

Napoleon Bonaparte

15th August 1769 - 5th May 1821

1. Corsica

to 9 years of age. Leaves Ajaccio 15 dec 1778 with brother Joseph & father

2. Schools in France: Autun/Brienne/Paris Ecole Militaire

acquires French at Autun (1 jan 1779 – 23 apr 1779) – Joseph stays on another 5 years. Napoleon enters Brienne on certificates of poverty and nobility (11 generations documented) in april 1779. Studies Latin and French literature and composition, history, geography, mathematics. Remains in Brienne six years without leaving. Never learns Latin, but is the most indefatigable reader in the school. Plutarch is a favorite. Father visits in 1782 and 1784 (but then dies of stomach cancer 24 feb 1785). Napoleon had been selected in 1784 along with four others to enter the Ecole Militaire in Paris (founded by Louis XV), due in part to mathematical proficiency. Leaves Brienne 30 oct 1784. Graduates from cadet to officer in only 10 months, at age sixteen. Assigned to Régiment de La Fère (artillery) & left Paris 28 oct 1785 for Valence. Rapidly rose from private to corporal to sergeant to second lieutenant by 1st jan 1786. Comes to know the Abbé Raynal (prominent philosopher). After 1 year's service, six months leave was due. Napoleon heads for Corsica 1 sep 1786 for first time in 8 years (aged 17). Leave extended in April 1787 for further 8 months. Leaves Corsica 12 sept 1787 and returns to Paris, lodging in Hotel de Cherbourg, attending theatre & opera. Applies for further extension of leave for another 6 months, and returned to Ajaccio 1st jan 1788. Extended leave finally expires 1st june 1788 (total absence 21 months), rejoins regiment now at Auxonne for next 15 months. In summer 1789, the Revolution reached Auxonne.

3. from Revolution 1789 to Toulon 1792/3

By 1789, France is bankrupt yet Louis XVI was spending 100 million francs a year at Versailles. Nobles and clergy both exempt from taxation, and 3rd estate carries the burden. Half the GNP goes to paying interest on national debt, up by 3billion francs in 12 years. Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette not up to the situation. Estates general to meet at Versailles 5th may 1789 (previous meeting 1614). On 27th June all Estates sit in one assembly and appoint committee on the constitution, but then 14th July Bastille is stormed. Tricolor unfurled,

National Guard organized. Louis XVI attempts to co-operate. Revolution spreads across France; peasants spontaneously overthrow feudal lords. In sept, Napoleon returns to Corsica for a month's leave. Corsica in upheaval too. Napoleon supports revolutionary sentiment. Paoli returns to Corsica after 21 year exile in France, now 66 years old. Napoleon first joins him, but relations are not harmonious. Napoleon extends his leave, then finally returns to France 31st jan 1791 (with 12 year old brother Louis in tow), and rejoins regiment at Auxonne 2 feb 1791 after further 17 months absence. 250 francs pay made up to him. New National Assembly re-organizes artillery, and Napoleon appointed first-lieutenant of 4th regiment, and returns to Valence 14 june 1791. Four days later Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette attempt to flee France for Austria, and are apprehended at Varennes and arrested. Revolution intensifies, and a written Oath of Allegiance to the Assembly required of all military officers. Many faithful to the *Ancien Régime* refused and emigrated (32 from 4th regiment alone). Napoleon took the oath 6th july 1791, a sincere Republican. Then took leave and left for Corsica sept 1791 – May 1792, accompanied by little brother Louis. One fruitless meeting with Paoli. From 1st jan 1792, Napoleon on list of officers "absent without cause." Returns to Paris may 1792 in poverty, pawns his watch. On 20 june Napoleon witnesses Louis XVI appear in red cap of Revolution while mob surges below, and asks "Why don't they sweep off four or five hundred of that *canaille* with cannon? The rest would run away fast enough." Then on 10th aug witnessed attack on palace at Tuileries when Swiss Guard decimated. Napoleon witnessed slaughter first-hand without being involved in fighting. In july 1792 Napoleon had been reinstated with rank of captain. Escorts sister back to Corsica in oct. In Corsica Napoleon is second lieutenant-colonel of volunteers, and joins expedition to Sardinia 18 feb 1793 to liberate from Italian rule. But crew of boat mutiny and mission fails. Back in Corsica, Paoli is turned against the Revolution by the excesses of Jacobin Convention (i.e. the Terror). Paoli denounced as traitor by Napoleon's brother Lucien in a speech to the Toulon Jacobin Club, and an order for Paoli's arrest issued in Paris. Napoleon in Corsica forced to choose between Paoli and the Convention, and turns against Paoli, his former hero and friend. Bonapartes family flee Corsica 11 june 1793 sailing for Toulon. Although he passes a few days in Ajaccio on his way back from Egypt in 1799, this is really Napoleon's final departure from Corsica. In Toulon, Joseph married Julie Clary, a wealthy silk merchant. Napoleon involved with Désirée, Julie's sister, but she marries Bernadotte, future King of Sweeden. Lucien marries Catherine Boyer, an illiterate inn-keeper's daughter. Napoleon rejoins

