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Letters to the Editor

Dikes and Bombs—Which Side Is Telling the Truth?

To the Editor:

Simple analysis reveals that the State Department's report concerning the bombing of the dikes in North Vietnam is both meaningless and deceptive. It is a further demonstration of the utter lack of credibility in any United States pronouncements involving its bombing policy in Vietnam.

The report claims to refute allegations made by North Vietnam of damage to the dikes between April and June of 1972. However, the aerial reconnaissance photographs on which the report is based were taken in mid-July of 1972.

The report freely admits that the damage inflicted by one large bomb could be repaired by the North Vietnamese without great difficulty in one day. Obviously, if the North Vietnamese repaired the damage to the dikes which they say was produced between April and June, and if they made their repairs prior to mid-July, the damage would not appear in the photographs discussed in the State Department's report.

Furthermore, since the nature of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam demands constant aerial reconnaissance, it must be asked why no photographs of the time period in question were studied; surely such photos were made.

The State Department contends that the pictures studied (but withheld from public view) reveal twelve bomb craters along the dikes, and that none

of the damage produced by them has been major. President Nixon has charged the North Vietnamese with a "propaganda" campaign because, he alleged, they have not repaired the damage to the dikes and, instead, they have exhibited this damage to reporters from other countries.

Again, it is obvious that North Vietnam must preserve some proof of its allegations. It may be inferred from the State Department's report that the damage which is being preserved is that of a less than serious nature. If all the damage alleged by North Vietnam has really taken place, it most likely would have been repaired as soon as possible, depending on its extent.

Without any proof, North Vietnam would be at the mercy of U.S. bombers, which could well wipe out the dikes, even if "by accident." Because North Vietnam preserved some proof that its dikes had been bombed, it was able to rally world opinion and force the United States to restrain its bombers in a small but necessary way. Too often we forget that North Vietnam is fighting for its very survival, threatened by a brutal and usually indiscriminate bombing policy.

With the revelations of the Pentagon Papers, the episode with General Lavelle and now the deception of this State Department report, it is clear just who is really waging a propaganda campaign. HOWARD ROFFMAN Philadelphia, July 29, 1972

To the Editor:

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, secretary general of the World Council of Churches, and U.N. Secretary General Waldheim—who have taken it upon themselves to publish advice to President Nixon against the bombing of North Vietnam's dike system—have had to admit that their information came from Hanoi sources and they could not verify that deliberate targeting of the dikes was occurring.

The Hanoi leaders have never admitted having even a single North Vietnamese soldier committed to the war. If they are prepared to try to mislead the rest of the world about anything as basic as their own participation in the war, why should anyone take their bombing atrocity propaganda seriously?

I am not opposed to the destruction of the dikes or any other target in North Vietnam, but I do not feel that President Nixon should be accused of it; if he is not actually doing it, it must be some kind of ultimate in hypocrisy for the Hanoi leaders, after ordering inhabited cities like Anloc bombed by tens of thousands of rocket rounds, to condemn Nixon for disregard for civilian lives.

JAMES R. BRUCE
Long Branch, N. J., July 27, 1972