

Correspondence

The MAD and the Myth

To the Editors: I am moved to comment on two articles in your November, 1972, issue, those by Paul Ramsey ("The MAD Nuclear Policy") and David S. McLellan and Walter Busse ("The Myth of Air Power"), in my continuing (and unsuccessful) attempt to get all of us out of the rut we have fallen into as regards war/peace issues. The conventional wisdom, whether of ethics or politics, no longer helps.

I have previously disagreed with Ramsey's long-term attempts to carefully distinguish between moral uses of force (against official combatants) and immoral uses (against noncombatants). Now, in adopting Brennan's thesis that we should indeed consider the widespread building of antimissile missiles, he unwittingly argues that we should transform thermonuclear war into something which *seems* both possible and "winable." This returns us to the Herman Kahn of 1960 (evacuate the cities and bomb the Russians) and the Robert McNamara of 1962 (missiles can attack missiles with no damage to "civilians"). There can be no hope at all in any effort to make nuclear war *attractive*, and this, no matter how inadvertently, remains at the heart of Ramsey's thinking. Let me use two illustrations to make my point:

1. During the early 1960's some individuals in McNamara's office raised an interesting question. Why, they asked, could not our missile silos be manned by *civilians*? After all, the silos were located within a reasonable distance of population centers (not because of strategy or misguided morality but only because of cost), those tending the missiles worked more or less normal "shifts," and there was nothing obviously inevitable about the proposition that those sitting at computer consoles must wear military uniforms. In

truth, there was no completely satisfactory answer to the question, even though the transformation from military to civilian was never carried through. It remains exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the military officer who sits at the console, the civilian mechanic who keeps the missile "ready" and the truck driver who might be delivering milk to the missile complex at the time the enemy missiles arrive.

2. By common consent, World War I remains the classic case of a war of attrition, in which evenly matched enemies slug it out for years across a stalemated front line and decimate entire societies in the process. It does not get us very far to insist that the Paris worker, suddenly pulled from his neighborhood and transformed into a *poilu* to fill an empty space in the trenches, becomes a more legitimate target in the latter role than he was in the former. No matter how outrageous it may seem, an atomic bomb might have produced a better outcome to World War I. The point remains that whatever Ramsey might wish, we cannot return to those glorious Middle Ages when the small armies of mercenaries fought each other thousands of miles

away from their parent societies and were, in effect, totally disconnected from them. That ancient theory of war, we might remember, was based upon a total unconcern about the "natives" who might be in the "neighborhood" where the war was being fought. It is, simply stated, a colonialist theory of war.

The McLellan/Busse piece typifies the sophomoric thinking which has so long cluttered up discussions of air power. They are so committed to the notion that air power *must* be totally discredited as to lose all sense of proportion. It may interest them to learn that in the mid-1960's serious proposals were advanced within the Air Force that it would be better to abandon bombing altogether than to use air power in ways which could not be expected to succeed and which, therefore, would publicly discredit air power itself. Few air power advocates have ever argued that *any* sort of bombing in *any* sort of war would, *by itself*, dictate the outcome, yet this is the caricature which underlies the McLellan/Busse argument. Having armed themselves with blinders, it is no wonder they cannot see.

Even the *New York Times*, certainly no supporter of Nixon's strategic moves, has reported that bombing had much to do with blunting this year's North Vietnamese offensive and that, in *combination* with the mining of harbors, it encouraged the North Vietnamese to seriously

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AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Attentive readers of mastheads will note a number of changes in *Worldview* this month:

Beginning with this issue, WILSON CAREY MCWILLIAMS, Chairman of the Department of Political Science, Livingston College, Rutgers University, and HILLEL LEVINE of Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences become Associate Editors.

DENNIS HALE of the City University of New York assumes the responsibilities of Book Editor.

GUNNAR MYRDAL of the Institute for International Economic Studies in Stockholm becomes a Contributing Editor.

EUGENE BOROWITZ joins the Editorial Board.

After more than twenty-five years with the Council on Religion and International Affairs, JOHN R. INMAN has retired from the organization which publishes *Worldview* and, therefore, from the Editorial Board.

ture. The point of reading such things now is to join the game of matching scenarios; a game recommended for fun and possible profit.

