

A retrospective reflection on vanguardism

--Questions about Huang Jisu's article

By Fred Engst

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I find Mr. Huang Jisu increasingly admirable as I learn more about him. After exchanging my views on history and contemporary affairs with him several times, I came to realize that we have much in common.

Mr. Huang is a man of conviction and conscience. He has an acute sense of justice, and strongly condemns inequality and oppression. He projects his personal value on his literary writings such as "Che Guevara". His writings are humorous, highly critical and sharp, and constitute withering attack on oppressors and their running dogs. He often goes for the jugular when dissecting social ailments. His analyses are so thought-provoking that I wish I made them. For example, his distinction between the struggles against oppression vs. the struggles to eliminate the system of oppression as the goal of revolution hits the nail on the head.

Recently I have closely studied Mr. Huang's article entitled "Chinese revolution and Soviet characteristics". Not only do I learn some new historical facts, but also I find many of his arguments highly agreeable. I wish I could elaborate on my views in such an expressive way as Mr. Huang does. Nevertheless, I, with a humble heart, would like to raise the following questions and hope to discuss them with Mr. Huang.

Equality and Justice

In his article, Mr. Huang observes "human nature leads to discontent over both equal distribution of wealth and great income gaps" and believes that "a nice social system should make sure there are no remarkable disparities between haves and have-nots". Let's put the "human nature" argument aside. But are there any objective criteria for equality and justice in this world?

The oppressed know pretty well that they are not on an equal footing as oppressors, but people may look at equality from very different perspectives.

Should we be equal at the start line or the finish line? Even if we are equal on the abstract, we cannot deny the existence of disparities in ability and skill. Mr. Huang writes a great deal better than I do. So what position does that put me in?

Gender equality doesn't mean men should carry babies. But a large family brings enormous economic burden. Is it reasonable to say that equality is achieved if people doing the same jobs are paid likewise?

For workers, more pay for more work. For capitalists, high risks justify high rewards. These are widely accepted as the norm. Recently, Nanjie Village has caused public controversy over its treatment of migrant workers¹. A veteran rebel of the Cultural Revolution, who spent years in prison for it, says: "Those outsiders took away every bit of their work in pay. They made no contribution to the community. Therefore, they don't deserve the villagers' welfare system. It is unfair to criticize of Nanjie Village on the ground that it only provides the natives with welfare because the natives live with low wages for ages and contribute so much to the wealth accumulation of the community." This reveals that this gentleman does not believe in the labor theory of value. He doesn't believe that those who do the same jobs should be paid the same or one should be compensated according to one's contribution to the society. He may not realize that he actually takes side with capitalists and adopts their logic.

¹ This is a village that still has collective economy where the villagers get paid mostly in kind, while 90% of the workforce in the village enterprise are outsiders who get paid with market wage.

The concept of justice faces similar problems. Isn't our stance that tells us if a wolf does a just thing by killing a sheep? As an apologist for the land reform campaign that he mentions in his article, Mr. Huang claims it was a just thing to do. But his argument lacks a general consensus.

If we don't have any objective criteria for equality and justice, how should we know if the disparities between haves and have-nots go over the top?

Cultural Tradition

Mr. Huang is a man of letters. So it comes as no surprise that he looks at social phenomena through a cultural lens. I'm a bit uncultured, and thought that approach is a bit meaningless.

It's impossible to deny that China's party-state system has something to do with its cultural legacy. But I think the cultural tradition by no means provides a convincing explanation for the choice of the political system. To start with, we must understand how come China has a cultural tradition different from that of Europe. Throughout the history, China had a high-level integration both culturally and territorially. Europe, however, was mostly segmented. It's utterly absurd to blame cultural genes of the Chinese and Europeans for this vast difference.

Obviously, languages are critical for a group of people to communicate and develop a sense of identity. For example, in the US, Chinese immigrants would like to have Chinese neighbors while Poles like to live in a Polish neighborhood, all for the convenience of communication. Currently the European Union still faces insurmountable communicative barriers on the path of general integration.

