

perity began to affect the labour supply to Rhodesia and also to the tea estates, in which big interests were now concerned, more powerful influences began to intervene. The growth of belief in economic planning afforded them an excellent opportunity for pleading that the economic life of the three countries was "complementary" and therefore must be "co-ordinated" or "integrated." Planning, of course, requires political authority and this has taken shape in the Federation Parliament in which 26 freely elected European and 6 "specially elected" African members are to have almost unrestricted power of formulating economic regulations for the three countries. Rhodesian planners are not likely to see the necessity for a free peasantry whose existence conflicts with interests they consider most important. But so insidious is the spell of the planning idea that no prominent anti-Federationist spokesman challenges the alleged economic advantages of the proposal; in public controversy the question is not even superficially examined and the case against Federation thus fades to a shadow. The future will show whether planning against the wishes of the vast majority can be imposed successfully where there are 600 Africans to one European.

I have cited Nyasaland, of which I had long personal experience, not as an example of a dependency enjoying good laws of taxation and land tenure, but only as an African territory in which, hitherto, more by accident than design, some mistakes have been avoided. Africans have not been pushed into Reserves, European land ownership, although considerable, has not been allowed to encroach dangerously into areas where the Africans maintain their customary system of tenure, and Africans have shown

they are quite capable of developing land successfully for purposes in which they have experience. But the native land system badly needs adapting to modern conditions, and as taxes are not assessed according to benefits received the question of paying for public works becomes more acute as development reaches a higher stage. It is to be noted that the benefit of useful public works is always registered in the increased value of land in the vicinity. If this value comes into the public treasury the public works pay for themselves.

It is not the duty of the ruling power to decide in advance who is best fitted to develop land; its duty is to make laws under which competition decides the question; and rent is the indication. If in our African dependencies each holder of land, rural, industrial or urban was obliged to pay into public revenue the annual value of his site alone, apart from improvements, and whether or not he made full use of it; and if the revenue so received was used to abolish or reduce other forms of taxation, every inhabitant, without distinction of race, would have equal opportunity of using land and all land would be put to its most profitable use. This is a clear practical policy that answers both ethical and economic requirements and attacks the root of all the African problems now demanding solution. It gives Europeans every opportunity to prove their contention that they are best fitted to make use of land; but it gives Africans the same opportunity. British electors cannot be expected to know in detail the circumstances in each territory, but an enlightened public opinion, acting through Parliament, could insist that the Colonial Office applied the principle.

F. DUPUIS.

## DE TOCQUEVILLE'S SERVICE TO MANKIND

Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805 to 1859, came of an aristocratic family strongly influenced by liberal opinions. His mother was a grandmother of the wise and humane Malesherbes who had been associated with Turgot in the Physiocrat administration of 1774—1776. As Turgot had been dismissed by court influence and Malesherbes was later guillotined in the name of the people, a descendant would have had particular reason to reject any form of political power as its own justification.

Tocqueville adopted the legal profession and in 1831, as a young deputy judge, was commissioned by the government of Louis Philippe to visit the United States and report on the prison system. In that period of surging thought and high aspiration a reflective investigator was not likely to restrict himself to a mere question of administration. The revolution of the preceding year in France and the agitation for electoral reform in England indicated that Europe was turning towards democracy, and democracy appeared to have succeeded in America although it had failed in France. Could the American example yield useful lessons for the guidance of his own countrymen? Tocqueville asked himself. The result of his investigations appeared in 1835 as *Democracy in America* and, with Stuart Mill's *Representative Government*, written with its warnings constantly in view, it remains one of the most profound surveys of

democratic government from every point but the economic.

Briefly, Tocqueville found that the power to vote members to a vast centralised government was not in itself a guarantee of liberty. Such a constitution fostered the impression that all men are equal rather than that they all have equal rights, and by magnifying the conception of the State, it might lead to a condition in which all are equal and all slaves. The real liberty that existed in America, Tocqueville considered, derived from other causes, some of them anterior to the Declaration of Independence: the powers reserved to the component States, the absence of a bureaucracy, and, especially, the constitution of municipalities governed by the town meeting. "Township independence is the life and mainspring of American liberty to-day." He recognised, however, that the American democracy he analysed was based upon an "equality of fortune" which was not to be seen in Europe and that the ownership of land was the basis of a governing aristocracy. He seemed to think that democracy, by its constitution, would perpetuate this equality of fortune, but in one important chapter he pointed to a factor "more important than the laws," namely, "The peculiar and accidental situation in which providence has placed the Americans" on the edge of a vast area of fertile and unoccupied land. "The European emigrant lands in a country

which is but half full, and where hands are in request; he becomes a workman in easy circumstances; his son goes to seek his fortune in unpeopled regions, and he becomes a rich landowner. The former amasses the capital which the latter invests, and the stranger as well as the native is unacquainted with want."

