



**INDOCHINA
IN THE YEAR OF
THE HORSE - 1966**



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Dedicated to Dr. Peter Rollins (1942-2015)

A Marine officer in Viet Nam, a Harvard PhD, an Oklahoma State University professor, author¹, film historian and documentary producer, Peter Rollins produced and directed the two-part documentary series, “Television’s Viet Nam.” Narrated and hosted by Charlton Heston, it was a collaboration between Peter and Accuracy in Media [AIM]. The documentary was a response to PBS’s 13-part series, “Viet Nam: A Television History,” a series filled with inaccuracies and misrepresentations, that Peter felt had to be answered. [Rollins helped RADIX Foundation organize the Viet-Myths conference at Simmons College in Boston, in 2004. *Ed.*] Peter also planted the seed that became “Confronting Iraq: Conflict and Hope,” which won the award for best documentary at WorldFest, the largest film festival in the country.

In 2013, Peter arranged a panel at the national conference of the Popular Culture Association and the American Culture Association, held at the Washington, D.C. Marriott-Wardman Park Hotel, at which I was the moderator. The panel examined Oliver Stone as an artist and historian. We were able to demonstrate the shortcomings of Stone’s work.

Peter Rollins was a great intellectual, a gentle warrior, and a good friend. I am so grateful to have this opportunity to write a dedication to Peter. He will continue to be sorely missed, but his work and his passion live on in the many lives he touched through his work as a filmmaker, a writer, a teacher and a friend.

Roger Aronoff
Editor, *Accuracy in Media*



As this volume goes to press, we sadly report the passing of at least three more of our contributors:

John F Guilmartin Jr, author of the article “Air War-1965” and Professor of History at Ohio State University.

James T. Taylor (MAJ, USA, Retired), co-author of the article “The Battle of Dong Xoai”, and

Nguyen Ngoc Bich, author of the article “Life in South Vietnam -1965” (see also the 1967 volume Dedication)

¹ E.g., Rollins, Peter C, *America Reflected, Language, Satire, Film and the National Mind*, New Academia Publishing, 2010.

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Introduction: Indochina in the Year of the Horse

The Military Assistance Command Vietnam [MACV] Command History for 1966 concludes,

“By the end of 1966, it was clear to all, except perhaps the enemy, that Free World forces in RVN could not be beaten militarily, but in the capitals of America and her allies, voices were raised both dispassionately and angrily as to the best means to be employed to bring the fighting to a successful conclusion.”

Pacification, counterinsurgency or “recovery” operations—winning hamlet level hearts and minds, providing security and recovering political legitimacy from the communist VC and NVA—became a larger focus. The establishment and prominence given to Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, CORDS and the contemporary release of the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Viet Nam, PROVN Report indicated a long engagement was ahead. Further, neither a negotiated nor a military solution alone showed any signs of offering a successful resolution. “No amount of military effort or capability can compensate for poor politics.”¹

The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) was successful in overrunning an isolated, poorly manned, defended and supplied Special Forces camp in the remote, but strategic, A Shau Valley in March of 1966. The terrain, rain, fog, jungle canopy and tall grass made the A Shau Valley virtually invisible from the air. Some 200 Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) were undisciplined, disloyal conscripted Vietnamese criminals. The A Shau camps were —a mission impossible to defend. Otherwise and elsewhere the NVA was unable to make headway

¹ “No amount of military effort or capability can compensate for poor politics. Therefore, although the prospects for an improved military posture are good, the ultimate achievement of the established military goal depends primarily upon the quality of support achieved by the political leadership of the government of Viet Nam at all levels.” Commander’s Personal Military Assessment of the Fourth Quarter, CY-63, The Senator Gravel Edition, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of the United States Decisionmaking on Viet Nam: 1945-1967*, 5 vols, (Boston: Beacon, Press, 1971) Vol. 3, pp. 169-175.
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/pent1.htm> . Hereafter The Senator Gravel Edition, *The Pentagon Papers*.