For this matter, I have a yet-to-be-approved theory. I believe that China's unification partially results from its logographic writing system. Historically speaking, the creation of a writing system can facilitate communication between different tribes and regions. But which kind of system that a people adopted, be it based on logograms or an alphabet, is not likely predetermined. Nowadays it seems that most civilizations have an alphabetic writing system. But a fully developed logographic system can make a significant impact on the course of history. Essentially a writing system is a tool like a piece of hardware. Although it may restrict the way of expressing certain things, it's never a determinant of content. In other words, it's not equivalent to ideas or software. Logograms are barely influenced by phonetic changes. An alphabetic language changes alongside phonetic evolution. For example, most modern Americans find Shakespearian works almost incomprehensible. From this we can see that a logographic writing system is much more helpful for unification than an alphabetic writing system. It can lay a solid foundation for unification.

But slaves in a segmented medieval Europe might suffer much more than farmers in a unified feudal China. Therefore, territorial unification may have nothing to do with social development.

All these suggest that cultural tradition cannot cast light on social phenomena.

Let's elaborate on this matter further. On the surface, China is a big unified country with a strict administrative hierarchy. In reality many directives from the central government are very poorly executed due to regional protectionism. The US is a federation. Its president has no control over its state governors. Neither do governors over city mayors. Local governments run their financial and educational affairs independently. The whole country, however, is a single market. For example, a local government can set standards for taxi production. But it has no right to designate taxi makers or take measures to disadvantage vehicle makers from other states. In the US, the unified market allows people and assets to move freely. There are no restrictions caused by, for example, a household registration system or regional protectionism. The rights of federal and local governments are clearly defined. Local laws and governmental procedures shall not violate those of the federal government. In China, police from Shanxi province are able to arrest suspects that flee to Henan province. This kind of thing will not happen in the US because American police are not allowed to enforce laws outside of their jurisdictions.

China and the US often take different approaches to enhance unification. In China, overall unification seems to matter only on the surface instead of in substance. The relationship between Taiwan and mainland China

is a fine example. A second example is the standard Beijing Time that the Chinese central government orders the whole country to adopt regardless of where a province is located. In Urumqi of China's far west, midday actually arrives more than two hours later than in Beijing. The locals find it very inconvenient to live their lives according to Beijing Time. In the US, however, every state has its own standard time, making it possible to synchronize activities across the country. A third example took place in April of 2008 when the State Council of China scrapped one of the "golden week" holidays. However, Guangdong province wanted to have its own way and cooked up a local "golden week" holiday, only to be annulled by the central government. If this kind of thing happened in the US, Americans would think the federal government had no right whatsoever to interfere with the local government's decision to give its residents an extra weeklong holiday. In the US, regional protectionism is strictly forbidden for it would give monopolistic corporations a hard time. American corporations are able to operate independently without government interference. In China, central state-owned enterprises, local state-owned enterprises and private companies all claim their own territories, only to fracture the market.

In my opinion, one of the things that won Mao Zhedong's admiration about Western democracy is its ability of dealing with overall and sectional interests in a balanced way.

Economic Base

Mr. Huang follows his heart and spares no effort to criticize social ailments. But criticism is far from enough. We need to find a way to make a change to the society instead of stopping at wishful thinking. We should understand the root or the mechanism of oppression in order to start a revolution to eliminate it as Mr. Huang suggests in his article.

Mr. Huang advocates that revolutionaries not go to the extremes, but adopt a mild approach. He cites the "relatively mild approach" to nationalization of private businesses in cities as a fine example. But he neglects the crucial fact that the national bourgeoisie was a part of the United Front at the time. Recently many internet users made a case against China's violent land reform campaign, and praised Taiwan's compensation approach. But they didn't mention that Chiang Kai-shek's regime failed to launch such a campaign on the mainland by compensating landowners. Without the threats of imminent sweeping revolutions, compensation-driven land reforms wouldn't be possible in Taiwan or South Korea. These examples reflect the concept that private properties are sacrosanct. What's worse, Chiang Kai-shek's seemingly generous approach to land reform spawned the Taiwan independence movement. Mainland China's land reform campaign gave rise to radicals and violence perpetrators. In my opinions, these two kinds of people are totally different and shouldn't be confused. A revolution is not a party dinner. At the time, the ordinary Chinese often violated the government's guidelines. Therefore, the Communist Party of China issued directives to forbid abusing captives. In the late stage of the Mao era, capitalist roaders attempted to make the struggle go in a different direction, only to encourage inflicting violence on the so-called Five Black Categories.

