

Floods and Bombing of the Dikes in North Vietnam

To the Editor:

The Sept. 6 Op-Ed article by Nguyen Tien Hung which appeared alongside my own article and under the map made by me could be considered by your readers as an indirect refutation of my remarks and create doubts as to the validity of my testimony.

Mr. Nguyen Tien Hung takes up arguments that have been used many times to conceal the responsibility of the men who order bombing of the dikes. His first argument is that the enormous floods of 1971 caused such serious damage to the dike network that they have not yet been repaired, and consequently the flooding that risks taking place would not be caused by bombings.

It is true that the 1971 floods were the most severe ever recorded, but the great number of public works implemented by the population under the guidance of Hydraulic Ministry engineers—involving a volume of 140 million cubic meters of earth—prevented the enormous flooding from causing a catastrophe. The dikes held out well in 1971.

The seriousness of the 1971 flooding and the threat of the resumption of bombing on the dikes led the

Hydraulic Ministry in 1972 to undertake important reinforcement and consolidation work involving fifteen million cubic meters of earth. During the visit of the "Commission of Inquiry Into War Crimes" we watched completion of this raising of the dikes in several places, especially in the Namsach district, adjacent to the districts that were flooded last year.

It is particularly untrue to say that the dikes in North Vietnam are in very bad condition. During my stay in

Vietnam I covered a great deal of ground and saw dozens and dozens of kilometers of dikes. Nowhere did I see any sectors in poor condition, except in the places that had just been bombed.

If my observations concerning localization of the bombing of the dikes are untrue, and if my conclusions are mistaken, General Headquarters of the United States Air Force can refute them by publishing aerial photographs of the eastern areas of the delta in which the greater part of the bombings took place.

Mr. Nguyen Tien Hung's second argument, that the Hanoi Government is pretending that the bombings will cause flooding in order to conceal the causes of the very poor crop that threatens because of the North Vietnamese war effort, is untrue. The "Commission of Inquiry Into War Crimes," which was in Vietnam from July 29 until Aug. 12, was in a position to observe that in all the regions visited agricultural work was progressing normally.

If, in rather large areas, the next crop is lost, it will not be because of the war effort, but because of the strategy being carried out by the United States Air Force of systematically attacking the locks which play an essential role in draining rain water from the rice paddies; the rice plants soon die if they are left under a few inches of water. Systematic destruction of locks and floodgates has been aggravated by destruction of the workshops that manufacture the parts needed to repair these installations. Thus, the Nha May Gho Khi parts factory near Hanoi was destroyed by a very precisely aimed raid on Aug. 5, 1972.

If the next crop is below normal, it will be essentially due to the bombings that have taken place on the entire system of locks.

YVES LACOSTE
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