Civil Disobedience and Political Obligation

by James F. Childress

(Yale University Press; 250 pp.; \$7.95)

We're some months late on this one, but perhaps just as well, since it is now possible to relate it to the subsequently published and much-discussed *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls. The relationship is as clear as it is complex. Professor Childress of the University of Virginia basically follows, as does Rawls, a contract theory approach to political obligations and advocates, as does Rawls, the idea of justice as "fairness." Unlike Rawls, Childress wants to be explicit about the metaethical (theological, anthropological) context within which political obligation can be conceived in a distinctively, if not exclusively, Christian way. Whether he in fact, and not just in intention, moves beyond Rawls is for the reader to judge. What he does do is to offer a closely reasoned analysis of past and present Christian thinking about political obligation. At one point in *A Theory of Justice* Rawls confesses that many of his assumptions are contingent upon a metaphysical framework but that it would take him too far afield to deal with that framework in detail. Childress declares his readiness to venture afield, and the result is a demanding and highly suggestive book that has an importance far beyond the late sixties' fashions of civil disobedience which may have been its immediate occasion.

In March
"Containment &
Change: 1966 & 1972"
Richard Shaull

Correspondence

[from p. 2]

seek an end to the fighting. As I implied in the August *Worldview*, it became clear to them that neither the Soviets nor the Chinese were disposed to challenge the blockade because of larger issues at stake in their relations with the U.S. Sensible discussion is unlikely to be helped by those who insist upon pretending that none of this ever happened. *Of course* bombing was seemingly ineffective so long as the North Vietnamese had access to virtually unlimited supplies from the Chinese and the Soviets, and this opened the door to those who imply that wars are "moral" when they involve infantrymen and "immoral" when they include airplanes. This most recent application of air power, however, is the *first* application during this ghastly war which conforms even in part to what an air power "expert" might recommend. Taken together with what seem to have been tacit agreements between Nixon, the Chinese and the Soviets, it paved the way to our disengagement from South Vietnam (and theirs also).

In the early 1950's I had the good fortune of having as a professor a distinguished Japanese scholar who had spent World War II as the editor of a Tokyo newspaper, and I never will forget his analyses of the effect of bombing. Correctly or incorrectly, *he* credited the incessant firebombing of Tokyo (not the atomic bombs, which he thought to have been superfluous) with having discredited the Japanese military in the eyes of the public and, more important, made it possible for the emperor, *for the very first time*, to step forward himself, in effect recapture Japanese society from its military, take charge of the surrender, and prevent the land war from reaching Japan itself. I make no assertions here about moral and immoral bombing, whatever those categories may

be, but I do insist that it is absurd to argue that air power *never* can have an effect at all on the outcome of war. Depending upon the entire set of circumstances, *strategic* air power (as in Japan) and *tactical* air power (as in Vietnam now) do indeed have an effect. The McLellan/Busse focus on Iwo Jima and Okinawa is absurd unless they mean to suggest we should not have bombed or shelled at all; this would change "absurd" to "idiotic."

Without being overoptimistic, I would guess we are turning a corner, and much in the way Nixon has described it. Given the global necessity to cope with the growth crisis, war will soon be seen as anachronistic and irrelevant. At the same time, we may have to credit fearsome weapons with having brought that about. If both we and the Soviets, for example, actually were able to fend off a thermonuclear attack without great damage, Nixon might not have gone to Moscow. We should have learned during the '60's, but Ramsey has not, that "graduated," "moral" or carefully designed "countercombatant" deterrents, let alone "flexible response," are concepts which lure the naive into believing that *some* wars can be made small enough, safe enough or cheap enough to be defined as "moral." That's how we got into Vietnam, and it is time to decently bury such thinking.

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To the Editors: In "The Myth of Air Power" Professors David S. McLellan and Walter Busse state, in support of the claim that air power is too costly in terms of destruction of our own and allied forces: "The U.S. has lost almost 1,000 aircraft reputedly worth ten times the damage inflicted on North Vietnam by the 1965-68 bombings." (It is assumed that the figure given above represents a projection from the 928 given in a Congressional Research Service report prepared in 1971 for

the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.)