We shouldn't be led astray by sophistries or blinded by capitalist roaders' misleading claims. We must remember that class struggle is the root cause of all the social phenomena in a class-based society. Here I don't suggest that Mr. Huang negates class struggle. But his arguments show that he fails to use the theory of class struggle to dissect social problems. For instance, his analysis of the basic missions in modern China simply neglects the vastly different pursuits of social classes, and therefore doesn't hold water. Even from the nationalist point of view, the goal of building a strong nation is not free of the shadow of class struggle. All Chinese rulers from Empress Dowager Cixi, to Chiang Kai-shek to the current Chinese president strive to make the country stronger. But the prerequisite is that China must remain under their rule. Losing the sight of class struggle, we would not see the root cause of social problems. We would pursue a cause to fight against oppression instead of one to eliminate it.

Therefore, I believe Marxism-Leninism-Maoism gives us the best tool for social analysis.

In fact, pursuit of equality, call for justice, urge for more freedom and inherent national unification are all rooted in interests. Therefore, we need to analyze social problems from an economic perspective, and look at historical events and current affairs through the lens of social class and class struggle.

Human beings need to engage in production activities to meet our basic needs. The mode of production determines what type of society we live in. All the social phenomena can only be explained by material condition and mode of production. They don't result from human nature, cultural legacy or ideology. Let me explain this by a few examples. In the old days, vehicles moved very slowly so there was no need to set traffic rules. In the time when there was barely enough to eat, those who were able to grab what they needed had a better chance to survive and have offspring. So they and their descendents were very possessive and protective of their properties. But this was not always the case. For example, a family wouldn't fight for cookware or food table because they needed those things to remain alive. Indigenous peoples of Americas had no concept of private land ownership before white people arrived. They kept the animals that they killed, but shared hunting grounds. This practice was shaped by their living conditions. The concept of private ownership changes along the general living condition. Twenty or thirty years ago, Beijing was notorious for its super-packed buses. The elderly and disabled people were simply neglected. Nowadays, people there will queue of their own volition to get on the bus. This is because they are better off, not because they are better educated.

All these examples demonstrate that economic base rather than human nature shapes people's thoughts, culture and political structure. The so-called human nature is just reflective of living condition, and will by no means remain unchanged.

Democracy

Mr. Huang doesn't like talking much about the Cultural Revolution. He believes that it happened by accident and was doomed to fail. I have to say I don't agree with both arguments.

In a society ruled by the working class, the socialist revolution must be carried out under the leadership of "the biggest revolutionaries in power". Therefore, the Cultural Revolution didn't happen by chance. Without the support of "the biggest revolutionaries in power", workers would be no longer China's rulers. Their struggle would no longer be an ongoing revolution under the leadership of the proletariat, but turn into a bourgeoisie toppling revolution.

Mr. Huang, democracy advocates, social democrats and Trotskyites may argue a sound democratic system is sufficient for overseeing government officials, and the ruling party's support is not necessary. They may ask why China, ruled by the proletariat, cannot oversee its government officials through a democratic system as those capitalist countries do.

To answer this question, we first need to understand capitalist democracy's origin and nature, and its difference from proletarian democracy. We also need to understand property ownership is an essential prerequisite to democracy and determines what type it belongs to.

In my opinion, those democracy advocates fail to see the most basic fact that property ownership cannot be established through democracy. As both privately and commonly owned properties are sacrosanct, their ownership is not open to any changes by anyone by democratic means. The untouchable property ownership is the very core of a single class ruled society. In fact, both capitalists and the proletariat need use the military, police and other violent apparatuses to safeguard the ownership that fits them. Democratic system, however, is of no use in this case.

The mainland Chinese had a taste of democracy during the Cultural Revolution. But they have never lived in a capitalist democracy as the Taiwanese, Indians, Filipinos, Latin Americans, Europeans and Americans do. When they discuss about capitalist democracy, they lay bare their ignorance, fantasies and wishful thinking. They are more like a bunch of young people rambling about sex after watching pornography. They simply long for and fantasize the system. On the other hand, any attempt to rub in antagonism against democracy is absurd as denying young people sex. Persistence in keeping young men and women from seeing each other would distract them, drive them onto a path of moral degradation, and even put them under threat of various diseases. Scaremongers always peddle nightmare scenarios like the aftermaths of the Arab Spring. They are like those self-righteous people that try to spread terror among love-seeking youngsters with threats of AIDS and venereal diseases. Advocates, however, spare no praise for Western democracy, as if talking about their first loves.

