

Chapter 11

At The Café

The Cafetier and The Drinking Circles

In Peyrane each family, each home remains the center of existence for its members in recreation as in work. The one institution that most nearly fills the role of a public recreational center is the café. It is not only a recreational center, however. It has other functions that make it an important institution in the community. First, it is a store like other stores but specializing in the sale of beverages, alcoholic and nonalcoholic. People who do not make their own wine and who do not like the wine sold at the groceries buy their wine at the café just as they buy their meat at the butcher's. One of the chores of some of the children when they get home from school at noon is to take an empty bottle to the café to have it filled with wine for lunch. A man whose wife is sick may come to the café to buy her a bottle of Vichy water.

Since the café is also a *tabac*, a tobacco store, it is an official government agency. The ownership and the management are licensed by the government and cannot be changed without its authorization. The manager of the store must be bonded, and he is inspected periodically by government agents. The café sells other products on which the government has a monopoly besides tobacco. One may buy matches, lighters, postage stamps, and lottery tickets there. The café has the forms on which all those who make brandy must declare officially the amount they have made. Finally the café sells tax stamps which must be put on all legal documents.

In the life of the village one of the main functions of the café is to serve as a neutral meeting ground, the only neutral spot where villagers and outsiders may come and go freely. Tourists, strangers, salesmen, any of the people coming to the village who have no access to a home, may go to the café to rest and refresh themselves. Natives want-

ing to meet on neutral grounds to talk over a private affair can find a back table where they will be undisturbed. A politician coming to the village to talk over party affairs with his local agents will meet them in the café.

When I began to give Rorschach tests, I either made arrangements to meet my subjects at their home or I invited them to our house. I soon found that both arrangements were unsatisfactory. In their home I was a guest, and my call was necessarily considered a social call. As a guest I was unable to keep other members of the family from taking part in the test. In our house I found people felt ill at ease. Their dual roles of guest and subject were confusing to them, and for some of the more humble villagers the relative comfort of our house was disturbing. Soon I discovered the ideal location for the tests—a back table in the café which came to be known as my office. There we were on neutral, familiar ground. Both the subject and I felt at ease, and the café owner cooperated in keeping curious clients from disturbing us. Furthermore, people saw that something intriguing was going on and wanted to participate. I soon found that I had more willing subjects than I could handle.

Since so many different kinds of people go to the café for different purposes and since few leave without chatting a bit with the café owner or his wife, the establishment has naturally become the unofficial information bureau of the town. All the information and misinformation gathered by the extensive network of gossip circles throughout the community is eventually funneled into the café. The town clerk spends two hours or so in the café every day. The doctor often drops in for an *apéritif* when he comes to town. People from outlying sections of the commune who come to the village only on official business at the Town Hall drop into the café and leave news of their neighborhood. Through the café owner the postman relays messages with which he has been charged on his route. With these and many other sources of information at his disposal the café owner usually knows better than anyone else in the village the news of the community.

The café also serves as a home, a substitute *foyer*, for the Lonely Ones, five or six of the poorest adult males of the community—bachelors, widowers, divorced—who live alone. They make the café the center of their existence. They are too poor to buy more than a couple of *cannons* a day. A *canon*, a small glass of red wine, costs only three

cents. So the café owner makes little profit from the Lonely Ones. Still, when they are not working or sleeping they are at the café. They read the café newspapers, use the café playing cards, unload their hearts to the café owner's wife, or just sit doing nothing. At mealtime they often bring their bread and cheese and sausage to the café and eat in the company of the café owner's family.

The Lonely Ones are the bane of the café owner's existence. Monsieur and Madame Chobaut had the café when we moved to Peyrane. They had been there only a few months. Before that they had lived in Nice where they said they had had a café so popular and prosperous that Madame Chobaut became *un peu fatiguée* from the strain. To give her a chance to recover her health they sold their place in Nice and bought the café in Peyrane. There they found that they had overestimated the quiet, restful atmosphere of rural life. Madame Chobaut got no rest. She had to be on her feet from early in the morning until late at night, if only to keep shop while the Lonely Ones made their forlorn conversation with her. She had been a governess in England, she said, and she was accustomed to the sophisticated conversation of her clientele in Nice. She felt sorry for Monsieur Maucorps and Pierre and Marino and *lou Frisé*, but she found that ten hours a day in their company were unbearable. Her health deteriorated, and after a few months her husband sold the café in Peyrane and bought a sheep farm in the southern Alps. There Madame Chobaut hoped to find the rest and peace she needed.

The Chobauts were replaced by the Voisins. Voisin, a forty-year-old adolescent who had never been able to become *sérieux*, had tried several trades but had not been satisfied with any of them. When we moved to Peyrane, he was a baker. The bread he made was not bad, but Voisin was unhappy. His work interfered with his one passion in life—playing *boules*. Being a baker in the winter when it is too cold to play boules was all right, but in the summer when he played boules until one or two o'clock in the morning and then had to start baking at three or four he couldn't get enough sleep. Three days a week he had to fill his car with bread and deliver it to farms around the commune. On the other days when he could have caught up with his sleep, he would no sooner get comfortably settled in bed than he would hear the clacking of boules in the *place* beside his house. He tried to ignore the noise, but eventually his passion won out over his

need for sleep, and he spent the rest of the day playing boules. His wife and his father nagged him, but it did no good. He got so little sleep that by September he was *fatigué* and had to give up the bakery.

His wife and daughter and he went to live in Apt with his father, where he spent several months resting and vaguely looking for a job. Finally he heard that the Chobauts were leaving, and he thought he had found his calling at last. As soon as government authorization could be obtained, he replaced Chobaut as *cafetier*.

By that time the boule season had opened, and Voisin found that he was finally able to combine business with pleasure. While his wife stood behind the counter, he spent the day playing *boules*. Unfortunately, Voisin is not a good player. In spite of his enthusiasm and his constant practice his game does not improve so that whenever Voisin plays, he loses. The client gets his drink free instead of paying for it. Voisin also loses at cards, and he loses in his business since he doesn't have the courage to say no when anyone asks for credit. Madame Voisin tries to make up for this, but when she has to leave the bar in charge of her husband she says it's *la catastrophe*. She returns home from shopping and finds a whole page of the little black book filled with names of people who have charged their drinks while she was away. Rivet said to Voisin one day (he is the kind of unfortunate goat who seems to ask to be insulted), "The only reason you're going to keep this café without going bankrupt is that you lose every contest you enter. You lose at boules. You lose at belote. You're bound to lose to your wife who'll keep the café going in spite of you."

Of course, no one could make a living from the trade of the Lonely Ones. The sale of government monopoly items like tobacco is not lucrative, although it helps attract customers who may buy a drink. The café as an information center and as a neutral meeting ground brings in a few customers a day. The sale of table wine brings some income. For most of his income, however, the *cafetier* depends on his sale of drinks during the time when the café is serving as a recreation center—during the *apéritif* hours, at boules and belote contests, and when the café is turned into a movie house.

As a men's social club the café functions principally during the *apéritif* hours, from twelve to one o'clock before lunch and from six to seven o'clock before dinner. The two *apéritif* hours are quite different. The noon hour is the hour of the city men. Rivet, the town clerk,

Avenas, the tailor, Porte, a retired naval radio operator who moved to the country to hunt—all three of them from Marseille—are always at the café at noon. Barbier, the Notaire, often comes. He was born in Peyrane, but he was educated in Aix and Paris. Doctor Magny usually drops in on Mondays and Fridays, and sometimes on Wednesdays if he is not too busy. Chobaut, the suave *cafetier* from Nice, held this group together and participated in it. Of course, the Lonely Ones are present too, but their presence is scarcely noticed and they do not join in the conversation. Now and then one of the men at the bar feeling mellow will say, "Well, Monsieur Maucorps looks thirsty. Serve him a drink, too," and the *cafetier* takes a *canon* of red wine to Monsieur Maucorps who murmurs his thanks.

The group at the bar does not drink red wine or pastis but more sophisticated and more expensive city drinks of the vermouth type. The number of drinks consumed by each member of the circle depends on the number present, for it is customary for each to pay for a *tournée*, a round. This is a fixed procedure, but it can be varied easily through a special excuse. If someone has to leave before he has offered his round of drinks, he says, "Tomorrow will be my round." If someone has to leave before profiting from a round due him, he says, "That will be for tomorrow." When "tomorrow" comes, everyone has forgotten the postponed drink.

The conversation of the noon *apéritif* circle usually centers about the lack of sophistication in this town where they are fated to live. They are amused by incidents and scandals which emphasize the village atmosphere, so different from the city they profess to prefer. It was from this group that I learned the details of such scandals as the Aubenas-Roche *brouille*.

When politics is mentioned, Avenas, for he is the only Communist in the group, tries to start an argument. No one takes him seriously, so political discussions are saved for those days when he is not there. When Avenas is there, he is inevitably the butt of all the joking. He is ribbed sometimes because of his incapacity as President of the Hunting Society, and sometimes because of his putative excessive sexual drive. When Avenas is away the Lonely Ones become the targets, but they profit from the situation since they are offered a free drink whenever anyone takes notice of them.

