

Document 14.4: Excerpt from *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* by Jung Chang, 1991

The narrator's father joined the Communist Party at Yan'an in early 1940. He was devoted to the cause. Soon after the Party came into power in 1949, he was placed in positions of responsibility. In the late 1950s, he became deputy director of the Public Affairs Department for Sichuan Province. Soon after the Cultural Revolution began, he became a target. The mental and physical abuse was so extreme that the family became convinced he was losing his sanity.

The Rebels' denunciation meetings became more brutal, even though my father was still allowed to live at home. One day he came back with one of his eyes badly damaged. Another day I saw him standing on a slow-moving truck, being paraded through the streets. A huge placard hung from a thin wire that was eating into his neck, and his arms were twisted ferociously behind his back. He was struggling to keep his head up under the forceful pushing of some Rebels. What made me saddest of all was that he appeared indifferent to his physical pain. In his insanity, his mind seemed to be detached from his body....

We watched my father deteriorate mentally and physically with each passing day. My mother went to ask [an acquaintance] for help again. He promised to see what he could do. We waited, but nothing happened: his silence meant he must have failed to get [those in power] to allow my father to have treatment....

Eventually, the family managed to get him into a hospital for psychiatric help. He underwent shock therapy and for a while was better. He was also prescribed tranquilizers. Later, though, his enemies targeted him again. His wife worked desperately to have his record cleared. As it stood, it would affect the future for each of their children. By March 1975, an investigating team came to a verdict, declaring that he had "committed serious political errors." He signed the paper.

When he read it, he wept. But he signed.

Shortly after, her father suffered a heart attack and died. He was fifty-four. Jung Chang writes:

For days I wept in silence. I thought of my father's life, his wasted dedication and crushed dreams. He need not have died. Yet his death seemed so inevitable. There was no place for him in Mao's China, because he had tried to be an honest man. He had been betrayed by something to which he had given his whole life, and the betrayal had destroyed him.

Source: Chang, Jung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993 edition. 464, 468, and 637.