

Editor's Report**A Memo
On Dikes**

By William Randolph Hearst Jr.
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Today's column consists of a memo to me here in San Francisco from Bill McCullam, our chief editorial writer in New York City, in which he enlarges at my request on an eye-opening editorial he wrote last week.

You may or may not have read the editorial, but whether you did or not I think you will be as interested as I was in reading this incisive run-down on the important and controversial question it discussed—Is the United States deliberately bombing the dikes of North Vietnam?

This question has made a lot of news recently, and it's going to make a lot more for reasons which will become clear. So, being more or less on vacation, I am



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happy to be able to knock off my own writing this week in favor of what follows — and here 'tis:

DEAR BILL — As stated in my editorial, it was less than six weeks ago that Hanoi launched what I called one of its most diabolic and successful propaganda offensives. It is most important to understand the timing of the campaign, and how carefully it has been orchestrated.

Having seen them first hand, you know that those primitive dikes are nothing like those in Holland. Instead they are a 2500-mile-long maze of interconnected earthen levees, hundreds of years old, whose prime function is to control the annual flood waters of the Red River Delta.

In 1954, literally millions of the 15 million peasants living in the delta died by drowning or famine when the dikes failed. Last year, with the dikes in disrepair because of war-caused manpower shortages, a similar but smaller tragedy struck.

This year the dikes are in worse shape than they have ever been, largely because normal erosion and collapses have gone untended. Manpower for repairs is in far shorter supply than ever. And, meanwhile, the flood-water season of September is as imminent as the potential mass disaster that season involves.

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WITH THIS FACTUAL BACKGROUND, and under

this looming threat of nature, the North Vietnamese in late June began their latest propaganda offensive — pushing charges that the U.S. is deliberately bombing their system of dikes and dams.

Xuan Thuy, Hanoi's chief negotiator at the Paris talks, was one of the first to make the charge. He alleged that the U.S. is "purposefully creating disaster for millions of people during the coming flood season." He still was repeating the charges in Paris last Thursday.

Simultaneous with the launching of their allegations, the North Vietnamese Communists began conducting guided tours of the labyrinthian dike system. The Swedish ambassador to Hanoi and various correspondents of European newspapers there were escorted to selected areas where damage had clearly or presumably been caused by bombs.

In no time at all the haters of America, and those here at home seemingly willing to act as Communist agents, began echoing the enemy claim — that the U.S. was engaged in a calculated and monstrous crime against millions of helpless people.

At the same time, Hanoi's invitations continued. Actress Jane Fonda, the far left activist who seems to be testing the limits of free speech, went and returned to vast television coverage with a movie showing damaged dikes which she claimed showed how they "are being bombed on purpose."

Right now, at Hanoi's invitation, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark is in North Vietnam to study alleged dike bombing as a member of a Swedish-Russian hatchet group called "The International Commission of Inquiry into U.S. Crimes in Indochina." Its early and predictable report undoubtedly will make headlines in much of our own press.

A major propaganda coup for the enemy came when Kurt Waldheim, who succeeded U Thant as Secretary-General of the United Nations, returned from a trip to Moscow and said that on the basis of what he had heard from "unofficial sources" the bombing of dikes was deplorable and should be stopped.

As noted in my editorial, this was too much for President Nixon. He said, appropriately: "I note with interest that the Secretary-General, like his predecessor, (has) seized upon enemy-inspired propaganda."

And that's exactly what it is. Mr. Nixon and other of our top officials freely admit that some American bomb damage inevitably has been done to the dikes near military roads and targets. But, as he said, if we were deliberately bombing the dike system it would by this time be in a stage of complete ruin.

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WHAT THE ENEMY DOESN'T ADMIT, meanwhile, is that a good portion of the military damage to the dikes unquestionably has been caused by the fallback of its own SAM missiles.

As many as 500 of these big Surface-to-Air Missiles have been fired at American planes in a single 48-hour period — mostly missing. When these missiles return to earth, often near or on dikes and dams, they can and do

The whole point, Bill, is that the enemy is faced with a looming mass tragedy in the coming flood season and is seeking — all too successfully — to blame us in advance for the disaster they fear.

Millions of people around the world, thanks to the Jane Fondas, the Kurt Waldheims and others now being indoctrinated and soon to be heard from, already are either convinced or suspect that we are indeed bombing the dikes deliberately.

It is really astonishing how effectively a lie can be spread when the Communist transmission belt works overtime. In this case you would think that official denials would be unnecessary. Common sense should convince anybody that a mass, sustained aerial attack on Hanoi's dike system would be verified at once and without any question whether it had happened.

There has been no such attack — and now there never will be, even though it was deliberate bombing of dikes which led directly to a halt of enemy hostilities in the Korean War. President Nixon has said, in answer to the enemy charges, that such bombing "is not our policy now, and will not be in the future."

What I tried to show in my brief editorial was that Hanoi thus not only has shifted blame for a possible mass tragedy from its own shoulders to ours — it also actually has defended its dike system from any truly deliberate attack, using propaganda alone.

I repeat what I said in my editorial — any way you look at it, the latest Hanoi propaganda offensive is a masterpiece of successful duplicity.

Signed — BILL McCULLAM.