Talk about sex is reserved for the days when the Notaire is absent.

He is not puritanical in the least, but he is the Notaire and deserves respect. On days when he is there the conversation turns more to trips he has recently made to Italy or Spain or Paris, the hotels where he stayed, the good meals he had. Automobiles are another safe and rich source of conversational matter. The Notaire has the biggest, newest, finest car in the commune.

At one o'clock when most of the townspeople have finished their dinner and the children are going back to school, the noon *apéritif* group breaks up and goes home for a one o'clock lunch.

The evening *apéritif* circle is a larger and less intimate group. There are usually ten or fifteen ochre workers, artisans and farmers, in addition to the Lonely Ones. The preferred drink is neither red wine, the poor man's *apéritif*, nor vermouth, the bourgeois drink, but *pastis*, the anis-flavored, milkish-colored, sweet-tasting drink which is the most popular *apéritif* in any café in southern France. The drinking ritual is fundamentally the same as that of the noon circle, but it is less formal in the evening. The groups of men standing at the bar or sitting at the tables mingle, and the *tournee* groups, that is the set-up groups, become so confused that often it is not clear whose turn it is to pay. Only the café owner's wife can keep the intricate network of debts in mind. She knows exactly who has paid for whose drink, and above all who still owes her money. In the confusion, a man who does not have enough money to pay for a whole round of drinks can order a drink for only himself without being embarrassed.

The language used by the evening circle is primarily the local Provençal dialect, and the conversation principally concerns hunting, war experiences, gossip, and politics. When the men start to talk about politics, the atmosphere becomes more tense. If someone loses his temper, others save the situation by introducing a bantering note, and the argument calms down. The butt of the joking mutters to himself for a few moments, but soon he overcomes his resentment and joins the conversation again.

The men in the evening circle drink more than those in the noon circle. Most of them are obviously stimulated by the alcohol. Voices are raised, and the conversations become animated, but there is rarely any drunkenness. The only chronic alcoholic in the community drinks alone. Almost the only cases of drunkenness I saw were on the rare occasions when a Lonely One had had a job, had just been paid, and

consequently had had more to drink than he was accustomed to. On these occasions the Lonely One comes to life. He aggressively takes part in the *tournee* groups. He insists on setting up the house. He takes too active a part in the conversation. He never gets rolling drunk, but his conduct is embarrassing to the other men. If, as he drinks, he becomes more gentle, the men remain friendly to him, but they joke with him as they would with a small child who has not developed rational control. If he becomes loudly or violently aggressive, they turn away from him. The *cafetier* refuses to sell him more drinks and tells him to go home to rest. Rebuffed, he goes out the door muttering to himself, and the atmosphere in the café returns to normal.

By seven o'clock most of the men have gone home. If one lingers, his wife sends a child to tell him that supper is ready. But the child is greeted so cordially that he often forgets the purpose of his errand. The men shake hands with him, joke with him, and the father gives him a sip of his *pastis*. Then the *cafetier* mixes a drink of grenadine or mint syrup and soda water and gives it to the child who remains the center of attention until he says, "Thank you, Monsieur."

Usually after a few minutes the father and child shake hands with everyone, thank the *cafetier* again, and go home to supper. If they do not go in a reasonable length of time, his wife will come to the café door, angry but smiling.

"Aimé, your supper is getting cold. Didn't the child tell you?"

"Yes, yes, yes. I'll be right there."

He doesn't go right away. He must remain a few minutes more to preserve his self-respect. But after a few moments he pays his bill and hurries off.

By seven-thirty all but the Lonely Ones have left, and the *cafetier* and his wife can sit down to their supper.

In the evening the café is quiet. Usually only four or five habitués drop in: little Avenas and his wife, two or three older unmarried men, and Raoul Pascal who seems eager to spend the evenings away from home. They play cards while the Lonely Ones sit and watch them. If an extra hand is needed, one of the Lonely Ones will be asked to play, too. The evening drags on, especially for the *cafetier* who sells scarcely enough drinks to pay for the light and heat. By ten or ten-thirty the card games are over, and the losers pay for the drinks. Conversation drags on for a while, and eventually the Avenases go home, followed

by the other habitués. The Lonely Ones are gently but firmly urged to leave, and finally the *cafetier* is able to close up and go to bed.

Unfortunately for him, there are occasions when this habitual group gets lively. It may happen that Raoul Pascal, who has been losing steadily all evening, is the object of so much joking that he finally appears to be insulted. He insists on starting another game and raising the stakes from a drink to one or two packages of cigarettes. With these high stakes the excitement grows, and everyone may stay until one or two o'clock to see the outcome of the match. Unless the *cafetier* himself is involved in the challenge, the situation is scarcely bearable for him. Light and heat are consumed for three hours more; he gets three hours less sleep; the increase in his evening's profits is inconsequential.

The *cafetier's* lot is not a happy one, his wife and he are quick to assure you. They get up early and go to bed late. They are on their feet most of the time. They have no privacy at mealtime. They must listen to much dreary conversation, and the wife must be able to smile impassively when salty remarks are made. They dare not join in political disputes, yet they must subscribe to newspapers and magazines representing the shade of opinion held by a majority of their clients. They are plagued with the problem of credit — *la plaie du commerce*. The life they lead is not a normal one, and still the income from the long hours of work is not sufficient. In order to make ends meet they must organize special activities to bring them more business.

Boules

Painted on the weathered façade of the café is a sign:

BOULES TOURNAMENT
EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT
NINE O'CLOCK

By organizing this tournament and by making his café a center for men who like to play boules, the *cafetier* attracts a larger clientele and increases his income substantially.

After the gardens are planted in the spring and before the hunting season opens in the fall, there is usually someone playing boules on the *place* across from the café—even if it is only Voisin practicing by himself. Lights are strung across the *place* (the *cafetier* pays the electric

bill) so that those who share Voisin's passion for boules can play at night as well as in the daytime. In the summer, a dozen or so men play boules until one or two or three o'clock every morning. They make so much noise that the property on the *place* has actually decreased in value. Three houses are vacant. No one wants to live in a spot that is so noisy. Most of the men who play so late are, unlike Voisin, serious workers. Raoul Pascal, who plays every evening, has one of the best-run farms in the commune.

"How can you work the next day when you stay up late every night? Aren't you sleepy?" I asked him.

He seemed surprised. "Sleepy? What does that matter? You just go ahead and work anyway."

Most of the men, however, do not come to play except in the tournament on Saturday night, or on a Sunday afternoon when there is also a tournament if enough men want one. A tournament may be organized or canceled on the spur of the moment. There are formalities, but no one feels that they are rigid.

Although the Saturday night tournament is advertised as beginning at nine o'clock, very few of the men arrive so early. They drift in slowly after their dinner, order a drink, and carry on conversation normally as though no activity were planned. Finally a couple of the men say, "Well, we have to begin to think about that boules tournament," and they informally assume the responsibility for organizing it. They collect a fee of twenty-five cents from each of the twenty or thirty men who are interested in playing. This money forms the pot out of which the first, second, and third prizes will be given to the winning teams. They write down the name of each participant and put a number beside his name. Then the *cafetier*, who is too busy serving drinks to help organize the affair, gives them a cigar box of old slips of cardboard which they dump into a *béret* to draw for teams. Each man finds his partner or partners, gets his boules from the old case in the back of the café, and goes out fondly clicking the boules together. By the time the tournament begins it is ten-thirty.

The balls with which the game of boules is played used to be made of wood studded with tacks, but in the twentieth century this old-fashioned boule was replaced by a cast bronze or steel ball called *intégrale*. Today the best boule is made of stainless steel, the "J. B. Boule." If a man takes his game of boules seriously he must acquire

a set of three "J.B.'s" which cost about four dollars apiece—a considerable sum for a man from Peyrane.

The game of boules is relatively simple, but as formulated by the F.F.B.J.P.P. (La Fédération Française Bouliste du Jeu Provençal et Pétañque—the French Federation of Pétañque and Provençal Bowlers) the rules cover three pages of fine print. Every possible contingency is foreseen—what happens if a boule breaks, what happens if a spectator interferes with the game, what happens in case of rain or *force majeure*, etc. We need not worry about all the fine points of the game here. We shall not even make the distinction between the two games of *pétañque* (from the Provençal expression meaning "feet together") and *provençal* (also called the "long game" or "Marseille game"). It does seem essential, however, that we have a general understanding of this sport which is as important in southern France as softball, horseshoes, croquet, bowling, and shuffleboard combined would be in the United States.

A team is made up of one, two, three, or (rarely) four men, each man having two or three boules. A boule must be from two and one-half to three and one-third inches in diameter and must not weigh more than about two pounds. The game can be played on any terrain, but the best terrain is a hard, smooth surface. (When the impassioned players of Peyrane get bored with their usual terrain, they go play on the macadam highway!) There are no limits to the playing field, no lines restricting the play; the game can be played anywhere. The only equipment needed is the boules themselves and a little wooden ball about an inch in diameter, which is called *le but* (the target) or *le bouchon* (the cork).

