

there is so much more to de Tocqueville than "mere history" that the reader finds himself darting off on many a fruitful tangent of his own. Today, as in the France of the late eighteenth century, taxation is so arbitrary that it seems unjust. But instead of striking at peasants and ordinary townfolk, the tax laws of today strike with special virulence at small businessmen who are trying to float themselves off into active enterprises of their own. The modern tax inequities bear down with special cruelty on the \$8,000 to \$20,000-a-year brackets, sometimes giving men of ideas the feeling that any unusual expenditure of energy is hardly worth the candle. The resentments of the "idea classes" can be absorbed up to a point without resulting in violence. But it is the apathy, not the revolutionary anger, of the "idea classes" that is hurting humanity today. The results of this apathy are particularly marked in England and the Scandinavian countries. But if Americans of "idea status" haven't succumbed to any marked degree as yet, it would require little more than another good round of inflation to make the "idea man" feel he is on a treadmill that leads nowhere.

ANOTHER part of de Tocqueville's book that is not "mere history"

is the lesson it has to teach about the dangers of centralization. These dangers have been mitigated recently by the reaction against the more extreme centralizing measures of the 1930's. But the trend against centralization hasn't really gotten off the ground. Central governments everywhere collect the vast bulk of the modern world's taxes. When the next economic "downturn" comes, with its invitation to centralizing politicians to seize more and more power, de Tocqueville's book will stand as an awful warning of what happens at the end of the centralizing road.

It should also stand as a perennial warning that nations cannot be arbitrarily changed by political action of any radical kind. Individuals working by means of voluntary persuasion can sometimes move mountains. But when politicians try to impose change by legislative and administrative fiat, something untoward happens. In life it is the "organic" that counts, and organic changes cannot be forced. The best law represents a consensus that is already prevalent in the hearts of men.

Voltaire and the State by CONSTANCE ROWE. New York: Columbia University Press. 254 pp. \$4.00.

"For a nation to be loved," said Edmund Burke, "it should be love-

ly." With something like that thought in mind, Voltaire set about defining the conditions that would make his beloved *la patrie* worthy of his unstinted devotion. French culture had a solid claim on his admiration, and with Parisian life he had fallen hopelessly in love in his youth. But, Bourbon management of *L'Etat* put a strain on one's patriotism and for that reason was in dire need of overhauling. For his pains in setting forth its shortcomings and in expounding a philosophy of government, Voltaire was compelled to live most of his life outside the land he loved best.

Voltaire and the State is a concise and highly readable study of Voltaire's views on the proper political organization of society. These views, in the main, were incorporated in our own Declaration of Independence and in our Constitution, and are therefore integrated with our political tradition. Long before Jefferson was born, Voltaire wrote of man's "primitive and inalienable rights," of equality before the law, of the obligation of government to preserve man's fundamental liberties. Though France was uppermost in his mind when he expounded his ideas, he held them to be absolute principles underlying the contract between the individual and organized society, applicable to any pe-

litical entity; he was a philosopher of patriotism.

The luster and immensity of Voltaire's ideas have worn off under the impact of familiarity. But in his time, it should be remembered, kings ruled by "divine right," not by any defined principles of government. Even he did not find monarchy in itself objectionable, indicating that his concern was not with any particular form of government but with the principles on which it operated. To him a State was on solid foundation only if it guaranteed to the individual such natural rights as liberty of person and property, freedom of speech, press and assembly, liberty of conscience and trial by jury; its techniques were of little moment. A patriot, to Voltaire, is one who strives to keep the government under which he lives in line with these principles. Voltaire advocated the reform, not the overthrow, of the Bourbon dynasty.

Now that the doctrine of "natural rights" has fallen into philosophic disfavor, and there is an inclination to relegate the individual to subservience to the State, it would be well for Americans to acquaint themselves with the ideas on which their political institutions were based. *Voltaire and the State* is an opportune book.

FRANK CHODOROV

Beyond the Dreams of Avarice by
 RUSSELL KIRK. Chicago: Henry
 Regnery Company. 339 pp. \$4.50.

Russell Kirk is a non-utopian, as I read him; which means that he stands in opposition to the major social drift of the modern world, the confident expectation of unending temporal progress.

Utopianism of one sort or another is a dominant or recessive trait in most of us; it has been bred out of only a few. Any person who pins his hopes on a future perfect society is a utopian; so is the purveyor of leakproof social panaceas. Utopians, of course, fight among themselves to weed out the heretics from among the True Believers. The deepest cleavage is between the collectivist majority which anticipates the arrival of its heaven on earth as soon as a benign political power becomes co-extensive with society; and a visionary minority which believes that only one thing prevents innately inoffensive human beings from living by the light of pure reason and morals — the institution of government, which they would eliminate.

Standing off in lonely isolation is the non-utopian. Alongside the visions of the utopians, his offerings must appear shabby by comparison. For him, a heaven in

heaven is at least a speculative possibility; but a heaven on earth — in the light of the known propensities of human beings already revealed throughout history — is sheer delusion. Man cannot manufacture a heaven on earth, and the Greek idea of *hubris* and the Christian doctrine of sin once kept him from trying. But when he jettisoned these, there was nothing to restrain his effort to build a new Jerusalem from scratch in this best of all possible worlds. Ever since the Enlightenment, his efforts to achieve utopia have been virtually unimpeded. More recently, collectivist utopians have had a free hand in several countries, but their new fangled heaven resembles nothing so much as the old-fashioned hell!

Even though the most profound and significant distinction among social theorists is that which distributes them into utopians and non-utopians, there is little or no current debate at this level. The beliefs which give an epoch its characteristic tone are seldom debated; they are taken for granted — even, in some measure, by those who do not share them. Thus the instinctive rebel against utopianism is not only called churlish and reactionary by the visionaries, he may actually feel that way. Our deepest beliefs lie so far back in the mind that, like a pair of glass-