As a member of the Provisional Government of 1848, Tocqueville helped to form the constitution for the Second Republic although he was unsuccessful in advocating two Chambers instead of one, and indirect instead of direct election of the President. Three years later when the President forcefully suppressed the Republic and after imprisoning or deporting many honest statesmen, made himself Emperor Napoleon III, Tocqueville might have ascribed this to neglect of the safeguards he advocated. But he was more concerned to discover the deeper reasons why in France every revolution eventually resolved itself only into a transfer of centralised control.

Napoleon's perfidious *coup d'état* had been confirmed by a vast and enthusiastic majority after a most "democratic" plebiscite. It appeared that the French people nourished some influence existing probably before 1789 which weakened them morally and intellectually in their efforts to defend personal rights against the encroachments of centralised power. Tocqueville decided to investigate conditions before 1789. For this he was in a position of independence which few modern writers enjoy and characteristically he ignored all books and judgments of his own time, concerning himself only with original sources. He was as conversant with English history as with French and was anxious to discover why England had escaped both revolution and bureaucracy. Neither the alleged wickedness of the French nobility, nor the survival of feudal institutions, nor the poverty of the French peasantry supplied the reason. In 1789 feudal powers were much stronger in Germany than in France; French peasants were no worse off than during the "great" period a hundred years before, and were certainly in better condition than the landless tenantry of the English landlords; and although the French nobility exhibited the vices common to every idle class, among them, during the 18th century, were many benevolent, enlightened and public-spirited men.

Such were the questions Tocqueville was concerned with when he published, in 1856, his *Ancien Régime*, the fruit of original and almost interminable research, but presented in a style as clear and attractive as its conclusions are convincing. Although he does not make a formal and consecutive comparison of English and French history, the facts he gives enable the English reader to notice the two lines of development. Feudal institutions were much the same in the two countries and their gradual transformation followed similar stages; the failure of the king to provide for public revenue out of customary feudal dues and the income from his own estates; the summoning of Parliament and the States General in France for power to levy taxes beyond customary dues; the tendency, in the contest between selfish kings and selfish nobility, to put extra taxes upon the peasants; the peasants' rebellions of the 14th century and subsequent commutation of lords' feudal dues for money, thus disrupting the feudal system; the

weakening of the royal power leading to anarchy and subsequent despotism of Bourbons in France, the Tudors in England tolerated by the people as an alternative to anarchy. It was after this period, however, that the institutions of France and England diverged and it was on a question of taxation.

In 1439 the States General made regular in a grant to Charles VII the collection of *taille*, a tax originally assessed on a tenth part of the produce of land and payable as exemption from military service. Subsequent kings, by exempting the powerful classes such as nobility, clergy and burghers were enabled to use the *taille* as a regular source of income, independent of the States General, and it assumed the character of an income tax more than a land tax. No such grant was made by the English Parliament which by consolidating its control over taxation gradually gained power to make and administer the laws. The erstwhile feudal lords watched with indifference the break up of the feudal system. Relief from dues enhanced the value of the land they now owned outright, and through Parliament they made the laws which as magistrates they administered. The new conditions made it easier for them to enclose common land and reduce the peasants to tenants. On the other hand, rule by independent magistrates had its advantages. It was cheap and non-interfering, it checked bureaucracy and developed in the landlords themselves an active public spirit ready to resist any restrictions imposed by the central authority. These conditions helped the middle classes to become prosperous and they made common cause with the landlords against both royal despotism and the threat of revolution from landless labourers and artisans.

In France the clever ministers of the young Louis XIV, building on revenue from the *taille*, were able to develop a system of government independent of the States General and administered by bureaucrats drawn usually from outside the nobility. But, to placate the privileged classes, which included the close corporations of the towns as well as the nobility, it was necessary to leave them in possession of all their privileges except the power of governing. "By 1789," says Tocqueville, "the political part of their rights had disappeared; but the pecuniary part remained, and this had often grown considerably." Thus the peasant, although not formally deprived of his land, was burdened with so many dues in all his operations that he could exist only on the lowest standard of life and at the cost of never ending labour. To acquire sufficient capital to improve his methods was impossible. The Suffolk squire, Arthur Young, who toured France immediately before the Revolution noticed the poverty and primitive methods in contrast to the landlord-and-tenant farming of England, but he did not sufficiently allow for the cause. Tocqueville gives a formidable list of these dues showing that they were not only burdensome in the extreme, but in the highest degree obvious and obnoxious. Nothing could have been devised more calculated to provoke rebellion.

