



Alexis de Tocqueville

(* 1805 Verneuil-sur-Seine, France- †1859 Cannes, France.)

After his studies and a career as a judge Tocqueville decided to travel to the United States of America. This was one of the most momentous journeys in the history of political thought. As a result of this journey he wrote "Democracy in America". Written by a man with a passion for individual liberty this farsighted analysis of a developing democracy provides a profound view of the threats for liberty in modern societies. The equality of the people could also become a breeding ground for despotism and lawlessness. "But it depends upon themselves whether equality is to lead to servitude or freedom, knowledge or barbarism, prosperity or wretchedness." Therefore Tocqueville stressed the importance

of a great variety of democratic institutions and a decentralisation of power.

Tocqueville helped to write the constitution of the Second Republic and became Foreign Minister of France in 1849. After his dismissal from the office in the same year he focused on writing „The Old Regime and the French Revolution“. He argues that the revolution gave rise to even more tax burden and more centralisation of power than the absolutist regime.

Literature:

Alexis de Tocqueville: Œuvres Complètes, Paris, Gallimard, 1951 – 1998, (18 vols.).

- Democracy in America (different editions)
- The Old Regime and the French Revolution (different editions)

Links:

Full-text Internet version of "Democracy in America"

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html

www.tocqueville.org

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