A member of one team starts the game by tossing the cork from fifteen to seventy-five feet in any direction. He then throws one of his boules, trying to place it as close as he can to the cork. A member of the opposing team then throws a boule, trying to place it still closer to the cork. After that the other boules are thrown, each team trying to get as many as possible of its boules closer to the cork than the nearest boule of the opposing team. For each of its boules closer to the cork than the opponent's closest boule, a team scores one point. The game goes on until one team wins with a score of fifteen points. Then the losers buy a drink for the winners.

The real complications of the game arise from the different possibilities for getting a boule closer to the cork. One can "point," that is, simply try to roll the boule close to the cork. One can "fire," that is, throw a boule at an opponent's boule, knocking it out of its position close to the cork. One can "fire at the cork," that is, throw a boule directly at the cork, knocking it away from an opponent's boule or knocking it closer to one's own boule.

The real interest in the game lies in the decision a team has to make each time a boule is about to be thrown. Should a boule be "pointed?" If so, in what manner? Should it be rolled with a lot or a little backspin? What tiny slopes or pebbles are there in the course that might influence the roll of the boule? Is the terrain hard and fast or soft and slow? Such questions could be multiplied many times, and they are! The members of a team may argue for fifteen minutes about how a shot should be made. The wit, the humor, the sarcasm, the insults, the oaths, the logic, the experimental demonstration, and the ability to dramatize a situation give the game its essential interest. Spectators will ignore a game being played by men who are physically skilled but who are unable to dramatize their game, and they will crowd around a game played by men who do not play very well but who are witty, dramatic, shrewd in their ability to outwit their opponents. The most popular players are, of course, those who combine skill with wit.

One Sunday afternoon a large crowd of spectators gathered to watch a match between two of the best teams in the village. On one team were River, Paul, and Pascal; on the other Prayal the tailor, Henri Favre, and Frayse. It was the final game in a tournament. All these men play unusually well, and all of them have a sense of drama. A tense moment arrived. River's team had 14 points, Prayal's team 11 points. River's team had thrown all its boules and had one boule closer to the cork than any boule of Prayal's team. This might be the winning boule. However, Prayal still had one boule to throw, and his team had three boules closer to the cork than River's second closest boule. The outcome of the game and of the tournament depended on the boule that Prayal was about to throw.

The question was how he should throw his remaining boule. He could "point" it. That is, he could simply try to roll it closer to the cork than River's winning boule. If he succeeded his team would get one

point; the score would be Rivet's team: 14; Prayal's team 12. The game would go on. If he failed to beat Rivet's winning boule, the game would be over.

There was the alternative of "firing" this last boule, that is, hurling it directly at Rivet's winning boule. This shot had attractive possibilities. If Prayal "fired" accurately, his boule would hit Rivet's winning boule squarely and send it flying, while his own "fired" boule would spin and settle down in the winning position now occupied by Rivet's boule, a perfect billiard shot. In this case Prayal's team would score not only one point, but four points, because with Rivet's ball removed Prayal's team would have four boules nearer the cork than the closest boule of Rivet's team. The score would be Prayal's team: 15; Rivet's team: 14. Prayal's team would win both the game and the tournament.

The cork, however, lay fifty feet from the spot from which Prayal had to throw. Prayal is an excellent "firer," but he stood no better than a fifty-fifty chance to make good on this shot, for it is extremely difficult to "fire" accurately at this distance. On the other hand, although it is normally much easier to "point," the terrain on which the game was being played was rocky and bumpy, and a tiny pebble or slope may deflect a boule disastrously when it is rolling. There was no safe way to play the boule. It was probably safer to "point" than to "fire," but the decision was difficult.

Prayal and his teammates, Favre and Fraysse, studied the situation silently for a while, walking around, surveying the angles, thumping the terrain, considering the distance. Finally Prayal broke the silence:

"I'm going to fire it. It's all or nothing."

Favre's expression showed amazement and contempt: "Are you mad? You're not in form today, or we'd already have won."

Prayal was indignant: "What do you mean, I'm not in form! I haven't missed a shot. If you'd played as well as I have, we'd already be in the café having a drink."

The argument developed. Prayal and Favre each called on their teammate, Fraysse, and on the spectators to testify in his behalf. The spectators remained silent, but Rivet—their opponent—hoping to add fuel to the fire and upset them still further, yelled:

"Come on and get it over with. It's our point any way you play it.

Everyone knows that Prayal can't "fire," and he's off on his "pointing" today, so he might as well throw and have it over with."

Prayal was insulted, and an argument developed between Rivet and Prayal concerning which one was responsible for losing the last time they were paired together in a tournament.

Meanwhile Fraysse had been examining the terrain, and had finally reached a conclusion:

"Look, Prayal. This is the way to play it. You've got to "point" it. Toss it all the way up to this spot to avoid the stones there in front of you. Land right here where it's solid. Not too much backspin. Then this little bump will make it roll right in between Rivet's boule and the cork. We win the point. It's simple. Look!" He pretended to throw a boule and then ran to imitate the trajectory which he predicted the boule would take.

Favre rejected this suggestion: "No, there are too many pebbles. The thing is to throw the boule high with plenty of backspin so that it will land right next to the cork—and there's our point. You can't let it roll. Look at those pebbles."

Fraysse said, "That's all right. We'll clean them away from the path." And he started to brush away the pebbles from his preferred course. This was against the rules. Rivet's team rushed in, furious, pushing the pebbles back where they had been, yelling.

A furious argument broke out. The men, who had been speaking Provençal, now burst into French, as they always do when there is an argument over rules. Fraysse feigned disgust for Rivet and his men, "little people who would argue over a few pebbles," but he knew the rules were against him.

Prayal called to Fraysse, "Don't bother about the stones, Fraysse. Don't upset the little men with them. I'm not going to 'point' anyway. I'm going to 'fire' and get it over with."

Favre objected to this reckless manner of making a decision. He tried to show Prayal that the only logical, sensible, safe way of playing the point was to "point" the boule as he, Favre, had suggested—to throw it high above the pebbles and with enough backspin so that it would not roll too far. This was certainly the reasonable shot to make, but Prayal was obstinate. He still insisted that he was going to "fire" the boule.

Although Rivet had openly disparaged Prayal's ability to "fire" he knew that in reality Prayal could "fire" better than anyone else in the village. He wanted to keep him from making a shot that might well win the game. So he said,

"If I were on your team, I'd tell Prayal to go ahead and 'fire' it. You know he's got to because he's afraid to 'point.'

Prayal was taken in. He now wanted to "point" just to show that he could do it. He refused to admit that he had changed his mind, but eventually he let himself be persuaded by his teammates who wanted him to "point" it. Prayal then found himself in an enviable position. He was going to "point" instead of "firing." He was going to play the shot safely and reasonably. At the same time he was getting credit for wanting to make the more reckless, dramatic shot, "firing" it. Furthermore, he had evaded responsibility. If his shot went wrong he could say that it was the fault of his teammates who persuaded him to do it their way in spite of his better judgment.

"All right," he said finally, "I'll 'point' it, but that's not the shot called for here. It would be less complicated to 'fire' it and finish the game, but if this is what you want, here it is."

Favre saw Prayal's trick and did not intend to be taken in by it: "Oh, no, you don't. You can't blame us if you miss your shot. Have it your way and 'fire' it, if you want."

Prayal started to reply, but Fraysse interrupted. Fraysse had made a side bet of two packages of cigarettes on the game and couldn't afford to lose.

"Leave him alone, Favre," he said. "Prayal, you know what we think, but do as you like."

Prayal surveyed the terrain again. There was more discussion about brushing away the stones, but all the drama had been drawn from the situation. Prayal was finally ready to make the throw.

"This is what you wanted. Here it is," he said.

Prayal stood poised. Fraysse kneeled and remained frozen pointing to the spot where he thought the boule must land to win the point. Favre squatted and pointed to the place near the cork where the boule must roll. The moment had arrived, but Prayal stood mentally rehearsing the throw he was about to make. Finally, with deliberation but with a free movement, he tossed the boule. It was a perfectly executed shot. The boule landed at the spot where Fraysse was pointing, rolled

almost to the spot where Favre was pointing, and came to rest near the cork. However, it did not roll quite far enough to win the point decisively. It looked as though it were exactly at the same distance from the cork as Rivet's boule. Was it a tie?

No word was spoken. Teams and spectators closed in, gathering round the boules lying near the cork. Rivet picked up a straw to measure the distances but found it was too short. With an impatient gesture he whipped off his belt and crouched down, using the belt to measure the distances. He measured them, and it was at once obvious that his boule had won the point, and that his team had won the game and tournament. Still nothing was said. He repeated the measurement two or three times. No one said a word, but the spectators started to walk away, and the players picked up their boules.

