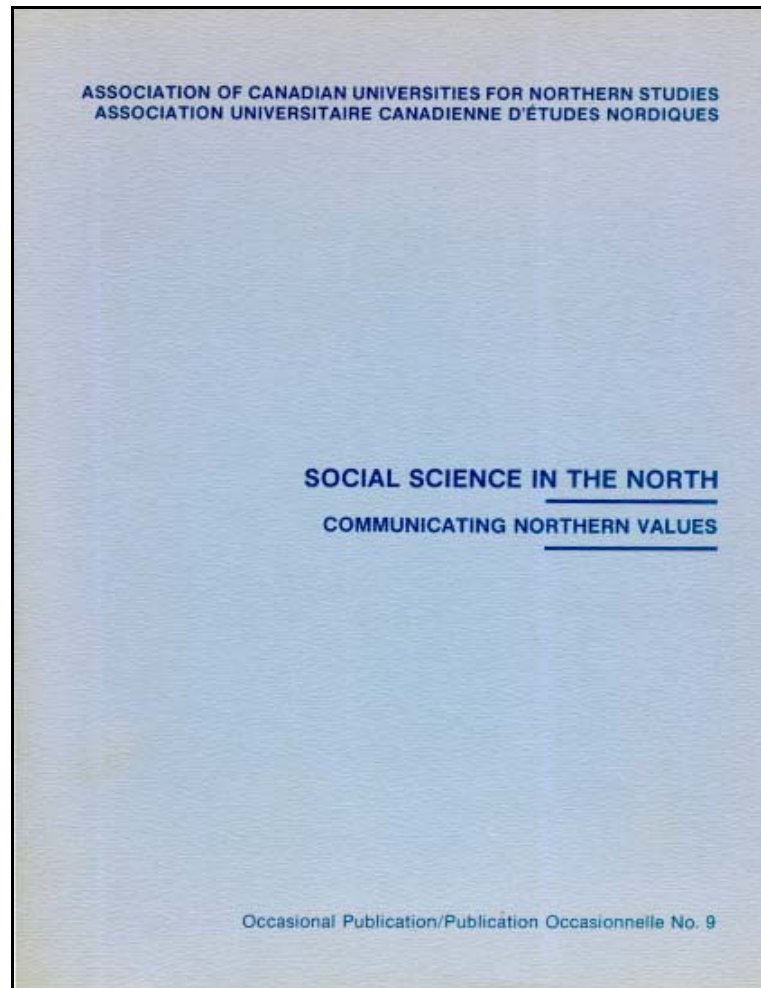


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Introduction

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The conditions of northern research have changed considerably over the last twenty years or so. In the 1970s particularly, institutional factors came into play which modified and affected the context and the later evolution of research in the human sciences. At the same time, a fruitful interaction was going on between researchers and representatives of native peoples, as both groups were concerned with analyzing events in the light of political considerations. During the same period there emerged institutions which created needed links between the state and northern societies. For example, in Quebec, organizations such as Makivik Corporation, the Grand Council of the Cree, and Le Conseil Attikamek-Montagnais - whose headquarters are located outside the North - consecrate, in varying degrees, a new bureau-

* I would like to thank Dr. Othmar Keel, of the Institut d'Histoire et de Sociopolitique des Sciences, Université de Montréal for the fruitful discussion on the matter of relations between science, technology and society, as well as Dr. Deirdre Meintel, Université de Montréal for her help with the revised English edition.

cratic phenomenon. All of this accounts for a metamorphosis which has irrevocably altered the relationships between the native peoples and the state ;' it has also created the conditions for the emergence of a new political force which cannot be ignored ¹.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Idealism in northern science ?

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In the years preceding the 1970s, the North seemed to be a privileged field of research in the human sciences for North American and European scientists. The theory of cultural change set forth by Julian Steward in 1955, in part on the basis of earlier work by Eleanor Leacock (1954), was for a time, to influence the publications devoted to hunter-gatherer societies ². Synchronic approaches centered on the-

¹ See P. Déry, "Pratique et discours idéologique" in Nations amérindiennes au Canada/Native Peoples in Canada, Culture, vol. III, no. 2. Société canadienne d'ethnologie, Montréal, 1982.

