

## “The Green Beret” Ho Thien

He was twelve years old  
And I do not know his name  
The mercenaries took him and his father,  
Whose name I do not know,  
One morning upon the High Plateau.  
Green Beret looked down on the frail boy  
With the eyes of a hurt animal and thought,  
A good fright will make him talk.  
He commanded, and the father was taken away  
Behind the forest's green wall.  
'Right kid tell us where they are,  
Tell us where or your father – dead.'  
With eyes now bright and filled with horror  
The slight boy said nothing.  
'you've got one minute kid,' said Green Beret,  
'tell us where or we kill father,'  
And thrust his wrist-watch against a face all eyes,  
The second-hand turning, jerking on its way.  
'O.K. boy ten seconds to tell us where they are.'  
In the last instant the silver hand shattered the  
Sky and the forest of trees.  
'Kill the old guy,' roared Green Beret  
And shots hammered out  
Behind the forest's green wall  
And sky and trees and soldiers stood  
In silence, and the boy cried out.  
Green Beret stood  
In silence, as the boy crouched down  
And shook with tears,  
As children do when their father dies.  
'Christ,' said one mercenary to Green Beret,  
'he didn't know a damn thing  
We killed the old guy for nothing,'  
So they all went away,  
Green Beret and his mercenaries.

And the boy knew everything.  
He knew everything about them, the caves,  
The trails, the hidden places and names,  
And in the moment that he cried out,  
In that same instant,  
Protected by frail tears  
Far stronger than any wall of steel,  
They passed everywhere  
Like tigers  
Across the High Plateau.