Pursuit of democracy is part of human nature like appetite and sexual desire, for everyone aspires to control their living environment. It gets increasingly urgent with the progress of mass production and urbanization. Anti-democracy is unsustainable, just like abstinence from sex. The question is how to turn democracy into a reality. In China, a lot of people, whether they are for or against democracy, fail to see the difference between a private ownership-based democracy and a common ownership-based democracy. This kind of ignorance is as bad as confusing consensual sex with rape.

In a private ownership-based democracy, citizens vote for those who give them the biggest benefits. This is like the way of prostitution. Prostitutes are better off than sex slaves. The latter are constantly at the mercy of the elite while the former have personal freedom to say the least. But personal freedom is all they have got. Freedom by prostitution doesn't mean the seller is equal to the buyer. In a private ownership-based democracy, the masses are always at the mercy of capital. The working class has to defend private ownership as the UK's Labor Party does in order to enjoy the benefits of democracy. Ordinary people are allowed to decide some minor things. All the big issues are left for capitalists to decide. Ordinary people's interests are never put first. This kind of democracy is designed in this way. Ordinary people may resort to extreme means to make a change such as coup and assassination. But a threat of capital withdrawal suffices make them concede ground. The consequence of Greek bailout referendum is a fine example.

Capitalist democracy provides capital consortiums with a tool and platform to moderate conflicts of interests. Failure to do so may lead to a dictatorship like what the Spanish Civil War results in or an open conflict like the American Civil War. History tells us categorically that private ownership-based democracy only needs the rich and powerful class's approval and maintenance to exist. It doesn't have the built-in dynamics as suggested.

The peace among the armed bourgeoisie is kept by a decision-making system based on wealth. The richer one is, the greater say one has. This is the very base that capitalism, market and a shareholding system are built upon. Without it, the bourgeoisie couldn't have a stable government. They only allow dictators to take power when they are engaged in intense clashes with workers.

Once capitalist democracy makes inroads into capital consortiums' interests, the state will resort to violent means to defend private ownership. The Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the overthrow of Allende administration of Chile in the 1960s are typical examples.

Armies, police and other state apparatuses of violence need manpower and money to maintain operation. This is the reason why a capitalist society adopts a wealth-based decision making system. Those who pay more tax have a greater say. The owners of social wealth are the masters of state apparatuses of violence. In a capitalist democracy, private properties can be nationalized, ending up being owned by the bourgeoisie. But its ownership can never be handed over to the general public.

In a private ownership based democracy, the rich and powerful class appears gentle, polite and reasonable. They treat those at the bottom of the social ladder in a gentlemanly way. They no longer brutally execute rebels against the political system. Undoubtedly these are significant improvements. But they don't mean an upheaval of the status quo. The masses are still powerless. Only by controlling the economic base can they be their own masters in politics.

In fact, democracy advocates, social democrats and Trotskyites try to avoid the question of how the masses oversee organizers of mass production, even those of globalized mass production. For example, how should the masses oversee Google? In what way can Apple be made to answer to the general public?

Social democrats champion the establishment of a democratic political system. But in so-called market socialism coupled with such a system, capital will still rule and the rich class will remain the masters of the society.

Trotskyites call for autonomy and shorter working hours. However, in the era of globalization, call for autonomy will encourage the petty bourgeoisie to restore the mode of production that they fancy. During the Cultural Revolution, workers were allowed to take part in decision making procedures in the frame of eight

working hours. This, however, didn't prevent some of them from perpetrating grim violence. This fact tells us that shorter working hours don't constitute a necessary prerequisite to the masses' rule.

Looking at those arguments closely, we will see they are actually against the historical trend and antagonistic to mass production, or suggest mass production doesn't need any organizers. Some of them even follow the capitalist logic, and indicate organizers of mass production should be played by the invisible hand of the market and can come directly under democratic oversight. In addition, these arguments fail to take these resourceful organizers' possible resistance against democratic oversight into account.

Common ownership of means of production is an absolute prerequisite to the masses' rule. In a common ownership-based society, workers are able to have their voices heard. And the masses can have a say or even take part in the decision-making procedures in politics, for economic issues, and in the cultural and educational fields. Without common ownership, nothing is possible.