Note : I do not intend to examine here the specific relationship between native societies and the state, since several authors have already studied this question from different angles. The reader is referred to their works. Among others see :

S. Bouchard, I. Larusic et al. *Negotiating a Way of Life*, DINA, 1979 (tr. fr.) ; Paul Charest, "Recherches anthropologiques et contexte politique en milieu attikamek et montagnais", in Culture, op. cit., 1982 ; H. Feit, "Restructuring Linkages between James Bay Cree and the State", Actes du colloque sur les sociétés de chasseurs-cueilleurs, Université Laval, 1980 ; A. Tanner, "Hunters and the State", *ibid.* ; E. Leacock & R. Lee, ed., *Politics and History in band societies*, Cambridge University Press & Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1982 ; S. Weaver, *Making Canadian Indian Policy : The Hidden Agenda 1968-70*. U.T.P., 1981.

² See, for example, Harvey Feit's article "The future of hunters within nation-states : anthropology and the James Bay Creel", Leacock & Lee ed., op. cit., 1982, pp. 373-411.

mes such as interethnic relations and acculturation ; diachronic studies were largely concerned with territorial or ethnohistorical issues. Although quite understandably ignorant of the events which were to transform the living conditions of certain northern populations, researchers of this period were aware of the cultural and economic turmoil confronting these peoples. Even so, none was so imprudent as to forecast inescapable doom ³.

For those who lived in the North during this period, these assertions will seem a statement of the obvious. Yet in point of fact, the period was a disastrous one in terms of the future. Amerindian communities faced an economic dead-end : for instance how could hunters maintain indefinitely the same economic relationships with the Hudson's Bay Company, with its well-known debit-credit cycle ⁴ ? Or to take an example from Quebec, with the *Ministère des Chasse et Pêche*. which, more often than not, delegated its responsibility to game wardens for setting quotas for hunters. How long would this *status quo* last ? And what would become of the other communities which, several years earlier, had ended such production relationships and were now experiencing conditions which undermined the very structure of their lives ? To appreciate the state of things which faced the observer of that time, the reader can turn to two examples. The first is that of Fort George on James Bay, where the allocation of the hunting territories enabled groups of hunters, as a whole, to exploit the environment. However, because the population of fur-bearing animals follows a cycle which makes it difficult to supply furs regularly through the season, most of the Indians whose lands were close to the sea hunted their territories intermittently, unlike those who hunted regularly

³ In my doctoral dissertation I refused to write a conclusion for the following reason : although I could not predict the future, I knew instinctively that the present situation could not last without some major event occurring to change it.

⁴ See P. Désy, "Les Indiens du Nouveau-Québec", in *De l'ethnocide*, 10/18, Plon, Paris, 1972, pp. 259-278. [Texte disponible dans Les Classiques des sciences sociales. JMT.]

further back in the hinterland, though they did not have the assurance of bringing back a rich harvest of furs. The second example concerns Lake John, near Schefferville, where the population was composed of Montagnais and Naskapi. Beginning in the 1950s and until 1972 (when the major part of the settlement was moved to the new reservation of Matemekush), this village, located on Crown lands, had a temporary status. The effects of this were fairly obvious, at least insofar as the housing, built from odds and ends, was concerned. In 1972, it occurred to the Department of Indian Affairs -to move the entire population to another reservation located within the municipal boundaries of Schefferville (a town controlled by Iron Ore Company of Canada). Had the Department given thought to the implications behind such a change ? Now that Schefferville is in the process of becoming a ghost town and the Naskapi, who are a signing party to the *Convention de la baie James et du Nord-Ouest québécois*. have left for a village of their choice, the question becomes pressing.

For a long time, governments concerned themselves only slightly with northern societies, leaving it to a few local civil servants to establish connections with the inhabitants of the communities. These civil servants behaved in a manner that was both paternalistic and colonialistic ; sheer ignorance often governed their behaviour. Ill-prepared for their responsibilities, unaware of living conditions in the North, they saw Indians in the light of the political destiny which the state had assigned to them : integration or disappearance ⁵. As for the missionaries, their role remained cast in history and influenced by the - thwarted - designs of the nineteenth century. Locally, power struggles most often revolved around the number of Anglican and Catholic proselytes.