While in Hanoi in mid-October with a delegation of lawyers, I witnessed the celebration by the Vietnamese of the 4,000th aircraft claimed to have been shot down over North Vietnam—an F-111.

According to a Draft Presidential Memorandum (DPM) dated May 19, 1967 (reproduced in part in *The Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, IV, 169-175), "The air campaign against heavily defended areas costs us one pilot in every 40 sorties" (p. 172). As B-52s, vulnerable to SAMs, are not sent against "heavily defended" target areas, the "one pilot" may be translated as one fighter bomber. The Air War Study, indeed, makes this adjustment.

At the time of the above DPM, sorties against North Vietnam were averaging 8,000 per month. In the Rolling Thunder campaign of 1965-1966, 203,000 sorties were flown against the North (Gravel Edition, IV, p. 136). According to the Statistical Studies appended to the Cornell Air War Study, the accuracy of which are not vouched, there were a further 109,000 sorties in 1967 and 82,000 in 1968:

Total Sorties Over North Vietnam	394,000
Total Planes shot down at the rate of one for every 40 sorties	9,850
or,	
Sorties flown from February, 1967, through October, 1968—8,000 per month for 20 months	160,000
Shot Down at 1:40	4,000
Losses per Pentagon Statement of February, 1967	1,800
Total Losses—1965-1968	5,800

Obviously, neither of the above projections can be regarded as accurate. For one thing, flyers wisely stay away from heavily defended target areas. (Except for Vietnamese claims, B-52s are not included in the above figures.) For another, the North Vietnamese air defenses did

not spring full-blown from the head of Brezhnev on the day we started regular bombing of the North back in February, 1965; they have gotten progressively more effective as the war has gone on. Indeed, if there was a 1:40 kill ratio in May, 1967, it is probably more like 1:20 today.

All in all, the Vietnamese claim of 4,000 aircraft shot down seems more tenable than the 1,000 figure reported by McLellan and Busse. Their related statement that our losses have been ten times the damage inflicted should probably be amended to indicate a damage ratio of forty times that inflicted. . . .

Malcolm Monroe
White Plains, N.Y.

David McLellan Responds:

Inasmuch as Mr. Monroe's letter involves a question of fact which, if true, would only serve to reinforce the import of our essay, we feel that it speaks for itself. Professor Thayer's letter involves such a gross distortion of what we had to say that it deserves a fuller response.

We never said that "air power *never* can have an effect at all on the outcome of war." We were quite explicit about that, and in fact we agreed that the tactical use of air power to blunt the North Vietnamese offensive was an appropriate use of air power. Our main thesis is that trying to win or settle a civil, guerrilla, nationalistic war by bombing is not likely to work and the costs are extremely high.

It is certainly true that the larger interests of Nixon, the Chinese and the Soviets deterred Peking and Moscow from reacting to our mining of Haiphong. It may even have led them to cut back on their support for Hanoi. But neither that nor the bombing has significantly altered Hanoi's objectives and hopes in the South. The bombing may have forced the pace and urgency of reaching an agreement *with the U.S.* (not with Thieu), but it certainly has not crippled the will and effectiveness of Hanoi in support of its cause in South Vietnam. It is precisely this so-called *first* application of an air

power *expert's* air war to Vietnam that is so dubious. (Haven't we heard all that before?) It was only after Nixon had altered the political parameter by reaching an understanding with Moscow and Peking that we could employ "all-out" air power; but this does not demonstrate that bombing has altered the political parameter of the essential struggle in the South.

Thayer's observations from his Japanese respondent are interesting but have not appeared in any of the half-dozen studies we've read about the Japanese surrender. As a B-29 navigator in the air war against Okinawa and Japan, I would be the last to deny its effectiveness. But Japan is an island, and much more credit must be given to the effectiveness of U.S. submarines and naval forces in interdicting Japanese supply lines in ending the war. We do not have the time to go into a discussion of the matter, except to note that Kesskemeti, in his study of the Japanese surrender, says that even the dropping of the A-bombs appears to have been decisive only when joined to the agreement by American leaders to the retention of the Emperor:

Whatever effect the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki may have had on the thinking of the Japanese political and military leadership, the choice between last-ditch resistance and capitulation did not depend on it. That choice was governed by the political payment on which the Japanese insisted and had to insist—the retention of the Emperor. Had this not been conceded, the chances are that the Japanese would have felt compelled to resist to the last. This concession, *rather than the dropping of the bombs*, saved the lives that would have been lost in the invasion of Japan.

