



Tiananmen Exiles: Voices of the Struggle for Democracy in China (Palgrave Studies in Oral History)

By Perry Link, Rowena Xiaoqing He

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In the spring of 1989, millions of citizens across China took to the streets in a nationwide uprising against government corruption and authoritarian rule. What began with widespread hope for political reform ended with the People's Liberation Army firing on unarmed citizens in the capital city of Beijing, and those leaders who survived the crackdown became wanted criminals overnight. Among the witnesses to this unprecedented popular movement was Rowena Xiaoqing

He, who would later join former student leaders and other exiles in North America, where she has worked tirelessly for over a decade to keep the memory of the Tiananmen Movement alive.

This moving oral history interweaves He's own experiences with the accounts of three student leaders exiled from China. Here, in their own words, they describe their childhoods during Mao's Cultural Revolution, their political activism, the bitter disappointments of 1989, and the profound contradictions and challenges they face as exiles. Variously labeled as heroes, victims, and traitors in the years after Tiananmen, these individuals tell difficult stories of thwarted ideals and disconnection, but that nonetheless embody the hope for a freer China and a more just world.

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Editorial Review

Review

'A moving and very personal account of life as a political emigrant...A convincing and powerful account of a central experience in contemporary Chinese life' -New York Review of Books by Ian Johnson

'Tiananmen Exiles is a brave book written eloquently, with controlled passion... [it is] a masterly narrative and analysis..[He's] often profound book is an unmistakable sign of her devotion to the cause' - The Spectator by Jonathan Mirsky

'Rowena He herself is an example of someone who has battled for years, sometimes in the face of angry criticism, to keep alive the memories of an idealism that emerged in full force in 1989. And she's determined not to let us forget.' -Christian Science Monitor by Dan Southerland

"A compelling account of idealism and the price it exacts" - Kirkus

'Bold attempt to reclaim Chinese history from the state' -The Independent by Edward Wilson

Tiananmen Exiles has organically tied the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen movement together through the lives and agonies of three former student leaders, and through them, the lives and struggles of their generation. Journal of East Asian Libraries by Zehao Zhou

"Rowena He...courageously battles state-imposed amnesia, forcing us to remember the human cost of China's 1989" - The Daily Telegraph by Julia Lovell

"Those who have chosen, or were forced by circumstances, not to live the official lie, including Rowena He, are condemned as traitors to China rather than as critics of the regime. For the three student leaders interviewed in her book, the events of 1989 and their subsequent exile created a permanent post-traumatic state. Much the same could be said of the nation they left behind, a nation that is waiting for the moment when the legacy of the tragedy suffered a quarter-century ago can be faced." - New Statesman by Isabel Hilton

'As long as the Communist Party continues to refuse to tolerate any conversation about June Fourth, it will only ensure that voices like Ms. He's echo even louder in the silence.' - The Wall Street Journal Real Time by Maura Cunningham

"Though China's democracy movement was crushed in the Tiananmen Massacre 25 years ago, the ideas that animated it are eternal. Rowena Xiaoqing He, one of the most courageous academics in the U.S., has written a powerful book that tracks the poignant journeys of three exiled activists and honors the sacrifices so many Chinese had to make in 1989 and after." - Adi Ignatius, Wall Street Journal Beijing Bureau Chief in 1989 and co-editor of Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang

"This new book revives as well as preserves the memory of the 1989 Tiananmen Movement in a quintessential way. Combining autobiographical and biographical approaches with psycho-cultural analysis, Rowena Xiaoqing He has ingeniously reconstructed the entire movement in historical perspective not only to unlock the past and explain the present but also to peer into the future of China's sustained struggle against

totalitarian tyranny. This is also a deeply touching narrative that the reader will find difficult to lay down until reaching the last sentence." - Yu Ying-shih, Emeritus Professor of East Asian Studies and History, Princeton University, and and winner of the John W. Kluge Prize for the Study of Humanity

"Tiananmen Exiles rekindles our painful memories of those who paid dearly for their ideals. In this oral history project, Rowena Xiaoqing He captures the indomitable spirit of three student leaders forced into exile after the Tiananmen crackdown a quarter century ago. Their stories are powerful, moving, and inspirational." - Minxin Pei, Director, Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies at Claremont McKenna College and author of China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy

Review

Tiananmen Exiles has been named one of the Top Five China Books of 2014 by the Asia Society's China File

About the Author

Born and raised in China as a member of the "Tiananmen Generation," Rowena Xiaoqing He moved to Canada in 1998, where she received her Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. Today she teaches at Harvard University, where her seminars on the Tiananmen Movement have earned her a Certificate of Teaching Excellence for three consecutive years. Her writing has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Globe and Mail. She has been interviewed by The Harvard Gazette, the Harvard Crimson, the Harvard Magazine, the Boston Globe, The Daily Telegraph, The Time, The Associated Press, The Christian Science Monitor, The Guardian, LA Times, the NBC, the CBC, the BBC, CTV, and various international media.

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