⁵ The article devoted by R.W. Dunning to this subject remains accurate in its essence : "Ethnic Relations and the Marginal Man in Canada". *Human Organization*, vol. 18, No. 3, 1958, pp. 117-122.

When there occur unforeseeable events whose shape is quite different from what was expected, the prism of history gets distorted. Today it is possible, indeed easy, to analyze what happened and to reject or criticize the writings of researchers of the day, without taking into account the history of ideas. However, what can now be explained *a contrario* and *a posteriori*, no researcher could have foreseen *a priori*. Here, of course, come to mind the gigantic technological projects financed by multinational firms. The carrying out of these projects (e.g., dams to harness James Bay hydro-electric power) or the formulation of plans to do so (e.g., the Mackenzie Valley pipeline) has had the effect of upsetting the internal structure of northern societies and, paradoxically, of creating conditions for the emergence of a bureaucratic and political infrastructure. No soothsayer, even one of Kafka-like prescience, could have foreseen all this ⁶.

From this point of view, hypotheses about cultural change or levels of acculturation and disintegration could no longer have the same

⁶ In retrospect one is reminded of "The Great Wall of China". Kafka's short story is not only rich in symbolism but carries ideological overtones as well, inasmuch as he criticizes neo-positivism in this text. There is one difference, though, for the purposes of our comparison here : Kafka's *Nomads of the North* become *Sedentaries of the Canadian South*. Let us quote a few passages :

"Our little town is hardly close to the frontier, let it be said. The distance involved is so great that surely no one from our place has ever gone there : so many high desert plateaux, so many vast plains to cross ! So it is strange, and still astonishing to me, to see us in our little town acquiesce so peacefully to all the measures taken in the Capital. Our administration hasn't changed, the most important civil servants still come from the Capital ; those of middle ranks, if not from there, at least from outside, and the lowest level, from the village.

[...] It's impossible to understand how they penetrated so far ... Meanwhile, they are there ; it seems that each morning sees their number grow... Converse with them, impossible ! They don't even know our language... Whatever they need, they take... One can't accuse them of violence -- because we leave them whatever they put their hand on and withdraw." (Translated from the fragments published in the French edition : *La Muraille de Chine*, Gallimard, Paris, 1960.)

meaning. At the same time as the teleological policy of the state was being modified in the light of reactions to the publication of the White Paper (1969), which had revealed the commitments of the native organizations for the outside world to see, several factors were creating conditions for a new direction among northern communities. Land claims from one end of the country to the other, the burden of administrative tasks, the growing bureaucratization within associations, the building of new villages, the guarantee of minimum wages for hunters who were signatories to the James Bay agreement, etc. : all these diverse factors give evidence of a profound change whose implications have yet to be understood. On the other hand, in those regions where processes such as the above did not take place, there occurred a degradation of cultural traditions with no visible signs of ensuing benefits. The case of Grassy Narrows, in Ontario, is eloquent in this respect. Following a federal government decision, the village of Grassy Narrows was relocated near the mercury-polluted English-Wabigoon River. The remarkable study of this case by Anastasia M. Shkilnyk is sufficient to convince one of the magnitude of the human disaster visited on this reserve ⁷.

The ethnological discourse *lato sensu* and the ethnographic description *stricto sensu*, we suggest, have been shaped by such events and concrete facts. It must be said clearly, however, that the anthropologist in the field during the 1950s and 1960s - even though previously politicized - did not enjoy conditions which would have made it possible for him to identify and situate himself in relation to a specific political discourse. On the contrary, more often than not he or she had to keep silent : numerous examples could be cited but this is not the place to do so. Nevertheless, what was true yesterday is not necessarily the case today. Thus, the decade of the 1970s, which was marked at various stages by changes of an economic nature, witnessed the emergence of a new phenomenon ; namely, "applied" anthropology -- to

