

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
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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