



2008 International PEN China Campaign Poem Relay Guide for Centres and Translators

The Poem Relay - Summary

The Poem Relay seeks to raise awareness about freedom of expression in China in a uniquely PEN way – through poetry and translation.

PEN Centres will translate and record a short poem, “June” (Liuyue) by the imprisoned Chinese poet and journalist Shi Tao, into as many languages as possible.

Via a website with a map of the world and a relay itinerary (similar to the Olympic Torch Relay itinerary), the poem will then virtually “travel” around the world, from centre to centre, language to language, adding new translations as it goes and ending in Beijing for the 2008 Olympics.

Visitors to the website will be able to track the poem’s progress and read and hear new translations of the poem as it arrives at each new centre.

The Poem Relay draws together several aspects of PEN -- freedom of expression, translation and linguistic diversity -- to send the world a message that only PEN can send:

- It supports Freedom of Expression. The poem is by an imprisoned writer, a main case of PEN, and is itself about a forbidden, censored topic.
- It celebrates Poetry and Linguistic Diversity. The translation and "relay" demonstrate the diversity of languages, literatures, and writers in the world, while at the same time demonstrating International PEN's diversity and global reach.

The Poem Relay is one of a number of actions organized as part of International PEN’s 2008 China Campaign in the lead up to the Beijing Olympics, International PEN will be sending centres information about other aspects of the campaign soon.

The Poem Relay will be managed by a Relay Team on behalf of International PEN and its China Campaign.

The team consists of:

PEN Sydney, Chip Rolley

Independent Chinese PEN Centre, Zhang Yu

Swiss German PEN Centre, Kristin T. Schnider



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About Shi Tao and “June”



Shi Tao is a Chinese journalist, poet and PEN member, serving 10 years in prison on the charge of "revealing state secrets abroad". In April 2004, Shi Tao (Shi is his family name) sent notes he took of a document read out at an editorial meeting of the *Dangdai Shangbao* (Contemporary Commerce News) to an overseas website using a Yahoo! email account. The document was from the Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and included warnings to the media on their media coverage during the upcoming 15th anniversary of the June 4 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests and Beijing massacre. According to court documents, Yahoo! (Hong Kong) Holdings Ltd provided the Chinese authorities with Shi Tao's identity. Shi Tao wrote the poem "June", a meditation on the 1989 protests and massacre at roughly the same time -- on 9 June 2004.

About the Relay

How will the relay be done?

The poem relay will be conducted “virtually” via a website, which will be linked to the International PEN website.

Participating centres will engage individuals to translate the poem, record it on an mp3 file and send it to the Relay Team. For practical reasons the collection of translations will start before the actual launch of website and relay.

At launch, the website will show a map of the world with the relay route and itinerary. Each participating centre will be indicated by a dot on the map.

Organizers are designing a relay itinerary for the poem, indicating what date it will “arrive” at each centre. As there are more PEN centres than there are destinations for the Olympic Torch, the Poem Relay Itinerary will be different from that for the Olympic Torch, but it is hoped it will intersect with it (unofficially) when it can.

There will also be information about the relay and about Shi Tao and his case. There is the potential to include information on the participating centres and their activities related to the relay,



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the wider International PEN China campaign, Chinese literature and translation and Chinese writers in prison along with translations of their work. **Note: for simplicity, only Shi Tao's "June" will be part of the relay.** In addition, we may be able to include an online petition (with petition and signatures to be delivered to the Chinese authorities, foreign embassies in Beijing, the IOC, etc at the time of the Olympics).

On the day the poem is scheduled to "arrive" at a centre, users will be able to click on the centre to read and hear the poem in the languages into which the respective centre has provided translations. As the poem travels around the world, the website grows in content, until August 8, 2008, when the poem reaches its final destination, Beijing. The website will then be a demonstration of the poem's (and its message's) journey round the world, centre to centre, language to language.

Additional Options

Depending on resources, a book could be published of all the translations, accompanied by explanatory and related essays.

Centre Participation

How do individual PEN Centres participate?

The individual who sent you this document is your Relay Team contact. This is your centre's contact for all queries related to the Relay. Notify them by email as soon as possible (and **no later than 31 January 2008**) if you would like to participate, giving them the **Name, Address, Email Address, Telephone and Fax numbers** of the person who will be your centre's contact for this Relay. Please let them know into **which languages** you are seeking to translation the poem. *Note: Your translation and recordings and centre information can be sent later.*

Your Relay Team Contact will confirm your participation, provide you with all technical requirements (text format, recording options, etc), and later notify you of the date the poem "arrives" at your centre (the date your translation(s) will appear on the website).



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This agreement to participate means you will:

1. Secure a translation of the poem into language(s) of your centre and the country/area where your centre is located.
2. Assign copyright permission of the translation(s) to International PEN for print, digital and audio use. (You will receive a form for this.)
3. Save the translation in the format advised by your Relay Team contact. You will receive this information after you notify us of your participation.
4. Record the translation on an mp3 file (or, if not possible, notify your Relay Team contact). (You will receive technical advice for this after you notify us of your participation.)
5. Send the translation, permission assignment, and recording to your Relay Team contact person.