The climax of the drama had been long; the anticlimax was extreme. Prayal had failed by a half inch to win the point. The evidence was convincing, and no one felt a need to comment on it. Spectators and players, who a few moments before had been tense, now stood completely indifferent. You could not tell from the expression on the faces of the players which ones had won and which had lost.

As the men drifted back to the café, Prayal muttered in a voice just loud enough for Fraysse to hear it:

"I should have done what I wanted to and 'fired' it instead of listening to Fraysse."

Fraysse was furious. "That's right. That's Prayal for you. You blame me when anyone can see it's your fault. You put too much backspin on the boule. When you threw the boule, I knew we were going to lose because of that backspin. Besides, if you'd 'fired' you'd have missed for sure."

The two walked back to the spot where the point had been played, set the cork and the boules up in the position in which they thought they had been, and began their arguments again. Fraysse said he'd show Prayal how the shot should have been made, and he bet him a package of cigarettes that he could roll his boule right next to the cork. He tried—and failed badly. His boule struck a stone and rolled three yards off to the side. Prayal gloated, and bet another package of cigarettes that he could "fire" his boule precisely as he had bragged he could. His attempt was perfect. The opponent's boule went flying, and Prayal's boule snuggled next to the cork.

Prayal was exultant. He had exonerated himself. He had lost the game, but he felt he had proved that he should have followed his own judgment. He should have made the bold "firing" shot which would have won the game instead of the sensible, safe shot that Fraysse had insisted on.

Fraysse was miserable. He knew that he was right, but he had lost four packages of cigarettes as well as first prize, and he had allowed Prayal to maneuver him into the position of responsibility. He knew that Prayal's so-called "proof" proved nothing at all except that luck had been on Prayal's side in the demonstration. Everyone would secretly agree with Fraysse, but no one would admit it because he had allowed himself to become the scapegoat for the defeat.

Rivet called from the door of the café, "How about the drinks you owe us?" Prayal and Fraysse picked up the boules and walked back to the café. Sitting around the table drinking pastis, all the men seemed to have forgotten the situation. The conversation concerned other subjects besides boules. Only now and then did Rivet make a crack at Prayal, and Prayal turned the joke onto Fraysse. The dramatic situation had become a matter for joking. It assumed its former importance only two months later when Prayal and Fraysse were again thrown together on a team. In another tense moment Prayal made a point of reminding Fraysse and the spectators of how one time Fraysse had lost them a tournament by insisting on having his own way instead of listening to Prayal.

The indifference with which the spectators and all the players except Prayal and Fraysse appeared to witness the end of this crucial match is difficult for an American to accept. There are no handshakes, no applause, no congratulations, no condolences. The only emotion expressed is amusement at the discomfiture of someone who may have become the butt of a joke during the game.

When Léon Favre had his motorcycle accident and returned from the hospital in Cavailhon to Peyranc, his recovery was discouragingly slow. His facial paralysis did not disappear. He was unable to work for weeks. As the time dragged on, Léon seemed to lose confidence in himself and in the future. His friends and family were alarmed by his depression as much as by his physical difficulty.

It was at this time that the big boule tournament of the spring fête was held. Léon did not plan to play, but at the last minute one of the

players dropped out, and Léon was asked to replace him. To everyone's surprise, Léon's team won game after game, and by the middle of the afternoon it was in the final match. Opposing it was a team of semi-professional players from Apt, the best team in that part of France, the team that later was sent to Algeria to take part in the French national boule tournament.

The game was close. The Apt team was not playing as well as usual and Léon's team was outdoing itself. The outcome of the game was uncertain down to a final shot which Léon himself made, a difficult shot on which an expert player might easily have failed. Léon won the point, the match, and the tournament with this shot.

I was moved by the situation, for it seemed to me that this unexpected public triumph might help Léon recover his self-confidence. Perhaps other people were moved, but no one showed it. The game ended and the crowd walked away. There were no congratulations, no applause. No one seemed excited by the upset. Nothing was said by anyone except by two members of the losing team who got into an argument over the manner in which the final point should have been played. I caught up with Léon Favre who had picked up his boules and was walking alone. When I shook hands with him and congratulated him on playing so well, he seemed surprised that I should have spoken to him. He was not displeased, but because my congratulations were unexpected, he did not know how to accept them. From the expression on his face one would have thought that his victory was a matter of indifference to him.

Belote

After the biggest tournament of the year, the tournament held at the Saint Michael's Day Festival, interest in boules begins to wane. The most enthusiastic players still come to the *place* every night, but the Saturday-night tournaments are soon abandoned. Some of the men are preoccupied with the grape harvest and with making their wine. Other men like to play only in warm weather. As the weather gets cooler it is not comfortable to spend the afternoon or evening out on the open *place*. The mistral begins to blow. Voisin, Rivet, Fraysse, and Léon Favre do not give in easily, but eventually even they are forced to abandon the sport. The steel boules chill their hands so that it is no longer possible to control the backspin. By mid-November the boule

season has ended. By that time, moreover, the hunting season has opened, and hunting takes the place of boules in the daytime. At night or on rainy days when they cannot hunt, some of the men spend their leisure time playing cards.

Several card games are played in Peyrane. *Manille* and *écarté* enjoy a certain popularity. A few people play bridge, but it is considered a city game. Only Bonerandi, Viquier, Aubenas, and Vincent play bridge with enthusiasm. In the winter they meet three nights a week at the inn to play.

By far the most popular game in winter is *belote*, which is said to resemble *bezique* and *pinochle*. Everyone in Peyrane knows how to play *belote*, and it is one of the few games in which both men and women participate. The schoolteachers and their husbands, who form an almost closed social circle, often play *belote* when they spend the evening together. When the Arènes have closed their store and finished their late supper they usually play a few hands before they go to bed. On cold, rainy Sunday afternoons some of the men sit in the cafe and play *belote* for four hours without stopping.

The *cafetier* takes advantage of this enthusiasm for *belote* by organizing a Saturday-night tournament to take the place of the boules tournament. He finds the *belote* tournament even more rewarding than the boules tournament. When men sit around playing cards they naturally buy more drinks than they do when they have to come in from the boules grounds outdoors to get a drink. Moreover, since *belote* tournaments are held during the hunting season the prize for the winners usually is game — hares or thrushes shot by the *cafetier* himself or by one of his debtors. The prize therefore costs the *cafetier* nothing, and he pockets the twenty-five-cent fee paid by each of the participants — “to cover the cost of heat, lighting, wear-and-tear on the cards and other equipment.”

The tournament is vividly advertised by the *cafetier* for several days before the tournament. He pencils a large sign, “*Belote Tournament Saturday Night*,” and puts it in his window. Below the sign he hangs the prizes, a couple of hares or four thrushes, to whet the appetite of the men who pass.

The turn-out is always good. There are rarely fewer than fifty or sixty men taking part in the tournament, and there is always one woman. Little Avenas doesn't play, but his amazon wife never fails to

show up. Perhaps other women would like to play in the tournament, but no woman except Madame Avenas dares. The men joke with her about her presence, but her rejoinders may be so devastating that she is usually accepted as though she were one of the men. Behind her enormous back, however, some of the men continue to remark that if she were *their wife* they would know how to put her in her place, and they have contempt for Avenas.

There are more players than spectators at a *belote* tournament, because *belote* is not a very interesting game to watch. Partners are not allowed to argue with each other over how they will play a point. Crucial decisions regarding strategy cannot be made collectively and openly as they are in boules. *Belote* players make their decisions individually and silently. *Belote* games can be tense, but by their nature they cannot be as dramatic as a good game of boules.

Of course, men like Rivet and Prayal cannot avoid making the most of every dramatic opportunity. When they are dealt an ordinary hand they play it in silence, but when they are dealt an extraordinary hand, a triumphant hand which cannot possibly be beaten, the rule of silence goes by the board and they loudly proclaim every play they are about to make. As they start to play the hand the other people in the café draw around to watch the display.

At such a moment Prayal sits forward tensely, holding his cards close to his chest so the bystanders cannot see them. As his opponent leads a club, he holds a card high above his head and throws it exultantly on the table, yelling: “That's the way it is. You play a club. I *cut* it with a heart and the lead is mine.” He holds up another card and slams it on the table: “And there's the jack of hearts to take away one of your trumps.” The other three men follow suit docilely. Another card thumps on the table: “And there's the nine of hearts to take another of your trumps. You were a fool, Baume, to bid hearts when I had the two top cards.” Baume looks downcast as he reluctantly follows suit. Another card thunders down: “And there's the ace of spades, and another trick is mine . . . And there's the ace of diamonds — for my last trick. You have a measly little trump left, Baume, so you can have the last trick. You're lucky you're not *capot*.” As the spectators make their way back to their own tables, Baume flares up: “It's easy for a person to brag when he's lucky enough to have all the good cards.” Prayal ignores this remark, which he and everyone else know

is true. He stares into space showing no inclination to argue a completely irrelevant point. He claims no merit for playing the hand well. He is content to have played his role well. He and his spectators are satisfied.

