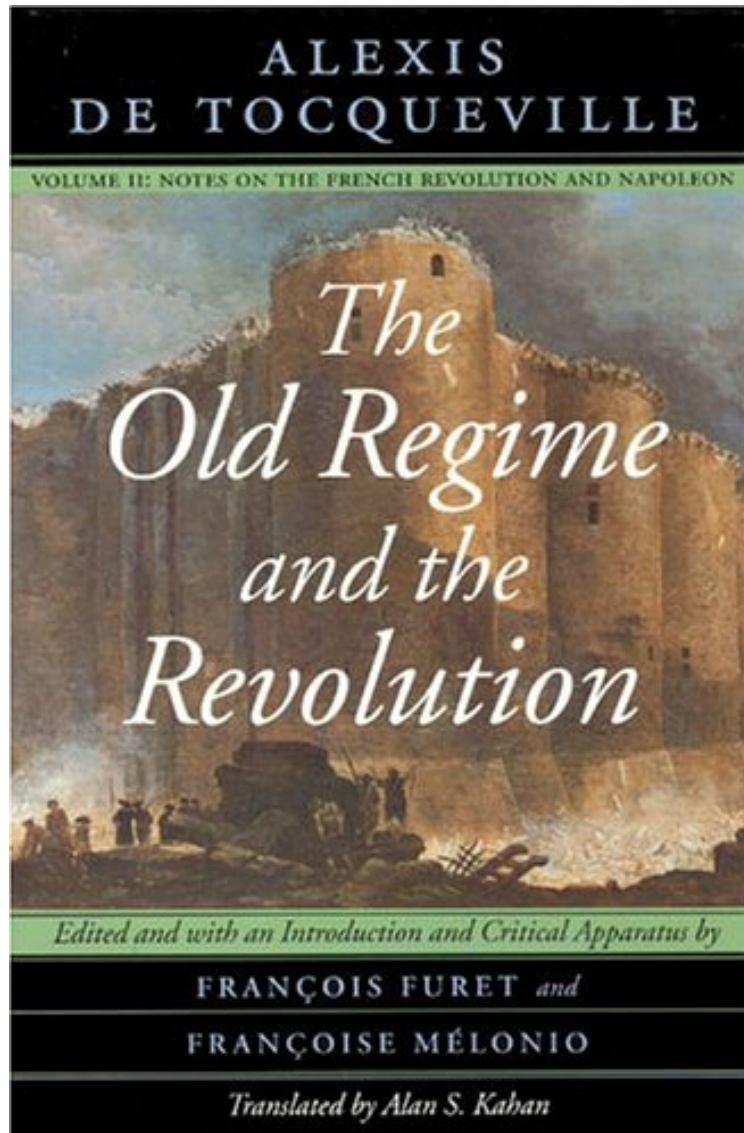


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The Old Regime and the Revolution, Volume II: Notes on the French Revolution and Napoleon

Alexis de Tocqueville

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Alexis de Tocqueville : The Old Regime and the Revolution, Volume II: Notes on the French Revolution and Napoleon before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Old Regime and the Revolution, Volume II: Notes on the French Revolution and Napoleon:

