

BRIEF TIMELINE

OF THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION

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(This material has been compiled from various unverified sources)

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Introduction

1788-1789 was a time of poor harvests, which engendered social tension and resentment of the **ancient regime** - a feudal system by which 40 per cent of the land was owned by the nobility and clergy, who were a mere 3 per cent of the total population.

After the nobility blocked Louis XVI's attempt to raise revenue, he was forced in May 1789 to convene the **Estates-General** - a parliament made up of clergy, nobility, and commoners.

The **third estate**, which represented the commoners, demanded greater voting rights which were refused.

The commoners then broke away and took power as a **national assembly** - this marks the first stem to revolutionary change.

In July 1789 rioting led to the storming and the fall of the Bastille, which was a serious blow against the oppressive and exploitive feudal forces of the **ancient regime**.

On 04 August 1789, the **National Assembly** abolished feudal privileges and swept away an entire system of property ownership (feudalism and serfdom are now ended in France).

Over the next two years the **National Assembly** passed a series of reforms, including the **Declaration of the Rights of Man** which further undermined the hold of **ancient regime**.

In April 1792 the **National Assembly** declared war on Austria and Prussia (who were sympathetic to Louis XVI). Serious social unrest ensued and on 20 August 1792 a mob stormed the *Tuileries* palace and Louis XVI was deposed.

Following the deposing of Louis XVI a radical assembly, the **Convention**, was elected and in September 1792 France became a **Republic**.

In January 1793 Louis XVI was charged with "crimes against the French Nation" - he is tried, convicted, and then executed by beheading on 21 Jan 1793.

In October 1793 the **Convention** establishes a **Revolutionary Tribunal** to administer instant justice, and a **Committee of Public Safety** (CPS) to wield central power.

On 10 June 1794 the **Law of 22 Prairial** was introduced - under this law, the **Revolutionary Tribunal** became a simple court of condemnation without need of witnesses.

Between its inception in 1793 and July 1794, it is estimated that the "Reign of Terror" **Revolutionary Tribunal** sentenced between 20,000 and 40,000 people to death.

In 1795 the **Committee of Public Safety** (CPS) was replaced by a five-man **Directory** who had the mandate to restore faith in the Revolutionary regime.

On 31 May 1795 the **Revolutionary Tribunal** was suppressed.

The rule of the **Directory** (1795-1799) was a time of great instability and unfettered corruption.

On 09 November 1799 the **Directory** was overthrown by **Napoleon Bonaparte** and he became First Consul in the new leadership.

The fall of the Directory marks the end of the French Revolution

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Brief Timeline of the French Revolution

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Date	Event
1756	Start of the Seven Years' War, which seriously compounds the French debt situation
1774	Coronation of Louis XVI at Reims
1781	February: Jacques Necker releases his ' <i>Compte Rendu</i> ', leading ordinary French citizens to believe that the economic situation was ok and that there was nothing to worry about The Segur Ordinance was introduced to prevent those without a patrilineal century of nobility from entering the army officer corps
20 Aug 1786	Finance minister Calonne informs Louis XVI that the royal finances are insolvent
29 Dec 1786	The Assembly of Notables is convened
Mar 1787	Calonne's publication of his proposals and the intransigence of the Notables leads to a public clash and impasse
15 Aug 1787	Louis XVI dismisses the Parisian parliament and orders the members to remove themselves to Troyes
28 Apr 1789	The Réveillon Riots in Paris, caused by low wages and food shortages - about 25 deaths by troops
20 Jul 1788	Meeting of the Estates of Dauphiné, known as the Assembly of Vizille and led by Jean Joseph Mounier, to elect deputies to the Estates-General - measures are adopted to increase the influence of the Third Estate
16 Aug 1788	Repayments on government loans stop and the French government declares bankruptcy

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Date	Event
05 May 1789	<p>Louis XVI called a meeting of the Estates-General, held in Versailles, to discuss and approve a new tax plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This is the first meeting of the Estates-General since 1614</p>
17 - 20 Jun 1789	<p>Three Poitevin curés decide to join the Third Estate, leaving the Chambers of the Clergy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Accepting the proposition of the delegate Abbé Sieyès, the Third Estate proclaims itself "The National Assembly"</p> <p>A few liberal nobles and many clergy join the movement of the Third Estate</p> <p>"Tennis Court Oath" - After being locked out of their meeting room (20 Jun 1789), deputies of the Third Estate assemble on a tennis court and swore not to separate until a constitutional regime is established</p>
07 - 13 Jul 1789	<p>The National Assembly appoints a committee of thirty members to draft a constitution</p> <p>The National Assembly proclaims itself the Constituent National Assembly, with full authority and power to decree laws - their primary task is to draw up and adopt a constitution</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Necker is dismissed</p> <p>Demonstrations and speeches take place at the Palais-Royal - Camille Desmoulins gives a speech (12 Jul 1789) urging the citizens of Paris to take up arms</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The electors of Paris form a standing committee and a citizens' militia</p>
14 Jul 1789	The storming and the fall of the Bastille
04 Aug 1789	The National Assembly announces the end of feudalism and serfdom in France
27 Aug 1789	The National Assembly issues <i>The Declaration of the Rights of Man</i>
05 Oct 1789	<p style="text-align: center;">The women of Paris invade Versailles</p> <p>Led by a large group of women, Parisians march upon Versailles and force the royal family back to Paris, where they take up residence at the Tuileries</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Louis XVI is now considered by many a "Prisoner" in Paris</p> <p>In Versailles, the Assembly, declares, in the spirit of constitutional monarchy, its inseparability from the king</p>
1790	The Civil Constitution of the Clergy is passed
20 - 25 Jun 1791	Louis XVI and his family try to flee to Varennes, but are forced to return to Paris

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Date	Event
13–14 Sep 1791	Louis XVI formally accepts the Constitution of 1791
20 Apr 1792	The National Assembly declares war on Austria
Sep 1792	The First meeting of the National Convention is held
Dec 1792	Start of Louis XVI's trial
21 Jan 1793	Louis XVI is beheaded by guillotine
Aug 1793	A National Draft was issued - all able-bodied men were to enlist in the army
Sep 1793 - July 1794	The "Reign of Terror" court sentences 20,000 to 40,000 people to death Law of 22 Prairial (10 Jun 1794) - the Revolutionary Tribunal becomes a court of condemnation without the need for witnesses
27 Jul 1794	The National Convention arrests Robespierre
28 Jul 1794	Robespierre is executed by beheading without a trial
26 Oct 1795:	National Convention dissolved
02 Nov 1795	An Executive Directory takes on executive power
1795	A new Constitution is adopted
1799	The fall of the Directory by Napoleon Bonaparte marks the end of the French Revolution

End

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