What we had to say may sound sophomoric, but as we tried to indicate, our analysis was based on the researches of many distinguished scholars and military analysts. If Thayer would care to examine some of the concepts and conclusions upon

which our analysis was based, he might care to read *Studies in War and Peace* by the distinguished military historian Michael Howard (Professor in Military Studies at Kings College and now of All Souls College, Oxford); Chapters 6, 9 and 10 will do. Fred Iklé in *Every War Must End* (Columbia University Press) has some relevant things to say in chapters entitled "The Fog of Military Estimates" and "Peace Through Escalation?"

Paul Ramsey Responds:

To join in the discussion of a "doctrine" of war, one must come to terms with the meaning of its terms. Professor Frederick C. Thayer has not done this. I would not undertake at this late date to instruct him (no tuition charged), except for the fact that his letter may have some consequence for the "moral landscape" and ethical misinformation of others.

Whoever tried to limit warfare to "official" combatants? Licensed and properly dressed killers? Why may not *combatants* man the computer consoles without "wearing military uniforms"? Who thinks that missiles can attack missiles with *no damage* to civilians? If McNamara thought so, indeed he was a fool; but not foolish for thinking that to be better than deliberate, indiscriminate city-busting, nor so foolish as to suppose with Thayer that "no damage to civilians" was ever the test of discriminate targeting on legitimate objectives in anybody's theory of just war.

Of course the bloodletting in the trench warfare of World War I was disproportionate combatant-destruction, not justified by any of the issues at stake in that war. But to say so invokes another test of just conduct in war—one that presupposes rather than disproves the combatant/non-combatant distinction.

In any age that distinction (and the meaning of collateral civilian deaths) is a function of the design of war; it is objectively relative to military technology and how adversaries are postured for encounters of power. Still, "unless the very concept of non-combatant status is itself suppressed,"

the distinctions "combatant/non-combatant/collateral damage" are "not likely to prove intractable," whatever the manner in which states are organized for war (Robert W. Tucker in *Just War and Vatican II*, a CRIA publication, p. 25).

Thayer has not "suppressed" the concept; he seems never to have apprehended it correctly. His misconceptions would return us not to "those glorious Middle Ages" but to no age of warfare that ever was and to a doctrine of just war never in the mind of any theorist.

Meantime it is Thayer, not I, who is living in the 1960's, in the era when untempered massive counter-city deterrence was still justified as an ultimate resort. In that decade I did speak of *counterforce* (i.e., possibly nuclear) warfare and deterrence. That was not to make nuclear war "attractive," but to move toward its limitation. In the article now in question, following the analysts Bruce Russett and Arthur Lee Burns, the idea of *countercombatant* deterrence was under review. That was to draw still lower limits. Instead of engaging in debate with me and with them, Thayer's 1960 stereotype guiltily associates me with aspects of Brennan's analysis which I know not and did not bring up, as also is the case with Kahn's once-held notion of "winable" thermonuclear war. See Fred Charles Iklé's article "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" (*Foreign Affairs*, January, 1973) for another up-to-date analysis Thayer should cope with.

Thayer's hidden agenda is most worth noting. He wants to keep war and deterrent aims as hideous as possible (refusing, however, to say they are in any form "immoral") in order that, perchance, the nations of the world will turn to solving the "growth crisis" and stipulate that war as such is "anachronistic" and "irrelevant." His is the motto of the Air Force: "Peace is our profession."

Within limits that is true enough. I agree, for example, with Thayer against McLellan/Busse that Nixon's more decisive bombing and the mining of Haiphong harbor "paved the

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way to our disengagement from South Vietnam." One must understand that negotiation is war in another form, where both are limited attempts to alter an adversary's hopes and expectations.

