



**THE CULTURAL  
REVOLUTION**



## **Communist Revolution Timeline**

1949 - 1966

### **(Chinese Civil War 1945 - 1949)**

#### **August 6th & 9th 1945:**

Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

#### **August 8th 1945:**

Stalin declares war on Japan and Soviet troops invade Manchuria (NE China)

#### **August 21st 1945:**

A formal surrender ceremony between China and Japan concludes the Second World War in the Pacific

#### **April 1946:**

Soviet troops withdraw from Manchuria after allowing the communists to take over the countryside

#### **May 1946:**

Mao calls for radical land distribution and all-out class struggle in the countryside

#### **June 1946:**

The Nationalists pursue the Communists all the way to the northern border of Manchuria, but are forced to halt their advance as George Marshall, President Truman's envoy, imposes a ceasefire. The Communist troops regroup and are trained by the Soviets.

*\*Known as the Marshall mission. George Marshall's failure was described as one of the greatest blunders in American diplomatic history, by Douglas MacArthur.*

#### **September 1946 - July 1947**

Truman imposes an arms embargo

#### **December 1946 - December 1947**

The Nationalists keep on pouring their best troops into Manchuria, which turns into a death trap

#### **December 1947 - November 1948**

The Communists win the battle of Manchuria after blockading all major cities

#### **January 22nd, 1949**

Beijing surrenders to the Communists after a forty-day siege

#### **November 1948 - January 1949**

The Nationalists lose the battle of Xuzhou in central China, opening up the Yangzi Valley and all of the south to Communist conquest

#### **April - May, 1949**

Nanjing, the Nationalist capital on the south bank of the Yangzi, falls to the communists. After a protracted siege, the Communists conquer Shanghai

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**June 30th, 1949**

On the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao announces that China should 'lean on one side' and embrace the Soviet Union

**October 1st, 1949**

Mao Zedong proclaims the People's Republic of China on Tiananmen Square in Beijing

**December 1949**

After the fall of Chongqing, Chiang Kai-shek abandons China and flees to Taiwan

*\*Chiang Kai-Shek was a Chinese Nationalist politician, revolutionary and military leader, who served as the leader of the Republic of China from 1928 until 1949 in mainland China. In 1949 Chiang's government and army retreated to Taiwan, where Chiang imposed martial law and persecuted critics during the White Terror. Chiang would go on to oversee social reforms and economic prosperity, Chiang won five elections to six-year terms as President of Taiwan. He died in 1975, three years into his 5th term as president.*

**December 1949 - January 1950**

Mao went to Moscow to obtain recognition and help from Stalin. On February 14, 1950 China signs a Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union

**June 1950 - October 1952**

The Communists implement land reform in the south

**June 25th, 1950**

North Korea invades South Korea, drawing condemnation from the United Nations Security Council and a counter-offensive under General Douglas MacArthur

**October 7th, 1950**

The People's Liberation Army invades Tibet.

**October 10th 1950 - October 1951**

A Great Terror unfolds, called the 'Campaign to Suppress Counter Revolutionaries'

**October 18th, 1950**

China enters the Korean War

**November 1950**

Start of a campaign to 'Resist America, Aid Korea'

**1951 - 1953**

Once the land has been redistributed, villagers are pooled into 'mutual aid-teams' in which they have to share their tools, working animals and labor.

**October 1951 - June 1952**

A 'Three-Anti Campaign' aims to purge the ranks of the government.

**October 1951**

Start of a thought-reform campaign designed to regiment and absorb the educated elite into the state bureaucracy

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**January – June 1952**

Mao declares war on the private sector in a campaign known as the 'Five-Anti Campaign'

**February – April 1952**

Beijing alleges that the United States is waging germ warfare in the Korean War. The W.H.O. and International Red Cross sided with the US stating the claims false – The Soviet affiliated World Peace Council sided with China showing evidence the claims were true. The US was accused with working with Shiro Ishii, a Japanese microbiologist and army medical officer who served as the director of Unit 731, a biological warfare unit of the Imperial Japanese Army

**March 1953**

Stalin Dies

**July 27th, 1953**

A ceasefire brings an end to the Korean War

**November 1953**

Introduction of a state monopoly over grain, as cultivators are forced to sell all 'surplus grain' to the state at prices determined by the state.

