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From the *New York Times*, March 26 2016:

Harriet Mills, Scholar Held in ‘Brainwashing Prison’ in China, Dies at 95



Harriet Mills in an undated photo made available by her sister. After returning from captivity in China, she taught Chinese language and literature at Columbia, Cornell and the University of Michigan.

Harriet Mills, a Fulbright scholar from New York who was imprisoned as an American spy in Communist China for more than four years and was widely believed to have been a victim of brainwashing, died on March 5 in Mitchellville, Md. She was 95.

The cause was complications of dementia, said her sister, Angie, her only immediate survivor.

When she was released in 1955, Ms. Mills described herself as an unpaid “espionage agent” for the United States and Britain, called Americans “warmongers” and said she believed that the United States had engaged in germ warfare during the Korean War.

“The Communists had a perfect right to arrest me,” she said. “I confessed from the very day I was arrested.”

She never publicly recanted, her sister said, but made clear that she been indoctrinated by the Chinese. “In the conversations I had with her,” Angie Mills said, “she said this is something they pressured her to do, something that had been drilled into her, that she was spouting what they said.”

Ms. Mills later wrote a magazine article saying the Chinese government was engaged in the “greatest campaign in human history to reshape the minds of men.” Writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1959, she said the “complex interplay of psychological and personal factors gives the technique its special character and power,” and concluded that “to be unprogressive in China is not simply a political verdict; it is social suicide as well.”

After leaving China, Ms. Mills spent two years recovering from tuberculosis and rarely discussed her captivity.

She later taught at Columbia, Cornell and the University of Michigan, specializing in Chinese language and modern literature, before her retirement in 1990. She returned to China for academic conferences in 1976, 1989 and 1999.

Continue reading the main story: Harriet Cornelia Mills was born in Tokyo on April 2, 1920, to Presbyterian missionaries, Wilson Mills and the former Cornelia Seyle.

She attended American schools in Nanjing and Shanghai, graduated from Wellesley College in 1941 with a degree in English literature, and earned a master's and doctorate from Columbia University in Chinese. She was a Fulbright scholar and studied at what was then called Peking College of Chinese Studies and Peking University.

When the Korean War erupted in 1950, she and two other Fulbright scholars applied for exit visas, but were rejected. In July 1951, they were arrested as counter-revolutionaries, in part because they were being paid by the United States government as Fulbright scholars and possessed a shortwave radio.

According to her sister, Ms. Mills was periodically restrained in handcuffs or ankle chains after repudiating one of her confessions, was denied contact with her family until the fourth year of imprisonment and was subject to "thought reform."

But when she reached Hong Kong on Oct. 31, 1955, she said that she had been treated "with the utmost consideration and courtesy" and that the Chinese government had "a genuine desire for peace." Her release followed intense lobbying by her parents, the American Red Cross and the State Department. The two other Fulbright scholars arrested with her had been released in October 1954 and September 1955.

Her recollections about being interrogated were said to have been delivered to Dr. Harold Wolff, a Cornell neuropsychiatrist, who studied Chinese and Soviet indoctrination techniques for the Central Intelligence Agency.

In his 1956 book, *Brainwashing: The Story of the Men Who Defied It*, Edward Hunter, a propaganda specialist for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, wrote that Ms. Mills's prison "mind reform" had continued for more than two years, making her "one of the longest occupants of the brainwashing prison." By cooperating, Mr. Hunter said, she was given more responsibility and, after a visit by British Labour Party leaders changed nothing, she became more resigned to her fate, assumed a new sense of belonging and began singing Communist songs.