The **French Revolution** ([French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language): *Révolution française*; 1789–1799), was a period of[radical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_radicalism) social and political upheaval in [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_France) that had a major impact on France and indeed all of [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Europe). The [absolute monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy) that had ruled France for centuries collapsed in three years. French society underwent an epic transformation, as [feudal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudalism), aristocratic and religious privileges evaporated under a sustained assault from [radical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_radicalism) [left-wing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left-wing#History_of_the_term) political groups, [masses on the streets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sans-culottes), and peasants in the countryside.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution#cite_note-0) Old ideas about tradition and hierarchy – of [monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy), [aristocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristocracy), and [religious authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clericalism) – were abruptly overthrown by new [Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) principles of [equality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libert%C3%A9%2C_%C3%A9galit%C3%A9%2C_fraternit%C3%A9), [citizenship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship) and [inalienable rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inalienable_rights).

The French Revolution began in 1789 with the convocation of the [Estates-General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estates-General_of_1789) in May. The first year of the Revolution saw members of the [Third Estate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Estate) proclaiming the [Tennis Court Oath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennis_Court_Oath) in June, the [assault on the Bastille](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storming_of_the_Bastille) in July, the passage of the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen) in August, and an [epic march on Versailles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Women%27s_March_on_Versailles) that forced the royal court back to Paris in October. The next few years were dominated by tensions between various [liberal assemblies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Legislative_Assembly_and_the_fall_of_the_French_monarchy) and a [right-wing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right-wing) monarchy intent on thwarting major reforms.

A [republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_French_Republic) was proclaimed in September 1792 and [King Louis XVI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_XVI_of_France) was executed the next year. External threats also played a dominant role in the development of the Revolution. The [French Revolutionary Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolutionary_Wars) started in 1792 and ultimately featured [spectacular French victories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_France) that facilitated the conquest of the [Italian Peninsula](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Peninsula), the [Low Countries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Low_Countries) and most territories west of the [Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhine) – achievements that had defied previous French governments for centuries.

Internally, popular sentiments radicalized the Revolution significantly, culminating in the rise of [Maximilien Robespierre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximilien_Robespierre%22%20%5Co%20%22Maximilien%20Robespierre) and the [Jacobins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobin_Club) and virtual dictatorship by the [Committee of Public Safety](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee_of_Public_Safety) during the [Reign of Terror](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reign_of_Terror) from 1793 until 1794 during which between 16,000 and 40,000 people were killed.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution#cite_note-1) After the fall of the Jacobins and the execution of Robespierre, the [Directory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Directory) assumed control of the French state in 1795 and held power until 1799, when it was replaced by the Consulate under [Napoleon Bonaparte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte).

After the [Napoleonic Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars) and ensuing rise and fall of Napoleon's [First French Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_French_Empire), a[restoration of absolutist monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourbon_Restoration) was followed by two further successful smaller revolutions ([1830](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Revolution) and [1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution_of_1848)). This meant the 19th century and process of [modern France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_France)taking shape saw France again successively governed by a similar cycle of [constitutional monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/July_Monarchy) (1830–48), fragile [republic (Second Republic)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Second_Republic) (1848–1852), and [empire (Second Empire)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_French_Empire) (1852–1870). The [modern era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_history) has unfolded in the shadow of the French Revolution. The growth of republics and [liberal democracies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy), the spread of [secularism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism), the development of modern [ideologies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ideology) and the invention of [total war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_war)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution#cite_note-2) all mark their birth during the Revolution.