**1953-1955**

The mutual-aid teams are turned into co-operatives, with tools, working animals and labor now shared on a permanent basis and the land pooled

**February 1954 – May 1955**

Gao Gang and the other senior leaders are purged for 'treachery' and 'splitting the party'

*\*Gao Gang was a leader in the CCP during the Chinese Civil War and the early years of the PRC – People's Republic of China*

**April – December 1955**

Hu Feng and other intellectuals are denounced for heading a 'counter revolutionary' clique. More than 770,000 are arrested in a campaign against counter-revolutionaries

**June 1955**

A household - registration system restricts the movement of people in the countryside

**Summer 1955 – Spring 1956**

As part of a push to accelerate the collectivism of the countryside, called the 'Socialist High Tide', farmers are herded into collectives in which they no longer own the land. In the cities, most industry and commerce are nationalized.

**February 1956**

Khrushchev denounces Stalin and the cult of personality in a secret speech in Moscow. Criticism of Stalin's disastrous campaign of collectivism strengthens the position of those opposed to the Socialist High Tide in China. Mao perceives de-Stalinization as a challenge to his own authority

*\*Collectivism – When the state owns the means of production.*

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### **September 1956**

A reference to 'Mao Zedong thought' is removed from the party constitution, the principle of collective leadership is lauded and the cult of personality is decried. The Socialist High Tide is abandoned

### **October 1956**

Encouraged by de-Stalinization, people in Hungary revolt against their own government, prompting Soviet forces to invade the country, crush all opposition and install a new regime with Moscow's backing

### **Winter 1956 – Spring 1957**

Mao, overriding most of his colleagues, encourages a more open political climate with the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign to avoid the social unrest that led to the invasion of Hungary. Students and workers demonstrate, protest and strike across the country

### **Summer 1957**

The campaign backfires as a mounting barrage of criticism questions the very right of the party to rule. Mao changes track and accuses these critical voices of being 'bad elements' bent on destroying the party. He puts Deng Xiaoping in charge of an anti-rightist campaign, which persecutes half a million people – many of them students and intellectuals deported to remote areas to do hard labor. The party finds unity behind its Chairman, who unleashes the 'Great Leap Forward' a few months later

### **Winter 1957 – Spring 1958**

In a series of party conferences Mao attacks Zhou Enlai and other senior leaders who opposed his economic policy. He promotes his own vision of mass mobilization and accelerated collectivism of the countryside, demanding increased agricultural and industrial targets. The slogan 'going all out, aiming high, and achieving greater, better, faster and more economical results' becomes the party line.

### **Winter 1957 – Summer 1958**

A campaign of repression targets hundreds of thousands of party members critical of economic policy. Several provincial party leaders are purged and replaced by close followers of Mao. Opposition from within the party is silenced.

### **Winter 1957 – Spring 1958**

A massive water-conservancy campaign is launched, marking the start of the 'Great Leap Forward' for hundreds of millions of ordinary villagers compelled to work for weeks on end on remote projects, often without sufficient rest and food

### **Summer 1958**

Khrushchev visits Beijing, but tensions appear as Mao decides to shell several islands in the Taiwan Strait without first consulting his Soviet ally, triggering an international crisis with the United States. Moscow is forced to take sides by throwing its weight behind Beijing, proclaiming that an attack on the People's Republic of China would be considered an attack on the Soviet Union.