⁷ "Government Indian Policy and Its Impact on Community Life : A Case Study of the Relocation of the Grassy Narrows Band", ms., DINA, 1981, Ottawa.

mention that discipline. Nowadays, most researchers in the North choose work consistent with requirements dictated by the native communities ; they often become consultants for band councils. Hired by the associations which subsidize them to perform research on specific topics, they are sometimes prevented, for high-minded reasons, from publishing their findings. Indeed, if their works were to be made public, they could be used by governments for purposes altogether different from those intended by the associations. Today, a scientist must obtain the authorization of the band council, or of the association which represents it, before undertaking research in a community. In other cases, he is retained as a consultant by the association or the band council. As a privileged go-between, he serves to link the world of outside researchers with those whom he represents. Given all this, independent research - no doubt the most appealing to some - must yield place to institutionalized research, the results of which will be applicable to specified ends. Under the present circumstances, it is impossible for the two types of research to co-exist : they are simply incompatible. However interesting this new northern anthropology may be, it has nevertheless displaced the more classical and individual anthropology. No doubt the latter did not play its role well, and it had to yield naturally to new constraints and specific situations. The question must be raised first of all whether, notwithstanding the excellent work which it has generated, the "new" anthropology does not fit into a broader problematic, the basic givens of which necessarily escape its grasp. Does it play, to some extent, a utilitarian role which is so precise and so well-defined as to make it part of a whole, that is to say of a purpose, whose scope and whose extent it cannot yet apprehend ? Consider the lot which has been reserved in recent times for university centres of northern studies, which were flourishing or filled with promise in the 1960s, and staffed with researchers reputed for their seriousness, but which are literally in the process of breaking up today. How is it that some have modified their initial course to the point of becoming mere shadows of their former selves (e.g. *Centre d'Études nordiques*, Université Laval) ? How is it that others are threatened with being shut down (e.g. Centre for Northern Studies and Research,

McGill University) ? Whatever the reason, this scandalous situation can only be understood in terms of a broader frame of reference. At the very least, one ought to ask how it is that our state-subsidized universities are allowed to close down or let drift institutions which are necessary in a country where northern space competes increasingly with southern space. For instance, to what extent is Soviet policy towards Eastern and Far-Eastern Siberia applied more coherently than ours ? We know that populations who were nomadic in the past have become sedentary or specialized in the techniques of transhumance. But we know also, in this latter respect, that the herds of Siberian reindeer, domesticated or wild, outnumber infinitely the caribou herds of the Canadian North- a revealing example, among others, of the differences between two circumpolar regions. A comparison between these two regions would certainly be enlightening.

In the final reckoning, it could well be judged that, for a time, centres of northern studies served purposes of prestige. Once they were judged to be no longer necessary, they could easily be closed or mothballed. After all, there are alternatives : researchers employed by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, by the private and/or state sector (e.g. Hydro-Quebec, S.E.B.J., etc.), consultants to Amerindian associations, and so on, should be able to carry on the work. It would seem that the state regards the university system (even as modernized in comparison with the classical tradition, since the introduction and ever-increasing teaching of scientific and technical disciplines) as shaped by an outworn cultural tradition. Indeed, in the bureaucratic-technocratic view of the world, the vocation of the educational system is not to raise the overall cultural level of the population, but rather to give training in narrowly specified skills needed to meet the ever-expanding requirements of production. University training geared to the requirements of specialized functions, although well advanced, has not progressed far enough. This point of view leads to the conception of an altogether different scientific and technological system, one where, for example, research and the training of researchers

would take place in research centres located in industry, rather than in universities, depriving the latter of their bases of legitimacy.

In conclusion, as economic conditions changed in the North, so have the conditions of northern research. As a result, idealism in northern science appears to be increasingly subjected to challenge from the factors which imperil the presumed independence of the field. The comparison between research before and after 1970 points the way to still other levels of interpretation and analysis. One might consider, for example, northern societies as a whole, as distinct from southern societies, and the deep gulf which separates the two. From this perspective, we might raise the following question : does not the real problem rest in the fact that the North is the utilitarian conscience of the South ⁸ ?