Thayer, however, soars above the moves and countermoves of war and diplomacy. Total war (and deterrence) and total peace are his twin aspirations. This is no new thought; alternating between the two is the very essence of the American attitude toward war and peace. Thayer simply wants the two organized in one system of massive, unreformable counter-society deterrence. "One must have the stomach for selective terror," says the revolutionary warrior. "One must have the stomach for total terror," says Thayer the pacifist warrior.

If he is serious, he should espouse Brennan's ironic "thought-experiment." He ought to espouse the mutual adversarial mining of all the world's major cities. By that scheme—less costly, more workable than the present deterrent—a MAD policy could insure that no nation can be or would want to be the adversary of another. The lion will lie down with the lamb, and there will be peace on earth among all resolute men of ill will.

I do not believe that peace and justice can be erected over such a moral abyss.

The Colonels and Their Critics

To the Editors: First of all, let me say that I have long admired *Worldview*, CRIA, and all they stand for. . . .

All the greater was my shock to find in the May, 1972, issue a piece which can only be characterized as utterly amoral. I refer to the article by David Holden on Greece ("The Greek Colonels and Their Critics"). Everybody is entitled to his opinion.

But there is a difference between presenting one's frank opinion and distorting and slanting facts in order to make a case. This is what this author does. I must say that what he said sounded depressingly familiar. I had a feeling of *déjà vu* or, rather, *déjà entendu*. Yes, I said to myself, this is exactly what I read about the Nazis and their deeds in the thirties by those outside Germany intent on whitewashing the regime and playing down its misdeeds. The same argument that it was the preceding parliamentary regime that had discredited itself and thus was responsible for the rise of the dictatorship (as if that was a valid excuse for what the dictatorship does and stands for!). The same playing down of "atrocities," which the author partly does not admit ("allegations of torture," "circumstantial reports of deliberate torture") and partly calls "exaggerated, if not fabricated." The very term "atrocities" was invented by Goebbels ("*Greuelmärchen*"). It's all a deliberate "anti-torture campaign" by Communists and other leftists hostile to the colonels (such as, apparently, all the member-states of the Council of Europe that expelled the regime!). Yes, indeed, one political prisoner, after release, regained his health, which proves that things cannot be all that bad; yes, indeed, "that classical form of punishment known as the *falanja*—striking the soles of the feet with a bar"—is the only kind of maltreatment specifically mentioned (for what really happens, see the book review on p. 54 of the same issue of *Worldview*). The concluding argument is the old and hoary one of "national character"—the Greeks were always like that. The colonels emerge as sort of buffoons, who engage in sometimes ridiculous antics, such as prohibiting long hair or miniskirts—thus trying to create the impression that this was the worst they do (exactly as in the case of the Nazis, whose revival of certain Teutonic customs and antics was emphasized by their "critics").

It is beyond my understanding how such a piece of whitewash of, and apology for, a despicable regime

could be accepted by your publication. There are no moral considerations in it. There is no discussion, or even mention, of the ethical problems involved. There is not even "realism" (Christian or otherwise). One expects this kind of essay in a Joe McCarthyite or Wallaceite or Agnewite publication, but not in *Worldview*. The least you can do is to either publish a piece that deals with the Greek dictatorship under some viewpoints of "ethics and politics" or discuss it editorially, and by distancing yourselves from its tenor.

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David Holden Responds:

It just goes to show, doesn't it, how hard it is to write dispassionately about Greece, of all places, without rousing an excess of passion in one's readers. As that was one of the points I was making in my book, from which the article was adopted, I must thank Mr. Herz for so intemperately confirming at least a little of my diagnosis.

He is, of course, entitled to his views about my "utter amorality," but frankly it escapes me how anyone whose mind was not previously clouded by a surfeit of moral indignation could see what I wrote as a "whitewash"—still less some diabolic imitation of Dr. Goebbels. Since Mr. Herz has managed to see it that way, however, may I suggest that he now examine some of his own assumptions? E.g., that there is a specific set of moral/ethical absolutes which should govern our interpretation of politics the world over (Vietnam? The Arab-Israel conflict? Ulster? Whose absolutes?) and, by extension, that these may be used by *Worldview* to exclude material that does not correspond with them. Is this what he teaches at his Department of Political Science? I hope not—if only to save the name of science from abuse!