### **Summer 1958**

The mass mobilization of villagers around huge water projects requires much larger administrative units in the countryside, leading to the amalgamation of farm collectives into gigantic people's communes of up to 20,000 households. Everyday life in the communes is run along military lines. Almost everything, including land and labor is collectivized. Communal dining replaces private kitchens, while children are left in the care of boarding kindergartens. A work-point system is used to calculate rewards, while even money is abolished in some communes. Backyard furnaces are used to melt all sorts of metal objects in order to contribute to

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the party's escalating steel target. Famine conditions start to appear in many parts of the country.

**November 1958 – February 1959**

Mao turns against local cadres who produce inflated targets and promise an imminent transition to communism. He tries to reign in some of the worst abuses of the Great Leap Forward, but continues to push forward with collectivization. He announces that mistakes made by the party are only 'one finger out of ten'. In order to meet foreign obligations and feed the cities, food procurements in the countryside increase sharply. The famine spreads.

**March 1959**

At a Shanghai conference Mao launches a withering attack on senior party members and presses for even higher procurement targets in the countryside, up to a third of all grain, despite widespread famine.

**July 1959**

At the Lushan conference Mao denounces Peng Dehuai and the other leaders as an 'anti-party clique' for criticizing the Great Leap Forward.

*\*Peng Dehuai – a prominent Chinese communist military leader, who served as China's Defense Minister from 1954 to 1959.*

**Summer 1959 – Summer 1960**

A campaign of repression is launched against party members who expressed critical views similar to Peng Dehuai and his allies. Tens of millions of villagers die of starvation, disease or torture.

**July 1960**

Soviet advisers are withdrawn from China by Krushchev. Zhou Enlai and Li Fuchun move the trade structure away from the Soviet Union towards the West.

**October 1960**

A report on mass starvation in Xinyang, Henan, is handed over to Mao by Li Fuchun

**November 1960**

An emergency directive is issued allowing villagers to keep private plots, engage in sideline occupations, rest for 8 hours a day and restore local markets, among other measures designed to weaken the power of the communes over villagers.

**Winter 1960 – 1961**

Investigation teams spread over the countryside, bringing to light the full dimensions of the catastrophe. Large quantities of food are imported from the West.

**Spring 1961**

Inspection tours by leading party members result in a further retreat from the Great Leap Forward. Liu Shaoqi (Chairman of the PRC) places the blame for the famine on the shoulders of the party but absolves Mao of all responsibility

**Summer 1961**

The consequences of the Great Leap Forward are discussed at a series of party meetings.

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**January 1962**

At an enlarged party gathering of thousands of cadres in Beijing, Liu Shaoqi describes the famine as a man-made disaster. Support for Mao wanes. The famine abates, but continues to claim lives in parts of the countryside until the end of 1962

**1966**

Mao launches the Cultural Revolution

*Timeline provided by Frank Dikotter, Chair Professor of Humanities at the University of Hong Kong*

For more reading about the Communist takeover of China, the Cultural Revolution and how the Churches worked through it all, please check out these resources:

- *The Tragedy of Liberation - Frank Dikotter*
  - *Mao's Great Famine - Frank Dikotter*
  - *The Cultural Revolution - Frank Dikotter*
  - *Jesus in Beijing - David Aikman*
  - *How the Red Sun Rose - Gao Hua (predates Mao's rise to power)*
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## **“The Sixteen Points: Guidelines for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”**

www.marxists.org

Adopted on August 8, 1966

### **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 souls and constitutes a new stage in the development of the socialist revolution in our country, a stage which is both broader and deeper.

At the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: to overthrow a political power, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class. This thesis of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's has been proved entirely correct in practice.

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do the exact 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 overthrow 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 to transform education, literature and art and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

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

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 force of habits from the old society. At present, this resistance is still fairly strong and stubborn. But after all, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is an irresistible general trend. There is abundant evidence that such resistance will be quickly broken down once the masses become fully aroused.

Because the resistance is fairly strong, there will be reversals and even repeated reversals in this struggle. There is no harm in this. It tempers the proletariat and other working people, and especially the younger generation, teaches them lessons and gives them experience, and helps them to understand that the revolutionary road zigzags and does not run smoothly.