The only time a serious argument arises over a belote game is when two men are accused of cheating by using prearranged signals. It is dangerous to make such accusations, however, because they are hard to prove and because there are few terms more insulting than that of "cheater." A man knows that if he accuses another man of cheating, whether he thinks the charge is justified or not, he will be *brouillé* with his opponent. Even when Biron and Ginez won the Saturday-night belote tournament for three weeks in succession no one openly accused them of cheating, but their winning streak aroused suspicion and was the subject for gossip. Some men went so far as to make broad hints or joking references in their presence. Biron and Ginez preferred to ignore these hints, and since no one was willing to accuse them directly, no violent dispute resulted. The two men understood the position they were in, however, for on the fourth Saturday night each of them sought another partner.

Although violent arguments are rare, less serious disputes occur frequently, especially between partners. At the end of a game, resentment that has built up during the enforced silence often boils over. A man accuses his partner of having played the game stupidly or carelessly. He has not counted the trumps accurately when they were played, or he has overbid when vulnerable, or he has not led back in accordance with conventional indications. The accused partner never takes criticism docilely. His partner and he have played so many games of belote with each other over the years that each remembers examples of his partner's stupidity. As they argue, their opponents pay no attention unless an insult is phrased with art. Then they join in the laughter. The butt of the joking sees that everyone is turning against him, and drops the argument. When he speaks again it is as though nothing had happened.

With fifty or sixty men and Madame Avenas participating in the tournament, it takes a long time to finish it. Like the boules tournament the belote tournament is scheduled to start at nine o'clock, but it never starts before ten or ten-thirty. Consequently it often lasts until two or three o'clock Sunday morning. Few of the men sleep late on Sunday

morning. If they do not have work to do they get up even earlier than usual to go hunting. This loss of sleep does not appear to affect them.

Movies

Armand Foullet, a young man from the neighboring village of Goult, has developed a profitable business since the war. With his portable 32-millimeter projector and portable screen he brings movies to the people living in the villages near his. There are seven villages on his circuit, and he has made arrangements with the *cafetier* in each of them to turn the café into a movie house one night a week. The *cafetier* is repaid by the profits on the increased number of drinks he sells. Foullet furnishes the film and pockets the admission fees of fifteen cents.

Tuesday night is Peyrane's turn. When Foullet is a mile from the village he clamps his hand on the horn of his car and holds it down until he drives up in front of the café. This blast is the loudest noise heard in Peyrane all week. When he has parked his car and carried his equipment into the café the *cafetier* helps him shove back the tables and arrange the chairs, set up his projector, loud speaker and screen, take down the poster advertising the evening's showing and put up a poster announcing the movie for the following week. By eight-thirty when the movie is scheduled to begin, Foullet is ready, but since few customers have arrived he sits down with the *cafetier* for a drink and a few hands of belote.

Customers drift in slowly. The clientèle varies but little; the same people, thirty or forty of them, come to the movies week after week. Almost all the adolescents attend regularly. Three or four families, families like the Henri Favres and Bellets who never miss any opportunity for "distraction," come with all their children. The Lonely Ones who have fifteen cents for a ticket are always present. Lucien Bourdin, Elie Seignon, and the other thirty- and forty-year old bachelors attend without exception. However, very few "serious" people ever come to the movies. A few of the wives of the more proper families let their love of the cinema overcome their sense of propriety; Madame Vincent, Madame Bonerandi, Madame Borel, Mademoiselle Héraud, the post-mistress. The one other group that makes up the regular clientèle is the cluster of Algerian ochre workers. Their appearance at the movies marks their only participation in any public occasion. Even then they

do not mingle with other people. No one scorns them, not even Madame Vincent or Mademoiselle Héraud, but they remain segregated as though by mutual agreement.

By nine-fifteen or nine-thirty most of the spectators have arrived and taken their usual places in the rows of chairs. Foullet and the *cafetier* interrupt their *belote* to collect fifteen cents from everyone present except the children, who are charged no admission. The lights are turned off, and the movie begins.

The people have no voice in the selection of the movie they are to see, and the variety of productions they are shown is great. They may see the best Pagnol film or the most insipid Tarzan picture, a bedroom comedy or a fantastic murder mystery, a surrealistic Cocteau production, or a western with Hopalong Cassidy speaking French argot. Foullet has no voice in selecting the film he shows, either. He has a contract with a distributing company in Paris which sends him a film, a short, and a newsreel every week. He may make suggestions and express preference, but his point of view appears to have little effect on the distributing company. Since his customers in Peyrane understand his helpless situation they do not blame him when they pay to see a boring film. They do not like it, but they know that he does not like it either. In fact he often warns them before they pay their admission that they are in for a bad evening. They accept his apology and are reassured when he tells them that the film for the following week will be better.

The favorite films are French, but foreign films are popular, too. They like some American films although they condemn others because they are insultingly naïve or unrealistic. They laugh at Hopalong because they say he never has to stop to reload his pistols. They feel cheated when an American film has a happy ending when an unhappy ending would have been more logical and realistic. On the whole, however, the films are accepted for what they are, and neither praise nor criticism is expressed spontaneously.

While the movie is being shown, little reaction is heard. The children laugh at the slapstick scenes, but as the evening progresses and the children fall asleep the comic element is accepted passively. From the dim light of the screen one can see no expression on the faces of the spectators. There is no whistling, no hissing, no stamping of feet, no applause. Almost the only time during the year that the spectators

reacted violently was during a French newsreel. The scene was a burning native hut in Korea. A maimed child was crying at the side of its dead and badly disfigured mother. When this scene was flashed on the screen, everyone in the audience gasped in horror. Some of the men whistled loudly to show their disapproval.

When the main film is half finished and Foullet has to change reels, the lights are turned on, and the audience is given an intermission of ten or fifteen minutes. The women usually stay in their seats. The men file out resolutely as though they were leaving for prearranged business. The first evening I attended the movie I followed the men to see what could be attracting them. They all unhesitatingly walked across the street and took their places facing the wall across from the café. Several years of this collective, periodic urination have discolored the wall from a height of two feet down to the ground.

Back in the café the men have a drink — a beer, a fruit syrup with soda or a glass of wine. Usually there is little discussion of the movie beyond a word or two of approval or disapproval. The conversation centers about situations in other movies or experiences in the life of the men themselves that are recalled by what they have seen in the first part of the movie. War movies are naturally the most evocative of all, and they are judged on the basis of their resemblance to the wartime experiences of the men.

The intermission ends. The lights are turned off, and the rest of the film is shown. By eleven-thirty or twelve the show is over. The people get up and file out silently. There is no conversation. Fathers and mothers carry their sleeping infants and rouse the older children so that they may stumble home behind them. Madame Vincent and Mademoiselle Héraud, Madame Borel and Madame Bonerandi walk directly home in pairs. The Algerians wait until the others have left, and then they leave the café in their silent cluster. In a few moments the café is almost deserted. The Lonely Ones settle back in the corners which they inhabit, and some of the bachelors sit down for a few hands of *belote* before they go home.

This same scene was repeated every Tuesday night during the year I was in Peyrane. Only once did the movies excite more general attention in the village, and that was the night when the film *Marius* was shown.

Marius is a movie about a young man torn between his love for a

girl and his longing to go to sea. Both families, the girl herself, and the neighborhood, whose life centers in his father's bar on the Marseille waterfront, try to persuade Marius to marry Fanny and settle down. In the end, Fanny realizes that Marius will never be happy at home, and above all that he will never be a dependable husband and father. She sends him away.

The principal actor in this movie is Raimu, who was one of the most popular and beloved actors in the history of the French movies. He plays the role of Marius' father, César, the big Marseille barkeep who protects his tender feelings by directing witty shafts at the people of whom he is most fond. Incarnate in César are the humor and pathos of the southern French stereotype.

Marius was filmed in 1932, but it is still one of the most popular movies in France, especially in the Midi. Two later films, *Fanny* and *César*, produced by Marcel Pagnol to round out this story of a Marseille family, lack whatever it is that attracts spectators to *Marius*. On the Tuesday evenings when they were given, there were no more spectators than usual and the atmosphere was calm.

The Tuesday evening when *Marius* was shown was very unusual. Instead of the few dozen movie fans, there were over a hundred people crowded into the hall. Everyone was in a good mood, smiling, chatting, and even happy to be together. Most of the people had seen this movie eight or ten times, but that made no difference. They only loved it more. There was a feeling of unity in this gathering, almost a feeling of corporative worship that was notably lacking at all other public events, even at funerals or at Midnight Mass.

When I asked people why they were so fond of *Marius*, they first mentioned Raimu. They said they always loved to see him on the screen. However, when the other two movies of the trilogy were shown, only the old movie habitués came to see them, and when Raimu appeared in still other movies during the year he did not draw an unusual attendance.

I pointed this fact out to people, and everyone's reaction was the same.

"Oui, mais *Marius*, c'est tellement ça!"

"Ça . . .?"

"Oui, c'est tellement ça, la vie."

