

IN SEARCH OF MY FATHER'S GRAVE

(To all the missing soldier's children of VietNam)

The day I returned to my homeland,
Twenty years have passed,
On the dust of war,
On my life, on my youth.
My mother's tears have dried,
Not from exhaustive sorrow,
Not from the healing power of time,
But from my promise,
That I would find where my father was buried.

The day I returned to my country,
I walked the paths of tears and grief.
I searched all the cemeteries,
To find my father's grave,
I walked all the reformed camps,
To look for his whereabouts,
His message from beyond the grave,
Left behind for his bereaved family.

From North to South, I walked,
Through forests now thick with foliage,
On meadows again green of grass and red with flowers,
On ricefields once more heavy with golden crops,
I walked through mounds overgrown with grass,
On bare hills of burned thorns,
On frequented passages, on desolate lands,
In the hope of finding vestiges,
Grave or bones of my soldier father.

I walked the entire country,
In its length, its width,
I saw my father everywhere,
In each grave, each mound,
In empty burial grounds,
In every prison, every reformed camp,
As everywhere,
Each soldier's remain holds my father's spirit,
Each story is his story,
Of courage, of integrity,
Of selflessness, of intensity.
O mother,
I did not find where my father was buried,
The place of his rest,
But I found his grave, his greatness,
In every parcel and corner,
Of the earth and the sky,
Of our homeland.

Humbly, and with gratitude,

Huỳnh Anh Trần-Schroeder