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Tres Tres BienBy SaraTocqueville has always been, and probably always will be, known as the author of "Democracy in America," a wide-ranging and perspicacious study of the early republic. However, it's when he writes about his own France, and its political system that he knows so intimately, that Tocqueville is at his best. Unlike "Democracy," "The Ancient Regime" is neither sprawling, judgmental, nor inaccurate. These are excusable lapses, of course, in a grand work of poignant analysis, but such deficiencies do not mar "The Ancient Regime." This book is succinct, beautifully written, expertly researched, and incredibly original. Because Tocqueville was French and worked in the French government, this work is much more focused, specific, and accurate than "Democracy" (written hastily after a 9-month tour of America in 1830-31). It is simply a brilliant work, the creation of a curious and sometimes eccentric mind.³ of 4 people found the following review helpful. Bad translationBy Jon ElsterI criticized this translation when it appeared ("Tocqueville in English", European Journal of Sociology 1999), listing some 60 gross mistakes reflecting ignorance of French grammar. Some of my criticisms were cited and endorsed by P. N. Furbank in his review in The New York Review of Books, April, 8 1999. Furbank wrote that "It is to be hoped that in any future edition the University of Chicago Press will take account of these and the many other criticisms of the translation that Mr. Elster has made". I have not checked systematically, but the passages I looked up have not been modified. I wonder why.⁵ of 7 people found the following review helpful. the great French observer of America looks at FranceBy Orrin C. JuddAlexis de Tocqueville is, of course, the most perceptive observer of American democracy ever to grace our shores, his Democracy in America one of the most important books ever written about democracy in general and the American Republic in specific. Here, in a less read work, he takes on the origins of the French Revolution and the peculiar French form of democracy it brought and proves an equally keen observer of his own country and countrymen.De Tocqueville makes several vital points about the French Revolution: first, that it built gradually and, given circumstances in France, was inevitable; second, where the American Revolution had as its lodestar the ideal of freedom, the French Revolution was motivated by a passionate hatred of inequality; third, the demise of all institutions other than the monarchy in France made it certain that when Revolution came, it would be violent and unchecked; finally, this combination of factors lead to the bizarre nature of the French Revolution, with no developed institutions to turn to once the King was gone and with no great emphasis placed on freedom, the French people were willing to tolerate the nihilism of the Terror and the authoritarianism of the governments that replaced the monarchy. He does not make the case, but it lies before us, that the American Revolution was fundamentally a positive action, a demand for greater freedom, but the French Revolution was a negative action, a demand that the few not own more than the many.This book was to be followed by a second volume dealing with the the Revolution itself, but he died before he could continue the work. That is a shame; it would have been interesting to have some more insight from him into the French, it seems unlikely that anyone has ever rendered a better description of his people than the one he offers in his Conclusion: When I observe France from this angle [their temperament] I find the nation itself far more remarkable than any of the events in its long history. It hardly seems possible that there can ever have existed any other people so full of contrasts and so extreme in all their doings, so much guided by their emotions and so little by fixed principles, always behaving better, or worse, than one expected of them....Undisciplined by temperament, the Frenchman is always readier to put up with arbitrary rule, however harsh, of an autocrat than with a free, well-ordered government by his fellow citizens, however worthy of respect they be. At one moment he is up in arms against authority and the next we find him serving the powers that be with a zeal such as the most servile races never display.In the context of this paragraph, we can begin to understand Vichy France and the bureaucratic tyranny of the modern French nation. I say "begin"....GRADE: B+

With his monumental work *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)-best known for his classic *Democracy in America*—envisioned a multivolume philosophic study of the origins of modern France that would examine the implications of French history on the nature and development of democratic society. Volume 1, which covered the eighteenth-century background to the Revolution, was published to great acclaim in 1856. On the continuation of this project, he wrote: "When this Revolution has finished its work, [this volume] will show what that work really was, and what the new society which has come from that violent labor is, what the Revolution has taken away and what it has preserved from that old regime against which it was directed."Tocqueville died in the midst of this work. Here in volume 2—in clear, up-to-date English—is all that he had completed, including the chapters he started for a work on Napoleon, notes and analyses he made in the course of researching and writing the first volume, and his notes on his preparation for his continuation. Based on the new French edition of *The Old Regime*, most of the translated texts have never before appeared in English, and many of those that have appeared have been considerably altered. More than ever before, readers will be able to see how Tocqueville's account of the Revolution would have come out, had he lived to finish it. This handsomely produced volume completes the set and is essential reading for anyone interested in the French Revolution or in Tocqueville's thought.

.com One is sorely tempted to allow the marvelously lucid prose in Alan S. Kahan's new translation of Alexis de Tocqueville's study of the French Revolution speak for itself: "In 1789 the French made the greatest effort ever

undertaken by any people to disassociate themselves from their past, and to put an abyss between what they had been and what they wished to become." But as Tocqueville found out when--with the hindsight of half a century--he examined the historical records, the revolution was really not so radical a turn of events. "True, it took the world by surprise, and yet it was the result of a very long process, the sudden and violent climax of a task to which ten generations had contributed." Thus the first volume of *The Old Regime and the Revolution* concerns itself with the state of affairs before 1798, getting beyond the "confused and often mistaken notions" of his contemporaries "about the manner in which business was conducted, the real practices of institutions ... the real basis of ideas and mores." Although many historians have taken on the French Revolution in the years since Tocqueville's analysis was first published, few have addressed the subject with as effective a combination of insight and clarity. --Ron Hogan
From Library Journal
This is a new translation of Tocqueville's last masterpiece, written in 1851. Best known as the author of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville focuses here on the meaning and origin of the French Revolution. This volume is organized into three major subjects. First, it looks at the nature of the French Revolution. Second, it examines the origins of the revolution in an absolutist and aristocratic society. Finally, it considers the reasons for the sudden outbreak at the end of the 18th century. Tocqueville discusses the continuity of French political behavior in relation to persistent class hostility, government centralization, and the preservation of individual and political freedom. This book surpasses older editions of English translations because of its readability and because it is based on the French critical edition that includes the author's sources and materials from his drafts and revisions. Kahan (Florida International Univ.) is also translating the work's second volume, which is to be published in 1999 by the University of Chicago. Recommended for academic libraries. ?Mary F. Salony, West Virginia Northern Community Coll. Lib., Wheeling
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Language Notes
Text: English (translation) Original Language: French