his regiment in Nice, where a revolt arose against the Constitution of 1793. Napoleon writes "Supper in Beaucaire" in support of the Revolution under lead of Jacobins, and is sent on missions to Toulon, which had opened its gates to the English in revolt against the Revolution. Commander of artillery wounded early on, and Napoleon next in command. Siege lasted two months, won on 17th dec using Napoleon's tactics. Napoleon's first great triumph. English fled, blowing up their magazines. Napoleon confirmed as General 7 jan 1794, and appointed Inspector of Coasts, based at Nice. Napoleon's finances improve enormously. Then suddenly, on 27 july 1794, Robspierre executed, and Napoleon denounced as a traitor. Arrested 10 aug 1794 and imprisoned near Antibes. Released 13 days later, then on 14th sept 1794 restored to rank of general. Takes part in Italian army manouvers against Austrians, then is appointed to command of artillery in expedition to reconquer Corsica, now in posession of English. Sailed march 1795; expedition failed; two French ships captured by English, remainder fled to Italy. Napoleon re-assigned to command artillery subduing Royalist uprising in La Vendée. Returning to Paris may 1795, Napoleon is transferred from the artillery to the infantry, but Napoleon pleads ill-health and bides his time in Paris. By summer of 1795, the terror is over and Paris is recovering from the nightmare. Napoleon forms a close friendship with Paul Barras. Barras had been a French soldier in India before the Revolution, and had been an active participant in storming the Bastille, and at Tuileries, at the siege of Toulon, and finally had been a central figure in the overthrow of Robspierre, which ended the terror. But the situation was unstable. Barras favoured Napoleon, but on 15th sept 1795 Napoleon is again stricken from list of Generals, and he is forced to sell his books to survive. Eventual separation of legislative and executive powers in an attempt to stabilise the situation – legislative power vested in two Councils (like two houses of Parliament) and executive power in a new Directory. But this only leads to new revolts, and 30,000 troops of National Guard resist the Convention. In panic, Convention turns to Barras, who is put in supreme command. Barras sent for Napoleon and put him in charge of the forces of the Convention. The National Guard outnumbered the troops of the Convention 5 to 1, but they had no artillery. Napoleon enlists the help of a cavalry officer called Murat (his future brother-in-law) to get all available cannons, which were placed at every available location on the streets leading to the Tuileries, where the convention was sitting. On 5th oct 1795, the insurgents arrived and were attacked in force, and driven back to the remotest quarters of the city. A second great success for Napoleon. The Convention re-appoint Napoleon

general and second in command of the army, with Barras as director.

4. First Italian Campaign 1796/7

With this great success, Napoleon enters the highest echelons of Parisian society. He reorganizes the army, and orders the disarmament of all Parisians. Enter Marie Joseph-Rose (widow of Alexandre de Beauharnais, executed 23 July 1794, four days before Robespierre) and her son Eugene asking for his father's sword back. Napoleon soon falls in love with "Josephine," although she is indifferent. Barras claimed in his memoirs that Josephine was already his mistress at this point, but this may have been a lie of revenge against Napoleon, with whom he eventually ended up enemies. In any case, Napoleon and Josephine marry 8 March 1796, with Barras one of the four witnesses signing the marriage certificate. The Bonaparte family do not take the news of Napoleon's marriage well, and refuse to accept Josephine. Two days later Napoleon leaves to take command of the army of Italy, to which post he had been appointed two weeks before his wedding. It was a campaign Napoleon had proposed a year previously but was then rejected. Arrived at Nice 29 March 1796, and begins his famous letters to Josephine, and his famous speeches to his troops. Italy was 20 small states and a unity only on the map. Napoleon's army was up against a coalition of Sardinia and Austria. By crossing the alps, he was able to use his own army as a wedge between the two, and then attack each in turn. This strategy Napoleon also employed at Waterloo, with less success. But it worked in 1796: in less than three weeks, Napoleon won six victories, killed or captured 12,000 men, taken 40 cannons, separated the Sardinians and the Austrians, and acquired as bases for future operations the fortresses of Coni, Tortona and Alessandria with their magazines. He was celebrated as a liberator in Milan and elsewhere throughout northern Italy (see Stendahl's novel *The Charter House of Parma*).

5. Egyptian Campaign 1798/9

6. Second Italian Campaign 1799/1801

7. Austria/Prussia/Russia 1805-7

8. Peninsular War – Wagram 1808-9

9. Moscow 1812

10. Leipzig 1813

11. Waterloo 1815

12. St Helena 1816-21