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7/25/95

Dear Henry,

How very kind of you to send us a copy of your fascinating book on the Seven Countries Studies! Millicent swiped it first and took it with her to some jamboree she had in rural Wisconsin. (Quite appropriate reading for what may be the nearest American equivalent of, say, Illomantsi). Since her return I have been enjoying it greatly. I suppose predictably, though I found it a little surprising, your accounts recalled much of my youth. I think this must have been because you have evoked the flavour of survey life accurately and vividly. Home visits, (did you know I went round some homes in Illomantsi with one of the dieticians and observed the families sitting down to the midday meal. One of the items was a monster oatcake, which was covered with molten butter applied with a two inch paint brush from a large pot or casserole. This has remained an indelible memory throughout my life, though come to think about it I don't recall what else was eaten); exasperation (days when everyone came in and the ECG baseline heaved about all over the place); frustration (days when no one came and one wondered how to get them along to preserve a respectable response rate); and just plain fatigue from very long days and endless repetition. Ah me! Happy days. Another reason for my youthful memories was of course all the people you mention, colleagues and non-colleagues alike. Louise Dalderup, for example, who, like me, was a visitor to the Illomantsi survey had just received the galleys of an article she had written and was painfully anxious about dealing with them. I have a memory that Ancel and I were somewhat unimpressed with the difficulties she felt these imposed on her. If my memory is correct, which it probably is not, we decided that she would get over these fits of nerves in the fulness of time. On the reason you advance for Ancel's deciding to carry out the study in the first place, I think you are probably right. Donald Read once told me about an encounter between George Pickering and Ancel at a WHO meeting. His description was similar to yours. It must therefore have been the same meeting you refer to. Donald considered Pickering's question a well known debating strategy: "A typical debating ploy, Ian my boy." It is strange to think what mighty oaks grow from such puny acorns. Another reason your book gave me pleasure was because of the lovely places you worked in, many of them places Millicent and I have visited. We started our honeymoon after all at the Cipriani in Venice and used to look across the water to the Royal Danielli. Then on to Rome and Athens and Crete. In Heraclion we stayed at the new El Greco hotel, which only had cold water. I thought we had stopped paying money for our living in Crete - the hotel, I think was the equivalent of \$3 per day! Such a change from the Cipriani! The following year we vacationed in Corfu - a jewel of a place. I liked your picture of the harbour of Paleokastritsa.

Jugoslavia is, sadly, something else again. We were in Dubrovnik much more recently for a Thoracic Society Annual Meeting. The thought of high explosives and that lovely place is horrible; but not so horrible as the ghastly goings on in the rest of the country. We spent a few days in Belgrade and visited Touzla after the chest meeting. It was good to be reminded of Ratko Buzina, for whom I always had a high regard. You will probably not remember writing me a letter shortly after leaving (I think) Slavonia. You were clearly seeing Jugoslavia in realistic terms and referred to being pleased to leave "this somber, sodden land." I have treasured this phrase, I suppose, for nearly 40 years.

Well Henry we go back a long time together you and I. As one grows older regression into the past becomes more important - I recently wrote to a friend I had not been in touch with for 50 years. Increasingly I have regretted my laziness in keeping in touch with old friends. With a computer and a word processor there is now even less excuse. Anyway very many thanks for your book.

All best wishes,

Law
Higgin

PS No, even I cannot diagnose your nightmare fit. Amanita muscaria seems most likely; but it must have been horrendous.