But in addition to the incubus of nobles' privileges, the peasant was burdened with the expense of an army of officials engaged since the days of Colbert in the hopeless task of trying to increase prosperity by imposing restrictions. It was in fact the planned economy. Tocqueville was unacquainted with the

title, but many of the details he gives seem like descriptions of conditions to-day, although in 18th century France many institutions surviving from earlier times hampered the planners. Tocqueville shows how the system necessarily entails the *droit administratif*, placing officials above the law and tends inexorably to suppress local institutions as well as personal rights. In an enlightening note he contrasts the results of unhampered State planning in French Canada with the virtual freedom of New England. In 1763 the population of Canada had grown to 60,000, that of the British colonies to three million.

But after a hundred years of planning, its absurdities as well as its burdens had become obvious to the king's best advisers. D'Argenson, who was dismissed in 1747, declared, "*Laisser faire* should be the motto of every public authority since the world has become civilised," and Turgot, but for Marie Antoinette, might have been able to establish such a system. The radical reforms, including land reform and abolition of feudal privileges, which he advocated might have saved France from revolution. But it still remains doubtful if the people themselves would have accepted his measures. The effect of State tutelage is enduring. One rises from Tocqueville's book with the conviction that it is only by *laissez faire*, in its widest and deepest interpretation, that men can be educated in those qualities by which they may be fitted, under any form of government, to govern themselves.

F. D. P.

### "A MIRROR FOR BUREAUCRACY"

The English translation of de Tocqueville's great essay on the ancient régime in France was published, in 1856, by John Murray under the title "On the State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789." The book was the subject of a special article by Colin Welch in the *Daily Telegraph* of March 28. Some of the quotations given by that writer are particularly striking, showing how things that were done in 18th-century France exactly describe how things are done in 20th-century England. Let de Tocqueville speak for himself, says Colin Welch:—

"The predominant idea in the remarks of the inspectors of manufactures, who treat the manufacturers with great disdain, is that it is the right and duty of the State to compel them to do their very best, not only in the public interest, but in their own. Accordingly, they think themselves bound to force them to adopt the best methods, and to enter carefully into every detail of their art, accompanying this kind interest with countless prohibitions and enormous fines."

Agriculture was treated in the same maternal way as industry. Prices were fixed by the State:—

"The Government did not confine itself to relieving the peasantry in times of distress, it also undertook to teach them the art of enriching themselves . . . It caused distributions of pamphlets on the science of farming . . . founded schools of agriculture and kept up, at great expense, nursery-grounds of which it distributed the produce . . ."

"Sometimes the Council (of State) insisted upon compelling individuals to prosper whether they would or no . . . Some of the decrees even prohibited the cultivation of certain crops, which the Council did not consider proper for the purpose; whilst others ordered the destruction of such vines as had, in its opinion, been planted in an unfavourable soil."

No one seemed to imagine that any important affairs could be properly carried out without the intervention of the Government; the State had, in fact, already assumed the role of Providence and was accordingly deluged with petitions:—

"Even the agriculturists—a class usually refractory to precept—were disposed to think that if agriculture did not improve it was the fault of the Government, which did not give them sufficient advice and assistance.

"One of them writes in a tone of irritation: 'Why does not the Government appoint inspectors to . . . examine the state of cultivation, to instruct the cultivators how to improve it—to tell them what to do with their cattle, how to fatten, rear and sell them . . . The farmers who exhibited proofs of the best husbandry should receive some mark of honour.'"

Agricultural inspectors and crosses of honour!—scoffs de Tocqueville. [But in Great Britain to-day, it is not a case of "crosses of honour" for exhibiting proofs of the best husbandry; it is a case of being crucified, evicted from house and homestead, for not obeying the officially-set and so-called rules of good husbandry—Ed., L. & L.]

As might be expected, the French administration of that day was as clogged with overwork as our own:—

"As early as 1733, M. d'Argenson wrote: 'The details of business thrown upon the Ministers are immense. Nothing is done without them, nothing except by them, and if their information is not as wide as their powers, they are obliged to leave everything to be done by clerks who become in reality the masters . . .'

"In order to direct everything from Paris and to know everything there, it was necessary to invent a thousand checks and means of control. The mass of paper documents was already enormous and, such was the tedious slowness of these administrative proceedings, that it always took a year before a parish could obtain leave to repair its steeple or to rebuild the parsonage, more frequently two or three years."

The French monarchy rarely attempted, or quickly abandoned, the most necessary reforms, which required perseverance and courage for their execution:—

"But it constantly changed its regulations. Within its sphere, nothing remained in repose for a moment. New regulations succeeded each other with such rapidity that the agents of the Government . . . often found it difficult to discover how to obey them."

"In motives as in methods," Colin Welch concludes, "our progressive contemporaries seem to shake hands across time with the sad, well-meaning King Louis. With eyes fixed on the future, they march resolutely into the past; and the shackles to which we now submit are in great part those which 18th-century France found intolerable."

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