



June Fourth Elegies. Liu Xiaobo

By Xiaobo Liu

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Liu Xiaobo died in 2017, the first Nobel Laureate to do so in detention since 1935. Liu was a pre-eminent Chinese literary critic, professor and humanitarian activist. After his hunger strike in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 he became a thorn in the side of the Chinese government, helping to write the Charter 08 manifesto calling for free speech, democratic elections and basic human rights. He was arrested and convicted on charges of 'incitement to subversion', and sentenced to eleven years in prison. The following year, 2010, during this fourth prison term, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 'his prolonged non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China'. Neither he nor his wife was allowed to travel to Oslo, and the Chinese government blocked all news stories of the prize and intimidated Liu's friends and family. June Fourth Elegies is a collection of the poems Liu Xiaobo wrote each year on the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. An extraordinarily moving testimony and an historical document of singular importance, it is dedicated to 'the Tiananmen Mothers and for those who can remember'. In this bilingual volume, Liu's poetry is for the first time published freely in both English translation and in the Chinese original.

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Editorial Review

Review

"It is ironic that today, while the Chinese government is very concerned to be seen as a leading world power, many Chinese people from all walks of life continue to be deprived of their basic rights. In this collection of poems entitled June Fourth Elegies, Liu Xiaobo pays a moving tribute to the sacrifices made during the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Considering the writer himself remains imprisoned, this book serves as a powerful reminder of his courage and determination and his great hearted concern for the welfare of his fellow country men and women" -- The Dalai Lama "It's the nature of language to pitch itself against the smothering oneness of the state. Words want to be free. Liu Xiaobo's crime is called 'an incitement to subvert state power.' This is an administrative term for the exercise of free speech - the very activity, Liu writes, that is the mother of truth... We try to imagine the nightmarish reality of the closed trial, the confiscated life. We feel the force of Liu Xiaobo's efforts to transcend what he calls 'a paralysis of spirit'. And we see his face in his words" -- Don DeLillo "One cannot talk about these poems strictly in terms of poetry. They are a monument of rage against the murderous powers of injustice, one man's relentless counter-argument to the logic of totalitarian oppression - twenty years of defiance in the form of elegies to the fallen, the 'departed souls' of Tiananmen Square. The imprisoned Liu Xiaobo is surely one of the world's most ardent defenders of human freedom, of the right of every person to live in an open society governed by laws, not guns" -- Paul Auster "What really speaks are the 20 elegies, all beautifully translated by the Chinese-American poet and publisher Yang" * Independent *

About the Author

Liu Xiaobo was a political activist, author, university professor and writer. He was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. He died in 2017.

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