The Indochina Story is a convenient handbook for antiwar preachers. Unfortunately, its leftward slant will probably raise the suspicions of moderate readers, and may cause them to dismiss it as more propaganda than fact. (Rightwingers, of course, will probably dismiss it as propaganda after reading the cover, if they read it at all.) It is far too short and over-simplified to merit any status as a scholarly work; it was not intended to be one. But in simplifying, the CCAS had to left out most of the detail; for example, the Cao Dai, a Vietnamese political-religious sect that tried but failed to import the communist influence, goes almost totally ignored, lost in the shuffle of the NLF. (The NLF, by the way, is a coalition which includes many disreputable elements, including many Cao Dais.) The CCAS is perhaps a bit too ready to forgive Vietcong terrorism. Still, VC violence hardly rivals that of the US B-52 fleet, so perhaps we can forgive CCAS.

But all this hardly matters, for The Indochina Story is a failure. It fails because it will not serve the CCAS purpose, which is to turn Americans against the policies of the Nixon administration. It will never reach its intended audience, simple because it is a book. The average American reads few books, and these are overwhelmingly novelettes. What is needed for the CCAS method is a mass appeal medium which is not generally a mass medium. Ironically, a television program exists whose content is very similar to The Indochina Story. It is called "Who invited the U.S.?", and was produced for NET Journal last year. It was actually aired in several cities and then yanked from distribution, so the story goes, because Spiro Agnew saw it and exerted pressure. The impact television can make has been demonstrated by political campaigns over the last five years or so; instead of writing a book, CCAS should have made TV spots — perhaps with some of the 450 g's McGovern and Company collected when they went on the air last spring. (What happened to that cash, anyway?)

That the war goes on, that Nixon rides high, is partly attributable to the weakness of the left; its inability to communicate its philosophy to the majority of the American people. Partly this is due to the radicals' roots in academia, whose inhabitants tend to speak only to each other, and who write books for each other. Meanwhile, through skillful use of the media, abetted by emotional rock throwers and bomber (generally kept to boot), appear to have succeeded in convincing millions of people that their real problems are the kids (and the black militants) making trouble at home. One TV spot reaches more people than a dozen books.

The authors of The Indochina Story, however, point out that the trends which produced Vietnam are at work elsewhere. The United States cannot stall off the inevitable forever. One day it will have to surrender its dominance, share its wealth, or bleed its economy; internal dissent will continue to weaken the social fabric (for some of us it is torn already); and if fascists come to crush revolution, it will not spare peaceful dissenters, apologists, or radical liberals. And in that final abrogation of the American Dream, if not in the blood of street battles, millions of Vietnamese villagers may one day have an ironic revenge.