Real efficiency, symbolic efficiency

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At this point it should be noted that while, for good or ill, the conditions of research on northern issues have undergone a metamorphosis, the infrastructure of northern societies has been modified without any effect on southern societies : indeed, nothing that happens in the North really concerns them. In what follows we will discuss the implications of this state of inter-ethnic and inter-cultural imbalance. At the same time, we will examine the following paradox : at a time when networks of modern communications between the North and the South are being put into place, no effort is being made to modify inter-ethnic relations between the societies which inhabit these two distinct areas. How can such a phenomenon be explained ? The answer is no doubt to be found in the lack of congruence between science, tech-

⁸ To borrow an expression from Marshall Sahlins in *Culture and Practical Reason*, U.C.P., 1976 (*Au coeur des sociétés. Raison utilitaire et raison culturelle*. Gallimard, Paris, 1980).

nology and society, and in the impossibility of finding common terms to relate these three conceptual levels. These technological and scientific networks, which provide continuous links between North and South, keep human networks out of sight. The resulting split perpetuates the image southerners have of northerners, a primitive and stereotyped image if ever there was one.

Experience and theory show that northern societies cannot drift from their geographic domain and their cultural space without endangering their originality. In the 1960s, it seemed that northern societies were prisoners of a system which enclosed and segregated them. The course of history seemed to destine them to either integration or disappearance. In fact, however, subsequent events proved otherwise : in a number of specific instances, these societies have succeeded in avoiding the traps laid down by the state as part of its multi-pronged strategy of territorial standardization ⁹ In this regard it should be noted that despite the intrusion of alien elements over time, northern societies are still characterized by a number of roughly identical traditional features : social structure, economic activities linked to hunting and gathering, and religious activities. Northern societies continue to be governed - even though if in some cases it is only at the symbolic level - by these institutions, institutions that lose all meaning outside the realm of their origin. On this score, northern societies make patterned choices according to their elective affinities, despite their isolation from each other. Looked at this way, they form an *environment* whose potential autonomy cannot be denied.

Beginning in the 1970s, tightly-knit bureaucratic, scientific and technological networks were built between the North and the South. They were put to work as an elitist system with the notion of progress central to all their activities. However, the manner in which this was accomplished did not merely leave untouched the most important ma-

⁹ We have in mind in particular the inhabitants of the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

trix to be understood, that of human relationships ; rather, it precluded the very possibility of understanding it as what Mauss calls a "total social fact". It is as though northern science itself has come to be ruled by the ideology of progress, this ideology being seen as an integral (indeed the pre-eminent) part of the creative process. Under a guise of apparent objectivity, it has simply been forgotten that the North might not exist merely to satisfy the economic needs of the South, but rather as an autonomous region. As a result, what southern societies see in the North is defined in terms of progress, not in terms of a social and cultural project.

In this perspective, the conditions of inter-ethnic relations are laid down by the state at the outset ; the state operates at the level of real efficiency, that is to say at the level of what is tangible. In other words, the knowledge to be drawn from the North is a utilitarian one, devoid of any symbolic structure. In the eyes of the state, the North belongs above all to a system of relationships between ends and means.

The non-existence of cultural communication between ethnic groups becomes understandable if we examine the links between science, technology and society as these are now articulated. At present, the social inadequacy of the communications system is assessed from a technocratic and bureaucratic point of view. Indeed, in this particular way of seeing things, the vocation of the present system is not to raise the cultural level of the population but to develop skills defined strictly in relation to the requisites of economic expansion and increased productivity. Science and technology which, since the Renaissance, had been defined by man as instruments of dominion over nature, seem to have now emancipated themselves from society ; that is to say their development escapes society's rule. Should we not ask whether the state, in setting up modern networks of communication, has not become dependent upon a certain ideology of scientific progress ?

Some might question whether it is possible to relate cultural and technological facts in common terms. But did not the problems of organization and communication between the North and the South arise specifically from the requirements of technological development in the 1970s rather than from purely cultural requirements and humanistic considerations ? The questions which can legitimately be asked, we believe, derive from the central and sacrosanct notion of growth - both as formulated and as it has so far been challenged - which has been invoked to justify the sacrificing of populations and the destruction of territories.