Only a democracy built on common ownership can ensure its citizens equal rights. When my parents visited Yan'an for the first time, they were amazed at a high-spirited, united community shaped by an equality-ensured democratic system. This experience made them nostalgic for Mao's China. But even in a common ownership based democracy, some people may find ways to achieve personal ends in the name of revolution. History doesn't lack figures who jumped onto the revolution wagon with an aim of climbing the social ladder or who oppressed the masses in the name of revolution.

Common Ownership and Vanguard Party

The October Revolution produced multiple vanguard party-led countries. But in those countries, the masses eventually lost the right to rule. Therefore, history vindicates that vanguard party's leadership cannot guarantee the existence of common ownership and the masses' rule. In his article, Mr. Huang writes "In reality, a vanguard party, after taking power, uses the mandate that the success of revolution confers upon them to create a complicated bureaucracy and eventually blends with the state. The single-party state acts as an administrative apparatus for bureaucrats and a mechanism for interest allocation." This argument hits the nail on the head. Unfortunately it leads to a conclusion that the single-party system should be blamed for the restoration of capitalism and widespread social ailments. This view is shared by Mr. Huang and many others.

In fact, no system can guarantee common ownership's existence and the masses' rule. Likewise, no football team can make sure it will win every match that it enters. In class struggle, which side will gain the upper hand in a certain period of time is totally unpredictable. As long as classes exist in this world, they will never stop struggling against each other. The dominance of a certain class cannot last forever.

Here it's imperative for us to figure out the necessary prerequisite to the masses' rule. We should decide whether or not the masses are able to gain a ruling status without a vanguard party's leadership.

There are at least two fundamental reasons why it's impossible for the proletariat to ensure the existence of common ownership through a multi-party system. Both ideology and economic base forbid it.

A class-based society has an undeniable reality that the ideology of the former ruling class looms large. Private ownership has taken root in the society and influenced the masses for thousands of years. So after the proletariat takes power, they should first consider how to enhance the dominance of common ownership instead of how to establish a certain type of democracy. Ignoring the basic fact that the concept of private ownership is still ingrained in social mind, they would serve the interest of the former ruling class even without realizing it.

If a referendum was held on collectivization in China after the land reform was completed, I think the entrenchment of private ownership would drive most farmers to vote against it. Chinese farmers were motivated to accumulate personal wealth through hard work. In the meantime, they believed that social wealth should be distributed equally. Under such circumstances, they needed guidance on the path to socialism in case that the society was polarized and they were stripped of the ownership of their land again. In the 1930s, if they were given a chance to vote on the land reform initiative, Chinese farmers, in my opinion, wouldn't approve it even without objection from landowners. For them, landowners had the God-given right to

collect debts and mustn't be stripped of their land without compensation. From here we can see that, both the land reform campaign and collectivization violated the principle of private ownership. They wouldn't be accomplished without a vanguard party's leadership.

Therefore, in a society dominated by capitalist ideology and the concept of private ownership, the masses can be aroused to fight oppression, not to eradicate it. Democracy, no matter what form it takes, will serve as a protector of private ownership. Western democracies prove this. As a result, the proletariat's long-term interests and common ownership cannot rely on any form of democracy for safeguard.

Only by establishing common ownership can the masses be in a position to discuss their overall interests. And those who deny the overall interests shouldn't be allowed to participate in the discussion. Only those who always put common ownership and the proletariat's long-term interests first are allowed to decide the masses' long-term interests. They are none other than a vanguard party of the proletariat. Moreover, the party should adopt democratic centralism and stand the test of time.

As long as the majority of the masses is indifferent to the safeguard of their rule and fails to look at things from the perspective of their overall interests, the leadership of the vanguard party of the proletariat is an absolute prerequisite to the masses' rule as it is able to provide necessary protection without fail. Otherwise, the masses will be swayed by the concept of private ownership and the bourgeoisie. The failure of the Cultural Revolution is an excellent example.

The vanguard party's leadership and trust in the masses are linked in a conflicting yet conciliatory way. One shouldn't put much faith in the spontaneity of the masses. Instead one should believe that they can turn into an unstoppable world-changing force once equipped with Marxism. Only the class with the topnotch capacity of organization can become rulers. The masses, when well organized, will turn into an incredible world-changing force.

But the leadership of a vanguard party is absolute necessary to keep armed workers from infighting. Such a party always puts the proletariat's long-term interests first. They need to adopt democratic centralism. The armed struggle during the Cultural Revolution is proof of this.