So people thought that *Marius* was "so much like *life*." It was realistic for them. That's why they said they liked it, and beyond that they could

not explain their feelings. Yet, viewed literally and objectively, this movie is *not* realistic. What is there in this mixture of farce and melodrama that gives the people of Peyrane the illusion of life? What is there that gives them at the same time an almost religious experience?

It would be hard to imagine a people more realistic than the people of Peyrane. "C'est comme ça" is the phrase that is most frequently on their lips. They complain about the problems of life, but they face them. From childhood they have learned to face them—the physical discomforts, the domination of tender but severe parents, the plagues of nature and governments, the necessity of trying to live up to family and community rules, all the family worries that beset everyone, the difficulty of getting along with *les autres*.

To live successfully in Peyrane one must learn to endure all this and to endure it alone. No consolation can be expected from *les autres*, and there is no solace for most people in formal religion. Each person must find solace in the depth of his own personality. This inner loneliness is hidden by a sort of gay, sarcastic banter that gives the illusion of lightheartedness. People see themselves in Raimu's César, the suffering parent.

But how many people, consciously or subconsciously, also feel with Marius an urge that they will always suppress but which he obeys—to go off, away, far? "Partir . . . N'importe où, mais très loin. Partir," Marius says. Expressed in simple terms, disguised with a strong element of farce, this movie answers a need felt by people who are weighed down by social restraints. Beneath the farce and the melodrama it describes a psychological situation which for them is realistic. If they were more sophisticated they might have a taste for the poetry of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé. Marius, and the people who go to the movie to share in his conflict, would understand a contemporary poet who also went to sea:

Emportez-moi dans une caravelle,
 Dans une vieille et douce caravelle,
 Dans l'étrave, où si l'on veut, dans l'écume,
 Et perdez-moi, au loin, au loin.

— Henri Michaux

Twenty-Five Years Later

On the number of visits I made to Peyrane and Chanzeaux since 1970 I became increasingly aware that Peyranais and Chanzeaux alike no longer feel themselves defined, in any sense of the word, by the limits of their community. At first, on these returns to Peyrane, which I felt I knew so well, I planned to arrive just before noon so that I could greet my friends at the *apéritif* hour. I could not count on finding most of the 1950 *habités*. Still, it was likely that even though individuals would have died, moved away or simply might be staying away from the bar because of their livets, others would have taken their places. In the past the Town Secretary, the doctor, the postman, the *notaire*, the husband of the schoolteacher, the café owner had, as a group, been the town's vital nerve center. By spending an hour with these men I had always been sure that no important event, past or present, would escape me.

I found to my disappointment that there was no longer a regular group at the bar. On my first return visit in 1973 I met Rivet, but he told me at once that since retiring three years before as Town Secretary, he no longer "comes up" to the village regularly. His successor, Madame Girard, a professionally trained administrator brought in from the outside, does not frequent the café. She is smart, says Rivet: she knows how to stand apart and not get herself involved in squabbles as he did. Rivet had never looked happier now that he could devote himself to playing in the regional boules contests. As he left after a few moments for Cavailhon, he reminded me I might see him on TV in a few hours if, as often happened, he reached the finals in that afternoon's tournament.

I now realize why the noon *apéritif* group has disappeared: Peyrane has ceased to be a tight little community in which such a group plays an essential role. The Peyranais no longer feel themselves to be — in fact no longer are — a unit functioning as autonomously as possible in defense against the Outside World; they have become an integral part of the world they once staunchly resisted.

The same change has taken place in Chanzeaux, that Angevin village where I have also spent so much time. There the weekly gatherings at the cafés and at the coöperative drinking society after mass on Sunday were equivalent to Peyrane's daily apéritif group. In the past I was sure to catch up on important news by sitting around a table with the Mayor, the Town Secretary, the president of the regional farmers' union, the "responsible" of the *Mouvement familial rural*, and the chairman of the parochial school committee. Now it is not certain that these people will even be in town then, for nowadays Sunday is the day for family excursions. Chanzeaux often go to mass on Saturday evening in order to have Sunday free, or they go to church with the friends they are visiting in a distant town. It is rumored that some may not even go to mass — once they escape the social pressure of their neighbors.

This evolution cannot be surprising, for in studying the histories of the two communities I have been impressed more by their constant transformation than by their stability. City people like to think of rural communities as unchanging, but we have seen that in Peyrane, as in Chanzeaux, shifts in the population and changes in the life-style generally have been more steady and more rapid than is commonly assumed. The illusion of permanence is nourished by a small core of families remaining in a community from generation to generation. In Peyrane the Jouvaud and Favre families play this role, though as a matter of fact many more members of these clans have left Peyrane than have stayed.

When some readers suggested that the mobility of the population of Peyrane was unusual for a rural French community, my students and I decided to compare its population movement with that of Chanzeaux, a considerably more conservative commune and well outside the tourist circuit. We discovered that although the state of the national economy affects the rate of change, the trend during the last 150 years has been toward a constant annual turnover of five per cent of the population. A majority of the people born there now live elsewhere in France; most of the people living there were born elsewhere.*

The flux of the population has, of course, been related to the transformations in the general character of these particular rural communities. In 1790, Peyrane and Chanzeaux lived in relative isolation, producing principally what was necessary for them to be self-sufficient. By mid-nineteenth

* See *Chanzeaux, A Village in Anjou* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 156 ff.

century, improvements in transportation permitted them to specialize in production for a much wider market: in Chanzeaux, meat and wine; in Peyrane, silk and madder, the plant from which red dye was made for British military uniforms. By 1860 the populations of the two communities, stimulated by this economy, reached their peak, almost double today's total. By 1900 Chanzeaux had changed little, but Peyrane had evolved into a quite different place: it had become a mining village with a large number of foreign workers brought in to help produce ochre from the red hills. During the Second World War the villages both returned to an economy of near self-sufficiency. By the fifties, when I first began to study them, their nature was less clear. They were groping to see how they could live in a modern world. Their sense of loss of control over their destiny was summed up in a phrase of resignation, *c'est comme ça*. Ten years later this atmosphere of grim acceptance had been lightened. The population was rejuvenated. City people were reviving the village. Farm people had the hope that by modernizing their operations they, too, might share in the benefits of a soaring French economy. The spirit of resignation implicit in "*c'est comme ça*" was reserved for poor health, bad weather, and disappointing offspring.

By the mid-seventies, however, it became obvious that the new prosperity was not to benefit all Peyranais and Chanzeaux equally. Those who for one reason or another could not adjust to the new life were more despairing than ever. Rivet had suggested that I call on Lucien Bourdin, an old friend who was "fatigué," in fact seriously depressed. In 1950 there had been a dozen Peyrane farmers living in the *bourg*. With the blacksmiths and other artisans catering to the farmers, they gave a rural atmosphere to life there. Today there are no rural artisans, and Bourdin is the only farmer left. He lives with his mother, who answered my knock. I found the 58-year-old bachelor sitting, unshaven and uncombed, in a corner of the dark little *salle*. He tried to greet me cheerfully and told his mother to give me a glass of her liqueur, made of his brandy, green almonds, and herbs. He immediately began to talk about the problem he had fixed on as the cause of his depression. Bourdin finds the government and the whole economic system against him, and he has given up trying to fight them. With their savings and a little garden, his mother and he can manage — though barely — so he has stopped going to his fields. His asparagus had not been harvested. His cherries would not be picked. His melons could rot on the vine.

Bourdin needs a psychiatrist, as his mother and the local doctor keep telling him, but he had fixed on a rationalization that no one could dispute. Most of the farmers of Peyrane and Chanzeaux, though without Bourdin's neurosis, feel the same way about the system. For generations the small land-owning peasant was the symbol of social stability; he was protected by all governments of every political persuasion. But France is now primarily industrial — in agriculture as well as in manufacturing — and the small agricultural unit is no longer viable. The very protection given the small farmers for decades proved their undoing; there was no need for them to evolve in order to compete in the world market. After the war they were encouraged and helped to modernize their operations, and many of them went into debt to buy new equipment, but modern farm machinery is efficient only for extensive farms like those in Beauce and Picardy. In Peyrane and Chanzeaux, as in many parts of France, most of the farms have fewer than 50 acres, and the fields are scattered over a wide area. Faced with the competition of the Common Market, the Bourdins of France cannot survive. The Government is not oblivious to the problem of the little farmer, but the official assumption is that he is doomed. The Concorde has replaced the Peasant as the national symbol the Government chooses to subsidize.

Periodic outbursts of violence in regions where farms are characteristically small, and most dramatically in Brittany and in southwestern France, are symptomatic reactions to changes in government policy. Recently when a tax collector was accused of hounding a recalcitrant farmer in Chanzeaux, the farmer's friends tried to keep the official from examining the records in the Town Hall. Among the group was one of the most sedate and respected farmers in Chanzeaux. He is now under indictment for having jostled the collector. Cardin's new machines, his wife's modern kitchen and the luxury items in the house point up the dilemma which moved Cardin to action against the Government. Were Cardin satisfied with his grandfather's low standard of living, he could still make a living from his farm, but he and his wife both reject the traditional lot of the peasant. They insist that their hard work entitles them to share the general French life-style held before them as a model on television and in the women's magazines. When they adopt this style and cannot make ends meet from the earnings of their farm, the result is frustration and anger.

