

4 June 1989

Mary Chapin Carpenter

I told them we heard singing first before we reached the Square
"Arise the wretched of the earth" filled the air
So many fists clenched to the sky we couldn't count them all
But then the sea of weeping washed over the Hall

I told them no one saw me, there was no one who would know
I was an army soldier dressed in students clothes
Between the smoking bonfires we held our rifles high
As the ashes of the banners soared into the sky

Ah, I was seventeen that spring
Ah, we were just obeying orders
Ah, I still see everything
Through the factory's yellow windows
In the dirty stinking river
In the messages that find you then vanish in the ether
They vanish in the ether:

I told them not to fear me but history tells the tale
The artists and the poets fill up every jail
Before I held a rifle I held an artist's brush
Before Tiananmen I even dreamed of love

Ah, I was seventeen that spring
Ah, we were just obeying orders
Ah, I still see everything
Through the factory's yellow windows
In the dirty stinking river
In the messages that found me, then vanished in the ether
In the messages that found me:.

I told them they'd see me walking in the rain
In Budapest, in Prague, in Soweto's lanes
Between the burning oil drums and the graffiti on the wall
I told them, yes I told them, I told them all

Ah, I was seventeen that spring
Ah, we were just obeying orders
Ah, and I still see everything
Through the factory's yellow windows
In the dirty stinking river
In the messages that find us, then vanish in the ether
Oh the messages will find us, then vanish in the ether