

SATIRICAL ESSAY: NOW I KNOW HOW MUCH BETTER CHINA IS!

If I'd never gone to the United States, I would never have learned how much better China is.

In China, almost everyone has a bicycle, and every household has several. In China a bicycle costs only a little more than 200 yuan, and there are special bicycle lanes on public roads.

In the U.S., a bicycle costs \$70 to \$80, the equivalent of more than 600 yuan, which is very expensive for the average person. For that reason, only rich and idle people own bicycles as a form of recreation. As for bicycle lanes, they are found only in a small number of public parks.

In China, most homes can receive television programming in both Chinese and English (through channels such as CCTV4 and CCTV9), while in the U.S., major stations such as CNN broadcast only in English. Chinese television stations have a cooperative relationship and disseminate a common viewpoint. But in the U.S., television stations all have their own opinions, leaving viewers in confusion.

China has lengthy holidays every year. Major festivals such as Labor Day on May 1 and National Day on October 1 are accompanied by a full week's holiday. The normal workday is also not very stressful. Upon arriving at work in the morning, you read the newspaper and then go out on some errand, and no one has anything to say about it. After work you all sit down for a friendly game of mahjongg. In the U.S., everyone is scurrying around to make a living, morning to night, with hardly time to draw a breath. Once you earn a little money, you have to hand over a good part of it in taxes. Pay for civil servants is lousy, with few opportunities to pull in a little extra on the side.

In China, you can have a cigarette in any public place, stand around and gab, and even expectorate at your leisure, and no one will have anything to say about it. If you happen to damage or make off with some item of public property, the police won't take any notice. In the U.S., you have to appear in court just for running a red light—it's enough to drive you to distraction!

In China, anyone's wallet contains some spare cash. In the U.S., when you open someone's wallet, six out of ten will just have a bunch of bank and credit cards and no cash at all, while two more might have a couple of bucks to use for tips.

In the U.S., it's very easy for children to come into contact with harmful information, especially through the Internet. Fortunately, America's Internet seems to be less well developed

than China's, and Internet cafés are far less plentiful, otherwise it's hard to imagine how far American society would degenerate. China has special Internet police charged with filtering out harmful materials, so this problem simply doesn't exist.

In China, diplomas are very easy to obtain. For example, a busy official can simply have his work unit shell out a few thousand yuan, and he can obtain a certificate in a couple of years without going through the bother of examinations. If you're in a hurry, it's no problem—just look on any telephone pole for one of those ads, call the telephone number they give, and in a day or two you'll have your certificate at negligible cost. In the U.S., you have to spend tens of thousands of dollars for a college education, and at the end of the day there's no guarantee that you'll end up with a degree.

There's more. In the U.S. you have to pay at least \$10 for a DVD, around 80 to 90 yuan, and Windows software will set you back hundreds of dollars. In China, the computer malls sell any software or movie you could want for four yuan, and you can get one disc with several types of software or several movies on it—the cost is negligible. And let's not forget, most Chinese homes have a video compact disc player, while most American homes have no VCD player, only an old-fashioned VCR.¹

Going back to transportation, most American cars are lumbering gas hogs, so Japanese cars claim a large share of the American market. You practically never see a compact car like the Charade produced in the U.S., which may be the reason why China has limited export of these cars. Recently it's been reported that the Charade will finally be made available for export to those deprived foreign devils.²

In the U.S., apart from computers, most high-tech products such as toys, shoes, tea cups and so on are imported from China. These products are often distributed throughout the U.S. through rebates, a form of aid provided to America's poor by the people of China.

Their democracy is also inferior to ours. Every time there is a presidential election, the large number of candidates causes a burdensome waste of financial resources, and the adversarial system always brings the threat of division. Wouldn't it be better to simply have Congress hold a meeting and elect the president by a show of hands?

Their economic situation is terrible. Most of them have a very low opinion of Wal-Mart, which they accuse of excessively



Photo: Reuters

depressing the cost of imported goods and depriving manufacturers of their profit margin. This kind of thing shouldn't be of any concern to ordinary people, but they meddle all the same. It's nothing like that here. We leave that kind of thing to the government. I'll buy what I want even if there's some article saying the workers' canteen food is cooked in the toilet.

Their cities are too low-class. When I went to Manhattan, the streets around the World Trade Center site—a world-famous financial district—were full of hawkers, pedicabs and street stalls. It had no big city atmosphere, and no one did anything to hustle the riffraff away or lock them up in an asylum. What would a visiting head of state think if he saw it? They have no sense of self-respect.

For anyone who is preparing to contradict this essay, I would like you to consider this: In any mid-sized Chinese city, you can eat genuine McDonald's food. But in your average American city, is it possible to eat genuine mutton buns, or West Lake vinegar fish, or Peking duck? And think of this: has the American government dared to take on projects like the Three Gorges Dam, or the South-to-North Water Transfer Project? Has Bush Jr. ever tried to spend a trillion dollars on a

National Day celebration? These are all part of our nation's essential character. Tens of millions of Chinese can be unemployed, and the system doesn't collapse. In America, if tens of millions were unemployed, and hundreds of millions of peasants migrated to the cities, Bush would be finished!

Translated by Stacy Mosher

Variants of this unattributed essay have been disseminated on a variety of Chinese Web sites, including: <http://www.observechina.net/info/artshow.asp?ID=37348>, and <http://b5.chinanews.sina.com/bbs/text/20/2005/0421/432.html>.

NOTES

1. It is fair to observe further that most Americans don't even know what a VCD is.
2. The Charade, or Xiali, is a Chinese version of a Japanese car, which has become known in China more for its ubiquity (in particular for taxi use) than for its quality. See Lee Alon, "The Humble Xiali," *Beijing CityWeekend*, December 7, 2004, http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/en/beijing/features/2002_14/Hero_Xiali.