

# Essay on the red scarf girl by ji li jiang

[People](#), [Mao Zedong](#)



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“ The Red Scarf Girl” “ Many friends have asked me why, after all I went through, I did not hate Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution in those years. The answer is simple: we were all brainwashed. ” p. 276 The book “ The Red Scarf Girl” is a memoir written by author Ji Li Jiang recounting what it was like to grow up during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, taking place in China from 1965 to 1968.

During this time, a political leader named Mao Zedong convinced the people of China that the “ four olds”, or the old ways of China, were wrong and that the only way for their country to move forward was to completely revamp their beliefs and ways of life; basically creating a whole new culture for the Chinese. By ways of torture as well as basically brainwashing the people into thinking whatever he said was true, Chairman Mao single handedly shaped China’s culture by removing all anti-communist beliefs.

During the first part of this book, little things that Ji Li Jiang witnesses and says hints that Chairman Mao was forcing change onto the people of China. For example, in chapter 2, Ji Li helps destroy a sign for the Great Prosperity Market, saying that names like this are four olds. Many other words and phrases such as “ fortune” and “ innocent” were also considered four olds, and were not to be used. But this was just the first step of Chairman Mao’s plan.

He also convinced his workers, called “ the red guards”, to publicly humiliate people for various anti-Communist acts. These public humiliations got more and more violent as time went on; in the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, people were mainly humiliated for their clothing. On page 30, a man’s clothing is cut apart while he is standing in the middle of a street

because the tight pants and pointed shoes he wore were considered four olds; "...tight pants and pointed shoes are what the Western bourgeoisie admire.

For us proletarians, they are neither good looking nor comfortable" said the Red Guard performing this act. But as the story progresses, people are forced to wear dunce caps and signs with horrible messages written about them around their neck. They were then paraded around while people yelled horribly mean things at them, sometimes even throwing things. Many people were treated this way because of their, or someone in their family's occupation; if you or anyone in your family was a landlord, you would definitely be treated this way.

Landlords were believed to be "black welps", meaning that they were evil people, because they would take land from the poor if they did not pay their taxes, and also often were wealthy enough to afford housekeepers. Many teachers were also treated harshly if the Red Guards had any reason to believe that they were teaching their students anti-communist ideas. The people of China did not think twice about this behavior, however, because Chairman Mao had convinced them that people like this should be treated harshly. To us Chairman Mao was god. He controlled everything we read, everything we heard, and everything we learned in school. We believed everything he said. Naturally, we knew only good things about Chairman Mao and The Cultural Revolution. Anything bad had to be the fault of others. Mao was blameless. " (p. 276) Certain people were treated even more severely. Struggle meetings (gatherings within the workplace where people

were publicly humiliated) were very common and often used physical violence to correct people.

During one struggle meeting, a woman is beaten and forced to climb the chimney of a factory as a punishment, for she was believed to be a teacher pushing anti-communist beliefs on her students. Ji Li Jiang's father is forced to partake in these daily because he was believed to be conspiring against the communist party. Even if The Red Guards did not have substantial evidence to torture these people, they had full permission to anyway under the power of Chairman Mao. " When I started to write this book, I asked An Yi's mother if she had hated Mao when she was forced to climb the factory chimney. I didn't hate him' she told me. ' I believed that the Cultural Revolution was necessary to prevent revisionism and capitalism from taking over China. I knew that I was wronged, but mistakes happen under any system. If the country was better for the movement that persecuted me, I was still in favor of it. It was only after Mao's death that I knew I was deceived. " For Ji Li Jiang, it was not until her father was tortured that she realized that the Cultural Revolution may not have been great as it sounded. Before then, Ji Li Jiang actively participated in these events.

So did all of her siblings and classmates. They all believed whole heartedly that Chairman Mao was doing this for the good of the people. Before the Cultural Revolution, people had big ceremonies for their ancestors, and for the Chinese New Year. They believed in many superstitions, such as not sweeping the floor on New Year's Day as to not sweep out the god of wealth, and eating spring rolls to " roll in the money". People were not ridiculed because they were wealthy; wealth was admired and people strived for it.

People collected stamps and other valuable things and cherished them with all their hearts.

They kept photographs of themselves and their family members. They wore fancy clothes on special occasions, and the elderly kept elaborately decorated trunks containing all their families heirlooms and passed them down from generation to generation. People were allowed to hire housekeepers to help them around the house and with taking care of their children. But during the Cultural Revolution, none of these things were allowed. They were all considered four olds, and people's houses were searched and pillaged to make sure that none of these things were going on.

Years after the Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao was proven guilty of unleashing this chaos onto the people of China purely to protect his own political position. " It was only after Mao's death in 1976 that people woke up. We finally learned that the whole Cultural Revolution had been part of a power struggle at the highest levels of the Party. Our leader had taken advantage of our trust and loyalty to manipulate the whole country. This is the most frightening lesson of the Cultural Revolution: without a sound legal system, a small group or even a single person can take control of an entire country. This is as true now as it was then. "