In short, instead of helping to establish balanced and dynamic cultural configurations, the exploitation of scientific and technological knowledge has served more often to destroy them. Our society aims for ever increasing technological development ; it forgets that its members have not always acquired the cultural means needed to make sense of the society in which they live. Science and technology have the property of infiltrating day-to-day experience and of marking all its features indelibly : personal experience, industrial development, mores, religious beliefs, etc. Our society has become technocratic to the point that fundamental aspects of living are affected without it being possible to recognize the fact. Along these lines, the hunter-gatherer peoples give cause for reflection. Far from enduring traditional techniques (TéXvr : arts and crafts), they integrate them into their daily lives, to the point of bestowing upon them a sacred dimension. In a sense, there is scarcely any pre-eminence of the object over the human, or conversely. That is to say that techniques are never stripped of their cultural dimension, hence the principle of symbolic efficiency. They are literally incorporated into the language of myths and cosmological thought, and they are even used to mediate between terrestrial and supra-terrestrial powers.

The progress of science and technology underlies the development of the apparatus of the state and shapes the social structure in which people live. Any reflection about science, technology and society ine-

vitably runs into the problem of relations between them, either to note the action of science and technology on society or, conversely, to note the action of society on science and technology. In the final analysis, such reflection leads inevitably to a critique of the present system of inter-ethnic relations, however it is conceived.

Historical memory and collective memory

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Is it possible, in our society, to separate technological exploitation from social contingencies ? We may well ask also whether our educational system does not encourage the denial of the phenomenon of ethnicity to the point of creating conditions ideal for the systematization of ethnocentrism. In this case, ethnocentrism impregnates the mentality of our social institutions, and provides reasons for denying the reality and truth of difference. This in turn gives rise to a neither explicitly expressed nor openly admitted compulsion to suppress the other as an Other ¹⁰. It is important here not to confuse the concept of ethnocentrism and that of ethnocide. Whereas the latter refers to the cultural death of minorities, the former is by contrast a virtually universal notion that refers primarily to the principle of a given peoples' identity ; when systematized, however, it becomes dangerous and can lead to ethnocide. Unlike ethnocentrism, ethnocide is a fluid concept First applied to Indian societies of South America in protest against their cultural death, as often as not associated with their physical

¹⁰ See P. Désy, op. cit., 1972, p. 277. The truth of this assertion can be verified at the level of university teaching. Over and above the fact that, so as to be able to offer courses on Amerindian cultures it was necessary to wage a powerful--and ongoing--struggle to overcome the objection that "no one is interested", students--in large numbers--belong to that class of youths who, more often than not buoyed by an inadequate education in the humanities, enrol in order to study a subject about which no one had previously spoken to them.

death, or genocide ¹¹. Applied to Canada, nowadays, the notion of ethnocide has meaning only if looked at in the light of political reality and historical evolution. From this point of view, this concept would seem to belong less and less to anthropological discourse, which it is bound to escape, than to Amerindian discourse, which is by definition more capable of describing the causes and effects on its own social formations.

Whereas northern science continues to be the preserve of an elite, the rest of society remains remarkably ignorant of the situation. Outside the institutional paths previously mentioned, outside the technological and bureaucratic spheres accessible to every citizen (one can even have gone to the North, on occasion, without as a result acquiring knowledge in the literal sense of the word), there is little creative space left for original cultural currents to be generated. In other words, the inhabitant of the southern regions has no significant reference points in northern culture ; on the contrary his perceptions find their wellsprings in conventional wisdom and stereotypes belonging to the collective memory. That these perceptions are clear and to varying degrees, complex, in no way alters their etiology.

The distinction between historical and collective memory can 'help to understand how the perception of the northern realm varies according to the vantage point of the observer. Whereas historical memory contains rigorously verified facts, the knowledge of which is the preserve of a coterie of intellectuals, collective memory is another matter. To quote Claude Lefort :

"[It] takes form within, and at meeting points of, a number of groups who recall from the past only that which suits their current representation of the present. It is shaped in our day, ever more insistently by that small group which has at its disposal the wherewithal to disseminate its representations

¹¹ For a critical definition of ethnocide, the reader can consult P. Clastres, "De l'ethnocide", in *Recherches d'anthropologie politique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1980.