### **3. Put Daring Above Everything Else and Boldly Arouse the Masses**

What the Central Committee of the Party demands of the Party committees at all levels is that they persevere in giving correct leadership, put daring above everything else, boldly arouse the masses, change the state of weakness and incompetence where it exists, encourage those comrades who have made mistakes but are willing to correct them to cast off their mental burdens and join in the struggle, and dismiss from their leading posts all those in authority who are taking the capitalist road and so make possible the recapture of the leadership for the proletarian revolution.

### **4. Let the Masses Educate Themselves in the Movement**

Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative. Cast out fear. Don't be afraid of disturbances.

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Chairman Mao has often told us that revolution cannot be so very refined, so gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things.

Make the fullest use of big-character posters and great debates to argue matters out, so that the masses can clarify the correct views, criticize the wrong views and expose all the ghosts and monsters. In this way the masses will be able to raise their political consciousness in the course of the struggle, enhance their abilities and talents, distinguish right from wrong and draw a clear line between ourselves and the enemy.

### **5. Firmly Apply the Class Line of the Party**

Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution and it is likewise a question of the first importance for the Great Cultural Revolution.

### **9. Cultural Revolution Groups, Committees and Congresses**

The struggle of the proletariat against the old ideas, culture, customs and habits left over by all the exploiting classes over thousands of years will necessarily take a very, very long time. Therefore, 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 and government and other organizations, but generally also for factories, mines, other enterprises, urban districts and villages.

### **10. Educational Reform**

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution a most important task is to transform the old educational system and the old principles and methods of teaching.

In this Great Cultural Revolution, the phenomenon of our schools being dominated by bourgeois intellectuals must be completely changed.

In every kind of school we must apply thoroughly the policy advanced by Comrade Mao Tse-tung of education serving proletarian politics and education being combined with productive labor, so as to enable those receiving an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and to become laborers with socialist consciousness and culture.

The period of schooling should be shortened. Courses should be fewer and better. The teaching material should be thoroughly transformed, in some cases beginning with simplifying complicated material. While their main task is to study, students should also learn other things. That is to say, in addition to their studies they should also learn industrial work, farming and military affairs, and take part in the struggles of the Cultural Revolution to criticize the bourgeoisie as these struggles occur.

### **12. Policy Towards Scientists, Technicians and Ordinary Members of Working Staffs**

As regards scientists, technicians and ordinary members of working staff, as long as they are patriotic, work energetically, are not against the Party and socialism, and maintain no illicit relations with any foreign country, we should in the present movement continue to apply the policy of "unity, criticism, unity." Special care should be taken of those scientists and scientific and technical personnel who have made contributions. Efforts should be made to help them gradually transform their world outlook and their style of work.

### **15. The Armed Forces**

In the armed forces, the cultural revolution and the socialist education movement should be carried out in accordance with the instructions of the Military Commission of the Central Committee of the Party and the

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General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army.

**16. Mao Tse-tung's Thought Is the Guide for Action in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**

In the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, it is imperative to hold aloft the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought and put proletarian politics in command. The movement for the creative study and application of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's works should be carried forward among the masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers, the cadres and the intellectuals, and Mao Tse-tung's thought should be taken as the guide to action in the Cultural Revolution.

In this complex Great Cultural Revolution, Party committees at all levels must study and apply Chairman Mao's works all the more conscientiously and in a creative way. In particular, they must study over and over again Chairman Mao's writings on the Cultural Revolution and on the Party's methods of leadership... Party committees at all levels must abide by the directions given by Chairman Mao over the years, namely that they should thoroughly apply the mass line of "from the masses, to the masses" and that they should be pupils before they become teachers. They should try to avoid being one-sided or narrow. They should foster materialist dialectics and oppose metaphysics and scholasticism.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is bound to achieve brilliant victory under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party headed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung.

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