The immediate solution for the small farmer seems to lie in specialization, in growing crops which require the sort of intensive care that cannot be given on industrially managed farms. In this regard the vintners are

well off. With the fantastic growth in the world market for French wines, and as the well-known wines price themselves out of the ordinary market, there is a demand for "little" wines that makes them a shrewd choice. Since Beaujolais is too expensive for the ordinary consumer, neglected possibilities are discovered in a Bourgueil, a Gigondas, even in an Auvergne. In Chanzeaux, the few farmers who produce Anjou *rosé* on the slopes of the Layon River are doing well. In Peyrane, the vintners can market all their wine profitably through the nearby coöperative of Goult.

Farmers whose lands make growing grapes impractical or who are not technically or psychologically tooled up for viticulture turn to other labor-intensive crops. In Chanzeaux, where families are traditionally large, the labor of women, children, and retired relatives makes it possible to produce tobacco, camomile, mint leaves, pansy seeds. In Peyrane, the sun and soil make truck farming and orchards profitable. Although labor is scarce and the farmers cannot bring in foreign workers through government contract because their operations are too small, they have shown ingenuity in solving the problem of procuring sufficient help. When I went to see Paul Carette in his asparagus field, I found him working with two soldiers from the atomic defense installations near Apt. They were earning a little extra on their day off.

Another solution open to the farmers of Chanzeaux and Peyrane would be for them to band together in coöperatives, as many vintners have. They say that vegetables, fruit and meat present more difficulties in coöperative marketing than wine, but I suspect that a major obstacle is psychological. Traditionally French farmers are jealous of their independence; they coöperate only to defend themselves against the government. A few years ago when an equipment coöperative was begun by a group of Chanzeaux farmers who had grown up together in the Catholic rural youth movement, I thought that necessity, strengthened by a unifying ideology, might bring a change in the traditional resistance to coöperation. But after five years the coöperative was abandoned. Aversion to joint planning and use of equipment was too great. In Peyrane, the Tractor and Ploughing Coöperative has been phenomenally successful under the leadership of an ardent Communist, Marc Peyre. I had thought the group's success was related to the strength of the Communist party among the farmers in the region, but departmental agricultural officials assured me that it is the charisma and organizational ability of Peyre, not his politics, that account for the success of the coöperative.

Logically, the solution to the problem of property structure would be to reorganize it completely, a procedure which, in theory at least, appeals to the French Cartesian mind. For years the government has actually sponsored a program of *remembrement*: at the request of a commune, government specialists will analyze the local property structure and then arrange the practical and legal procedure for reshaping and exchanging fields and rights of way so that every farmer can have a more compact holding of large, adjoining fields. But few communities — certainly neither Chanzeaux nor Peyrane — have the will to undergo this major, corrective surgery. Among the excuses people have found for avoiding it is their contention that in the long run it would be futile because the constant division and dispersion of fields through death and inheritance would soon recreate the old structures. Furthermore, farms are rarely limited to the confines of a commune; a solution would have to involve a joint effort by several communes. And communes have as great a problem in cooperating as farmers.

Change in the property structure is slowly taking place through attrition, however. As farmers can no longer compete, they are forced to abandon their land; the remaining farmers can then expand their operations. During the last 50 years the number of farms in Chanzeaux has gradually diminished from 150 to less than 100. Still, it is generally agreed, there is room for no more than 10 viable farms in the commune. The farmers' predicament is further complicated by the growing competition of city people in the purchase of rural property. The question has become: *which* farmers will survive?

The former head of the Farmers' Union of Chanzeaux is one of the few who openly recognized his predicament and acted before necessity made action painful. Eugène Bourdelle retired early and moved to the *bourg*; his farm has been rented to a young neighbor; his son was dissuaded from becoming a farmer and was trained as a Government agronomist. Given human nature, Bourdelle says, no farmer will admit that he will be among those forced off his land. Each one sees himself as winning out and eventually acquiring enough land from the surrounding farms to raise beef for an insatiable market.

The *bourgs* remain the administrative and educational center of the *communes*, but they are no longer the functional center for the farm economy. The farmers relate more to the city market than to the nearby village. In 1950 it was not clear what the future of these obsolete villages would be, but I see now that they were already evolving new functions. The

bourgs of Peyrane and Chanzeaux today are adjuncts of the city. Their function is to furnish living quarters, second residences and retirement homes for people from the city.

Workers used to move to the city to be near their jobs. Now they prefer to live at home and commute. Workers already living in the city try to move from the huge, urban housing developments to small, single houses in not-to-distant villages. Peyrane is only five miles from Apt, which used to be a sleepy little town but is now thriving because of the nearby launching sites for France's atomic missiles. The mayor of Chanzeaux, Jean-Pierre Gardais, a self-educated farm hand who has become head of a departmental social-service agency, drives to work in Angers in his Citroën 2CV every day. He has a large family, and housing is cheaper and life more pleasant in Chanzeaux than in Angers. For most people the bottlenecks at the bridges over the Loire keep Chanzeaux and Angers from being accessible to one another, but factory jobs in the booming city of Cholet, a few miles to the south, are not too far from Chanzeaux.

Undoubtedly the popularity of the *bourgs* as *villages-dortoirs* (bedroom communities) would be greater were it not for another phenomenon which has forced the value of village property higher than many workers can afford. It used to be that only the well-to-do had a *résidence secondaire*, a country house, as well as a city dwelling. Now most middle-class people have a house in the country, and the upper classes seek a third and even a fourth residence, one for the sun in the Midi, one in the mountains for the snow, one in Brittany for the ocean. Now that the French working class has been largely replaced at the bottom of the social scale by foreign workers, the aspiration for a *résidence secondaire* is beginning to reach these French, too. The Communist party newspaper, *L'Humanité*, carries advertisements of property supposedly within their means: "*Aulnay-sous-Bois: Spécial weekend, anciennes dépendances de château, bord de rivière, océan de verdure.*" "*Sup. pav! pl-pied gd liv 3 chbres/cuis bns ch cent jard park pêche chasse.*"

Each village acquires a new personality according to the type of city people it attracts. Chanzeaux, less beautiful, less known than Peyrane, less expensive, is attractive to shopkeepers, petty functionaries, skilled laborers. Peyrane, with its spectacular ochre cliffs and the sun of the Midi, has attracted sophisticated city people. The house we rented the year we lived there was bought and modernized several years ago by an Italian sculptor. At the back of our courtyard, near the edge of the cliff, the shed where our

landlord's wine-making equipment was stored was torn down and replaced by a swimming pool overlooking the valley. Recently the house was bought by one of the best-known journalists in Paris. There are no more bargains in real estate!

Many of the *résidences secondaires* are acquired with retirement in mind. One-half of the house we lived in at Chanzeaux has been sold to a Paris truck driver and his wife who rented it for a summer and then decided to retire there. A retired construction worker from the shipyards of Nantes has bought the other half. Peyrane has once more become a town of older people. When we lived there, a quarter of the population was over 60. Then the increased birth rate following the war created a community dominated by the young. Now, with the increasing number of retired people, the atmosphere is not unlike that of a Florida retirement community. The Mayor is a retired engineer; the Assistant Mayor is a retired army officer. The game of boules is played all day now because so many people are not working. Boules in Peyrane reminds one of shuffleboard in St. Petersburg.

The possibility of a family exploration in the ochre cliffs followed by an extraordinarily good meal in the village fills Peyrane with excursionists every Sunday. The little restaurant Monsieur Vincent took over the year before we arrived now has a wide reputation. The rustic tables at the edge of the cliff where in fair weather tourists used to eat truffled omelette and roasted thrush, have been replaced by a substantial building that can be used all the year around. Vincent has retired, and the restaurant is run by his son, Georges, who gave up his plans to be a civil engineer and became a chef. Georges is friendly, outgoing, and especially popular in Peyrane because he organized a soccer team and starred as its center forward. As he grew older his popularity drew him into politics, and he was soon elected town councillor, then assistant mayor. It looked as though he might furnish the leadership Peyrane had so long needed, but after a few years the restaurant had grown so much that Georges felt he must devote all his energies to it. To help run the kitchen he brought back Jacques Leporatti, a classmate in the English class I taught years ago, who had finished his chef's training in a tour of Riviera hotels. Now that the Vincent restaurant has become a regional institution and Peyrane's sense of community is diminished, Georges is naturally less tempted by the idea of a local political role. This natural leader came on the political scene a generation too late to meet the needs of Peyrane.

