

**HOW TO BE A GOOD COMMUNIST (1939)**  
**By Liu Shaoqi**

**Introduction**

Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969) attended the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow, where he became a member of the Communist Party. He returned to China in 1922 and was one of Mao Zedong's early supporters. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, he was active in economic programs and was President of the PRC from 1959 to 1968. When Mao's "Great Leap Forward," begun in 1958, led to widespread famine in the early 1960s, Liu moved to oppose Mao's policies. By 1968, Mao had removed Liu from his Party positions and Liu disappeared. After Mao's death, Liu's fate became known: He had been incarcerated and died of untreated diabetes and pneumonia in 1969. He wrote *How to Be a Good Communist* in 1939.

**Selected Document Excerpt with Questions**

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A good Communist Party member is one who combines the great and lofty ideals of Communism with practical work and the spirit of searching for the truth from concrete facts.

What is the most fundamental and common duty of us Communist Party members? As everybody knows, it is to establish Communism, to transform the present world into a Communist world. Is a Communist world good or not? We all know that it is very good. In such a world there will be no exploiters, oppressors, landlords, capitalists, imperialists, or fascists. There will be no oppressed and exploited people, no darkness, ignorance, backwardness, etc. In such a society all human beings will become unselfish and intelligent Communists with a high level of culture and technique. The spirit of mutual assistance and mutual love will prevail among mankind. There will be no such irrational things as mutual deception, mutual antagonism, mutual slaughter and war, etc. Such a society will, of course, be the best, the most beautiful, and the most advanced society in the history of mankind. Who will say that such a society is not good?

At all times and on all questions, a Communist Party member should take into account the interests of the Party as a whole, and place the Party's interests above his personal problems and interests. It is the highest principle of our Party members that the Party's interests are supreme.

**Primary Source Document with Questions (DBQs) on**

**HOW TO BE A GOOD COMMUNIST, BY LIU SHAOQI (1939)**

A Communist Party member should possess all the greatest and noblest virtues of mankind. He should also possess the strict and clear-cut standpoint of the Party and of the proletariat (that is, Party spirit and class character). Our ethics are great precisely because they are the ethics of Communism and of the proletariat. Such ethics are not built upon the backward basis of safeguarding the interest of individuals or a small number of exploiters. They are built, on the contrary, upon the progressive basis of the interests of the proletariat, of the ultimate emancipation of mankind as a whole, of saving the world from destruction and of building a happy and beautiful Communist world.

**Questions:**

1. What are the ideals that a Communist Party member should hold?
2. If you were a Communist Party member, or aspired to be, how would you put Liu's abstract advice into concrete practice in your own life?
3. Does Liu's description of how to be a good Communist have anything in common with Confucian morality?