- political leaders whose declarations are replete with reminiscences uttered to give credibility to a given tradition, intellectuals concerned with presenting an edifying past, little and great manipulators of the media, clever enough to let through only that which pleases the masters of the hour" ¹².

And what of university researchers who are busy carving the territory of the North into personal or institutional fiefdoms for their exclusive scrutiny ? We have seen how this apportionment was encouraged by universities concerned with collecting large subsidies. It cannot be denied that it was carried out in an institutionalized fashion at a given moment of rapprochement between scientific and technological knowledge. At the same time those researchers who had the bad manners to stray from the prescribed wards risked condemnation.

The opposition between historical and collective memory breeds its own contradictions : thus, while there is an organized and Holy scientific intellectual output on the North, there exists at the same time an intellectual output which relies upon discursive forms of repetition. It is as if the North, which is a privileged territory in one instance, can also be picked over for purposes of trivialization in the other. Unfortunately, the collective memory, being exempt neither from the constraints of fashion nor the pressure to comply with it, turns most often to this second form of intellectual production. In other words, this means that if one must speak about the North, one does so, but in such a manner as to conceal reality and disguise the facts in a certain way : thus, the very number of approaches, the very multiplicity of impressions, and the very abundance of declarations can paradoxically end up by discouraging all desire to know.

In contrast, what can vaguely be defined as a current of sympathy toward native peoples belongs to another order of ideas. This current, when it exists, is important if only because it calls government decisions into question. In the case of the Russell Tribunal in Amsterdam

¹² "Une autre révolution", *Libre*, no. I, Payot, Paris, 1977, pp. 86-87.

and the Geneva conferences, for example, Canada was suspected and even accused of using methods she is the first to condemn in others. We find manifestation of this "sympathy" on the national level as well. Even so, on the local level, every time that a Euro-Canadian community is placed in contact with an Amerindian community, the hypothesis of sympathy seems fragile. Indeed, the very closeness of the two types of communities causes tensions and rivalries, and gives rise to acts of violence, from which many of those who do not live in situations of this kind believe themselves immune. If certain cities such as Kenora, Regina or Winnipeg, to cite only those, are representative of this state of affairs, the cities further to the north that were built for purposes of exploitation, give even stronger evidence. Scheferville, where a social microcosm of the south was created from which the native population was excluded, is a good example. In Quebec where, in the manner of Pangloss, some like to entertain the illusion that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds", the still recent events of Restigouche and Akwesasne should serve as eye-openers. To speak of Quebec, so long as the question of national identity informed the speech of our politicians, autochthonous peoples remained invisible at the level of political discourse. Yet now that their claim are heard in high places--because the information at long last gets through, not because the claims are new--it seems that native peoples can serve equally well to question this identity or justify it. An opportunity is thus provided to institutionalize a social obligation : the obligation of sympathizing with the Amerindian cause, although hardly a more enlightened obligation for all that. This obligatory sympathy can serve as a way of hammering out a comfortable national conscience. Obviously this change in attitude is linked with political-historical circumstances ; however, the conditions under which the collective memory continues to take shape have in no way been altered.

Some may object that our position is pessimistic and that "things have changed a great deal". To this, we could respond that "the more things change, the more they remain the same". The knowledge that is

drawn from the North and from its societies is basically the same as that which prevailed over twenty years ago. Transformations which seem radical at the level of information and publications influence historical memory more than they influence collective memory.

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In the final analysis, relations between the North and the South are determined less by geographical than by social distance. Indeed, the concept of geographical distance is only applicable to a certain sphere as we saw in regard to the instrumentation of technological and bureaucratic knowledge. On the other hand, the concept of social distance opens quite different horizons : the problem, for instance, of how inter-ethnic relations are reproduced cannot be understood without reference to social, as opposed to geographical distance. In this light, northern societies have every reason to retain their originality rather than to emulate their neighbours to the South. It is no doubt in this sense that it will be possible to interpret the idea of autonomous northern provinces.

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