*Note: Please send translation texts in as soon as they are ready. You may send the other files in later. The final deadline for all files (translation text, recording and permission) is **1 March 2008**.*

Centres may also do the following which then will be included in their “Centre Information” on the website. You will be notified of the deadline for this information (some time before your centre’s poem “arrival” date):

1. Issue a press release on the day the poem is to “arrive”, announcing the uploading of the local translation(s), raising awareness of Shi Tao, other writers in prison in China, and the broader goals of the International PEN China Campaign. If this coincides with the arrival of the torch, it could provide a good alternative story for the media.
2. Hold an event on the day the poem is to arrive. This could include readings of the poem in the local language(s), plus other readings of Chinese literature, and speeches / statements that raise awareness of PEN’s China main cases.
3. Centres may also provide the following information for inclusion on the website:
 - Centre contact information.
 - Link to the centre’s website.
 - Short CV of the translator.
 - “Five key facts” about the PEN programs in the local centre/country.
 - “Five key facts” about the languages and literatures in that centre’s location. (The idea here is to be brief and “web user-friendly”.)



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- Information about the local event they may be holding in conjunction with the relay.
- Any local centre press release related to the poem relay and/or the International PEN China campaign.
- Any local centre declarations about freedom of expression in China.

About the Translations

Must we translate from the original Chinese?

Every translation is necessarily a departure from the original. To translate from an intermediary language increases the distance a poem must travel to another language. We urge all participating centres to make every possible effort to engage individuals to translate directly from the Chinese.

What if we cannot find a translator from Chinese to our language(s)?

We recognize that it may not always be possible to translate directly from the Chinese, particularly when arranging translations into minority and indigenous languages. We have drafted this document to aid translators who must rely on an English translation, so that translators will be aware of the choices made by the existing translation to English by Chip Rolley. *Please note, it is slightly different from the translation published in PEN International magazine, volume 56, no. 1, 2006 and displayed on the document presented in Dakar.* The choices made by him may be entirely inappropriate for translations to another language. As well, other translators to English will make different artistic choices. Chip Rolley's revised translation is at the end of this document, followed by a word-for-word literal translation. If your translator will be working from English or another intermediary language but has queries about the original Chinese, ask your Relay Team Contact to put you in touch with an expert in Chinese.

What if a translation to our language has already been done?

There are a number of centres with Spanish as their main literary language. The same is true for English, French, Chinese, Arabic and others. Translations of the poem have already been done to English, French and Spanish and we have several who have promised more Spanish translations. Your centre may arrange to use these existing translations, or you may do your own version. Different versions can reflect different artistic choices, as well as dialectical and other



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local differences in word choice, rhythm, etc. In addition, some centres may wish to use the existing translation, but do their own recording of the poem, using a well-known local author to recite it.

We urge all centres – especially centres of these dominant world languages – to arrange translations to the minority and indigenous languages in your country/area, even if they are not languages of your centre.

Can we do translations into languages that are not our centre's main literary language or an indigenous language of our country/area?

Many translators do not live in the home country of the language they translate from or to, and therefore may not be a member of, or even known to, a centre strongly associated with a particular language. (A translator from Chinese to Greek may very well live in Australia.) We would like this Relay to be as open as possible to participation and would like to ensure we have as many translations as possible, so will leave this decision to individual centres. (For example, depending on the level of participation, it may transpire that a centre in South America provides the only translation to Yiddish.)

Examples of Centre Participation

Swiss German PEN

Swiss German PEN notified organizers of their participation at the PEN Congress in Dakar. German is the centre's language, but the Swiss speak different German dialects. Therefore they have decided to leave the German translation to one of the other German-speaking centres and agree to provide one translation of the poem into Swiss German. There are chances that a Swiss poet, who does write in Swiss German can collaborate with a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre who lives in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. They will find a translator and provide him or her with all necessary information and support him/her whenever there are questions. They will make sure that he/she agrees to sign a copyright permission. They will see to it that the poem is recorded, and the translation and recording is delivered in time according to their deadline. They will check the translator's work in regard to its compatibility with the requirements and send it on to the Relay Team member who is assigned to them. In addition they will send centre Information, contacts and the translator's CV.



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Sydney PEN

English is the language of Sydney PEN and most Australian writing. Sydney PEN has already provided a translation into English and will also try to secure translations into some of Australia's indigenous languages. (Australia has over 200 indigenous languages, though many are tragically close to extinct.) We will focus on the more dominant languages such as Pitjantjatjara, Arennte, and hopefully others. These will likely have to be translated from English. We will provide the Relay Team with the translated poems, along with copyright permission assignment forms signed by the translators by the deadline. We will also record recitations of the translations and ensure they are delivered to the Relay Team by the deadline.