

**THE SIXTEEN POINTS: GUIDELINES FOR  
THE GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1966)**

**Introduction**

Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976) had lost a substantial degree of power in the aftermath of the disastrous Great Leap Forward (1959-1961). As a result, the Communist Party pursued a number of social and economic policies, of which Mao did not approve. In 1966, the Chairman launched the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" as a way of attacking his enemies within the Party leadership, most notably President Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969) and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997).

The document below is an early statement of Mao's goals as articulated in a decision of the Party Central Committee.

**Document Excerpts with Questions** (Longer selection follows this section)

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Guidelines for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966)**

...

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, and customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds, and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. At present our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic "authorities" and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and transform education, literature, and art and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

The masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals, and revolutionary cadres form the main force in this Great Cultural Revolution. Large numbers of revolutionary young people, previously unknown, have become courageous and daring pathbreakers. ...

**Primary Source Document, with Questions (DBQ) on  
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**Questions:**

1. Mao Zedong and the Communist Party's Central Committee do not state the names of those "persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road." If you were a Chinese person reading this in 1966, and if you yourself were not clear on exactly which individuals were the targets, what would you do?
2. What steps would you take to carry out this Central Committee policy in your own local community or your own high school, college, or university?
3. If you identified yourself as a "revolutionary intellectual," whom would you attack and overthrow?

**Longer Selection**

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***1. A New Stage in the Socialist Revolution***

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution now unfolding is a great revolution that touches people to their very soul and constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in our country, a deeper and more extensive stage. ...

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***2. The Main Current and the Zigzags***

The masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals, and revolutionary cadres form the main force in this Great Cultural Revolution. Large numbers of revolutionary young people, previously unknown, have become courageous and daring pathbreakers. They are vigorous in action and intelligent. Through the media of big character

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posters and great debates, they argue things out, expose and criticize thoroughly, and launch resolute attacks on the open and hidden representatives of the bourgeoisie. ...

Since the Cultural Revolution is a revolution, it inevitably meets with resistance. This resistance comes chiefly from those in authority who have wormed their way into the party and are taking the capitalist road. It also comes from the old force of habit in society. At present, this resistance is still fairly strong and stubborn. However, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is, after all, an irresistible general trend. There is abundant evidence that such resistance will crumble fast once the masses become fully aroused. ...

***9. Cultural Revolutionary Groups, Committees, and Congresses***

Many new things have begun to emerge in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and other organizational forms created by the masses in many schools and units are something new and of great historic importance.

These cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and congresses are excellent new forms of organization whereby under the leadership of the Communist Party the masses are educating themselves. They are an excellent bridge to keep our party in close contact with the masses. They are organs of power of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

The cultural revolutionary groups, committees, and congresses should not be temporary organizations but permanent, standing mass organizations. They are suitable not only for colleges, schools, government, and other organizations but generally also for factories, mines, and other enterprises, urban districts, and villages.

It is necessary to institute a system of general elections, like that of the Paris Commune, for electing members to the cultural revolutionary groups and committees and delegates to the cultural revolutionary congress.