The Cultural Revolution merits close study. Any democratic system may confront resistance of minority. In democratic Brazil, military tanks were recently mobilized to move resistant slum residents from the chosen sites for building Olympic arenas. During the Cultural Revolution, in Shanghai, the General Headquarters of Worker's Revolutionary Revolt mobilized tens of thousands of workers to lay siege to Shanghai Diesel Engine Plant in order to take down the Joint Headquarters of Worker's Revolutionary Revolt. Obviously, a multi-party system cannot prevent factionalism and violent struggles among the masses or the working class. During the Cultural Revolution, armed struggles made many people see the true color of various armed factions.

Therefore, history tells us categorically that the failure of socialism based on the masses' rule on the global scale stems not from single-party system, but from the degeneration of vanguard parties and the fact that the masses are inexperienced in ruling. In my article named "On the relationship between working class and its parties during socialist era," I try to prove that bureaucratic privileges and a lack of public oversight lead to the degeneration of vanguard parties. During the Cultural Revolution, the endless factional clashes and armed struggles demonstrated that the masses were poor rulers.

During the Cultural Revolution, those engaging in armed struggles had an acute sense of justice. They were ordinary people. They were angry, took matters into their own hands and pursued equality. Related historical events render Mr. Huang's equality and justice based approaches to social analysis ineffective and unconvincing. I believe we should take the approach of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism instead. As long as they are unable to tell these two types of tensions apart and deal with them accordingly, the masses will not impose effective rule.

Democracy advocates, social democrats and Trotskyites need to consider how to keep armed ordinary people from going into conflicts without a vanguard party's leadership. They should learn from history. All idealist superstructure designs are of no use.

After working class seizes power, it needs to hand over power to its vanguard party to maintain its rule for the vanguard party will protect its overall interests by all means. Like traffic police who imposes rule on vehicles and pedestrians, the dictatorship of the proletariat can force the general public to think and act according to the overall interests. When the majority of working class recognizes the dictatorship of the proletariat and acts in accordance with the overall interests, the vanguard party's leadership will become irrelevant and disappear with the form of state.

The Cultural Revolution happened to be an experiment on how to keep a vanguard party on the right track and materialize a democracy for all in the frame of common ownership. Without a thorough understanding of class struggle and the history of the Cultural Revolution, one will be caught in groundless fantasies, come up with theories of idealist superstructure designs, and blame social injustice and inherent human weaknesses for all the cruelties back then.

Planned Economy and Vanguard Party

For the masses, only by taking control of social wealth can they rule their country. This means that they need to control the means of production. And they should run the economy according to their overall interests and overall planning.

Normally a car, a bus or a locomotive needs a driver. A ship needs a helmsman. A plane needs a pilot. Likewise, mass production, especially after being globalized, needs organizers for coordination. Unless we are engaged in simple commodity production, we will find these production organizers absolutely necessary. Therefore, the masses must find a way to oversee them and hold them accountable.

Market behavior is swayed by financial gain. Both sellers and buyers make decisions based on the maximization of their financial interests. As long as the organizers in charge of production and economy do not answer to the masses, any market economy controlled by the state, including those with a self-claimed socialist label, won't allow the masses to rule.

Only planned economy allows the masses to control globalized (or national to say the least), highly interdependent, and coordination-enabled mass production. With rule over economy, the masses will forbid any enterprise, sector or region to take their overall interests hostage. They will ban any production organizer from making decisions independently. The market will be prevented from holding sway over their overall interests. Otherwise it will definitely lead to partial interests swaying overall interests.

Therefore, planned economy is the only means of making mass production serve the masses' overall interests. It's an absolute prerequisite to make sure the masses' interests are not damaged.

The following data are calculated according to China's official statistics. Contrary to the official description, they show China's planned economy actually fared better. Except textiles, crop production during the "Three Years of Natural Disasters" and fake GDP growth rates, the data show China under planned economy (starting from 1952, except for automobile production which began in 1995) grew faster on average.