The Rose d'Or, Peyrane's luxury inn, has also prospered, but it has always

remained aloof from the community. In order to avoid embroilment in local quarrels the manager brings help in from outside instead of hiring Peyranais. The inn's location emphasizes its isolation, for it is both in and out of the village. Built on a spur of ochre cliff, it remains separated from village life: its guests, lunching comfortably on the terrace, look across the narrow valley at the village as observers rather than as participants. Visitors who want involvement in the life of the town — visiting Peyranais relatives, artists and sociologists — most usually stay at the *pension de famille* started by Maman Jeanne. Maman Jeanne has retired, however, and the *pension* has been taken over by Georgette Jannel, who has returned to her native Peyrane with her Italian husband and their children. Reports are that one eats well chez Georgette as one takes part in — or just observes — the new bustle on the Place de la Mairie.

Maman Jeanne, no longer interested in either business or politics, now devotes herself to one of Peyrane's favorite past-times. The lurid beauty of the cliffs has always been an attraction for a certain kind of artist, and this enthusiasm has been communicated to some of the natives. Rivet was a prolific painter before he became so involved in competitive boules. Maman Jeanne finds painting a source of income as well as pleasure; for her canvasses sell for 1,000 francs. "Je suis un primitif," she says. In the summer Peyrane even has an art gallery in what used to be the shed for Monsieur Prayal's buzz saw. At the top of the hill, where Madame Lestapis was for so long the lone survivor of another age, a young silversmith and his wife have a shop where they sell his work as well as that of other serious regional artisans. With the death of Madame Lestapis all the houses on the top of the hill are now occupied by "city people."

The economy of the village is geared to the needs of its new population. When we lived in Peyrane, there were five groceries; now there is one. The old groceries had the only refrigerators in the village. We shopped from meal to meal at Arène's, four yards from our front door. His grocery was our larder and our pantry. Now every house in the village has a refrigerator, and for most of their shopping people drive to a city supermarket. The remaining grocery, combined with a bakery, is viable only because it is mobile: Monsieur Bonerandi trucks his wares through the countryside, while his wife and mother take care of the little store.

In the fifties we were surrounded by artisans. Across the street in Chanzeaux was the wooden-shoe maker. Our landlord was a harnessmaker. Chanzeaux and Peyrane both had two overworked blacksmiths. Now there

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is scarcely a horse in either community; the smiths and the harnessmaker have retired. Wooden shoes and tin pails have been replaced by plastic ones bought in the city. The widow of the tinsmith tries to supplement her social-security payments by selling kitchenware.

Supplying energy to modern homes brings prosperity to some merchants. When we were in Peyrane, Monsieur Borel used to bring truckloads of oak logs and *petits bois* to our courtyard; our fireplace and the wood stove in the kitchen provided the only heat in the house all winter. Now Borel's sons carry on a prosperous business in bottled gas for the cooking and heating facilities of the whole village. Bottled gas has also helped transform farm life in Chanzeaux. Farmers no longer spend long winter hours harvesting branches from the trees in the hedges that separated the fields.

In Peyrane, what little trash there was in the past was customarily dumped over the cliff into the surrounding valley. In 1950 every old bottle, every piece of paper, every piece of cast-off clothing was put to use. When we bought olives at Monsieur Reynard's grocery, he wrapped them in a neat square of newspaper taken from a pile he used only when necessary. We saved the oily paper because we learned it was helpful in starting a fire. Now newspapers seldom have a second use. Wood fires are not used for cooking and heating; for wrapping, everyone has a supply of plastic bags saved from trips to the supermarket; the coming of toilet paper eliminated another use for newspapers. The dump at the foot of the cliff is a growing pile of paper and plastic flapping in the mistral.

In the fifties, there was a water shortage in both villages. "Chanzeaux *sans eau*," complained the critics of the Town Council. Then Chanzeaux had water piped in from the Loire, 20 miles away. Peyrane's new supply comes from the Durance River. But water was plentiful only for a brief time. The supply was soon outrun by new demands — for irrigation, toilets, bathtubs, clothes- and dishwashers, even swimming pools.

When the French standard of living began its phenomenal rise during the nineteen-fifties, many French saw in it the corruption of French culture by "Americanization." They denounced the *civilisation du gadget* and the *Coca-colonisation* of France. These terms are not heard now. Everyone knows that the increase in the standard of living was simply the result of the modernization of a country that had so long remained economically backward. Today the French proudly repeat the prediction, made by the Hudson Institute in the U.S., that by the 1980's their country will be the first industrial power of Europe. They take it for granted that all French (though

perhaps not the foreign immigrant laborers) should enjoy the comforts of a highly industrialized society.

In the light of the changes described so far, it is surprising to find stability and continuity in those aspects of life most directly related to ideology. In the legislative elections of 1972, Chanzeaux voted decisively in favor of the Gaullist candidate. Peyrane, temporarily united by agreement at national levels between Socialist and Communists, voted decisively against the Gaullist mayor of Apt. The political characteristics, defined in terms of national parties, persist. Though the terms "left" and "right" have been applied in quite different situations in each generation, Peyrane maintains a position to the left and Chanzeaux to the right.

Religious behavior also remains constant, at least when measured in statistical terms. In Peyrane the number of faithful attending mass is still about 5 per cent. When the Abbé Autrand retired, he was not replaced; a missionary now comes every Sunday and for any emergency. In the huge church at Chanzeaux, most people attend mass as they always have. But these statistics are a measure of custom rather than of religious fervor. Long ago the priest of Chanzeaux pointed out to me that most people, in most communities, are religiously indifferent: the 5 per cent figure for Peyrane probably corresponded to the 5 per cent of the Chanzeaux whom he considered truly devout. Most of the people of Chanzeaux go to mass because in that part of Anjou one goes to mass; in the Vaucluse, the custom is not to go to mass. These distinctive customs, like the political behavior, have prevailed for centuries.

The devout of 1950 were different from those of 1970, however. From the beginning of the century, after the law of 1905 separating church and state, the gentry supported and dominated the church and parochial schools. Today the devout 5 per cent comes from a young elite who were trained in the Catholic rural youth movement in the forties and fifties. These leaders support social change generally, as well as change in the church, and are dismissed by the conservative gentry as "Communists disguised as clergymen."

At first sight, a startling transformation seems to have taken place in education. Peyrane has a new school, large, sunny, well-ventilated. In Chanzeaux, where there are only parochial schools, the buildings and equipment have been completely modernized since public funds became available to the parochial system. The audiovisual aids are impressive. Textbooks have been redesigned and are profusely illustrated. Beneath these visible signs

of change, however, education appears to be essentially what it has been for decades. It involves the same basic conceptions, usually labeled Cartesian, of what constitutes knowledge and how it ought to be acquired and used. The textbooks, despite their changed appearance, preserve the traditional structure and subject matter. The ultimate function of examinations is still to assign individuals a proper niche in the social hierarchy.

One aspect of school life is markedly different from what I observed in the fifties, however. Because the change is also seen in family life, I find the development particularly significant. In both teacher-child and parent-child relations, the traditional figures of authority are less sure in their exercise of power and have communicated their lack of conviction to the children.

Twenty years ago the five-year-old Dédou Favre might occasionally have talked back to his mother; he might even have been impudent to another adult, if he were verbally clever — and stayed out of reach of a punishing hand. Fundamentally, Dédou expected to obey his elders, however. In the single classroom for two dozen 4- to 6-year-olds, the discipline was stern but was such effective training that in the upper classroom one scarcely heard a whisper. This year I saw Dédou's nephew, another Dédou Favre, having a tantrum in the street in front of his house; his mother seemed completely indifferent to what in the past would have been a neighborhood scandal. In school, children now speak more freely, just as at home they take part in adult conversations without being regularly silenced with the traditional "Mange et tais-toi!"

The loss of control is even more obvious with older children, especially with adolescents who in increasing numbers go to the city every day, some to work, some to continue their education. A few parents try desperately — and unhappily — to enforce traditional patterns of authority and hierarchy, but in most families there is acceptance, though tinged perhaps with nostalgia, of the young people's new independence. Village parents may be shocked by their children's involvement with city schoolmates in the lycée revolts of recent years, but at the same time they rather wonderingly admire the daring of the young in confronting authority.

The French are puzzled by this evolution and often not sure how it ought to be handled. When the old and new attitudes coexist and action is required, conflicts develop. Observers wonder why French officials — from school principals and police officers to Cabinet members — have been unable to cope with recent student uprisings. Why should the most powerfully

centralized state in the Western world be baffled by a few thousand young people? The explanation may lie in the fact that many of the officials, like the parents and teachers of Peyrane and Chanzeaux, feel a growing ambivalence toward the exercise of authority and find their public and private roles conflicting. Publicly there persists a belief in hierarchical law and order, but private experience in many families has undermined this conviction. At home people have learned to tolerate — even to enjoy — a less authoritarian social atmosphere.

Despite the evolution in human relations, the families I know in both the provinces and Paris seem more unified than before. The belief in hierarchy has given way to a concern for each individual's will, a mutual respect, a tolerance of differences that I would never have thought possible. The independence of the individual has grown, while the unity of the family is less tense and even more solid. I conclude with more conviction than I did in 1960 that the most basic and enduring element in French civilization is the individual's acceptance of his responsibilities in the family with his concomitant refusal to compromise his right to independence.