<u>Period of time \ Growth rate %</u>	<u>Steel</u>	<u>Coal</u>	<u>Electricity</u>	<u>Logistics</u>	<u>Automobile</u>	<u>High school graduates</u>	<u>Crop production</u>	<u>Textiles</u>	<u>GDP</u>
Mao Zedong's era (1952-1976)	10.1	6.9	13.2	6.7	22.0	17.3	3.1	3.3	5.8
Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)	8.1	8.7	11.1	7.3	16.5	33.1	3.7	2.8	6.0
Reform and Opening-up (1977-2015)	9.6	5.3	8.8	3.7	14.3	2.5	2.1	5.9	14.9

During the Mao era, China shook off imperialist shackles, gained total control over its politics, economy and armed forces, and established an integrated industrial system. Although its economy grew faster than other Third World countries', its potential was not fully realized.

Before the Second World War, the Soviet Union transformed from a backward industrial country to a superpower within 20 years. In the late 1970s, China produced more than five times amount of steel and electricity than the Soviet Union, and almost reached the same level as the latter in per capita terms. Four decades later, however, China began to rise. Now it still falls short of the superpower status. In addition, in

the late stage of the Mao era, China managed to make large aircraft by itself. But now it concentrates on developing large aircraft again. These comparisons are truly shocking.

Therefore, history tells us that planned economy is able to achieve faster growth. If China stuck to planned economy instead of adopting the reform and opening-up scheme, it could grow much faster. Now a small part of the Chinese population has become incredibly rich. But when it comes to GDP per capita, China is far behind Russia which suffered serious economic recession after collapse of the Soviet Union. It is in the same league as Brazil and South Africa instead.

<u>2017 data*</u>	<u>Russia</u>	<u>Brazil</u>	<u>China</u>	<u>South Africa</u>	<u>India</u>
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$27,000	\$15,200	\$15,400	\$13,300	\$6,700
Urbanization rate (%)	74.2	86.2	57.9	65.8	33.5
Motor vehicles per 100 people	29.3	24.9	15.4	16.5	4.2

*Sources: CIA website, except for the third entry which is based on Wikipedia's data.

But planned economy doesn't hold the key to meeting the masses' material needs. Finding a way to balance overall and sectional interests does. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Communist Party of China commanded the Eight Route Army and guerilla warfare. The former was part of the national armed forces which could affect the outcome of the war. The latter had limited regional influence. Together, they made China's struggle against the Japanese invaders a people's war. A planned economy needs to follow the same logic. The failure to differentiate overall and sectional interests and take appropriate measures accordingly was the only defect of China's planned economy during the Mao era. As a result, the country could be caught in chaos when the central government relinquished control, or show unreasonable inflexibility when certain policies were carried out. For example, it was imperative for the country to call for all the farmers to join the collectivization campaign. But it was absurd to have all the crops planted in high density. In addition, collectivizing services such as hairdressing and vehicle maintenance in cities was obviously a bad idea. Overall and sectional interests must be differentiated and dealt with accordingly. The mechanism of planned economy is capable of doing that. What's more, people are also able to find a way of doing it after learning from previous failures.

In the meantime, a planned economy needs a core leadership for overall planning. All the powerful production organizers must be part of a vanguard party who adopts democratic centralism. Under the leadership of the party, they need to coordinate production activities according to the overall plan. Planned economy lays an economic foundation for the party's rule, and gives rise to central leaders or so-called helmsmen who can make sure the overall plan is not compromised. Only class struggle can produce such leaders. It's true that the globe won't stop turning for anyone. But without political leaders such as Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong, the world's working class would spend much more time looking for a way out of darkness.

But such helmsmen can lead the masses onto a capitalist path. There are at least two ways of preventing the scenario from happening. First, the leading post mustn't be monopolized by a small group of people. Second, the masses need to know when they are led astray and have the right to sack incompetent leaders. Once they get into the habit of protecting their overall interests, they won't allow any leader to castrate the proletarian revolution under the guise of pursuit of economic growth.

Thus, revolutionaries who fight to eradicate oppression face a most complicated challenge. They must find a way to prevent powerful production organizers and political leaders from forming a clique of common interests.

Conclusion

Planned economy won't give rise to a multi-party system. It's necessary for the masses' rule. The proletariat cannot protect common ownership through a multi-party system. Therefore, I think Mr. Huang makes a wrong judgment by blaming the single-party system for social ailments. The key is to prevent the ruling vanguard party from degenerating. In fact, the modern one-party system merely reflects the dominance of state

capitalism. A vanguard party's leadership and planned economy are necessary prerequisites for the masses' rule. But history tells us they are not sufficient prerequisites. Denying their importance is an act of ignorance and irrationality.