McNamara professed delight at the orderliness of the demonstration, another emissary from the world and the principal commencement speaker, Mr. Arthur J. Goldberg, said that although the nation was devoted to free expression and the right to dissent “it is completely destructive of democracy, as we learned during the terrible Nazi period, when peaceful and orderly meetings should be disrupted and broken up.” To many people Mr. Goldberg’s anxious concern would seem to be in excess of the cause. If an orderly, quiet demonstration is going to call forth such ready comparisons with Nazis, we would do better to give up historical analogies completely.

But all was not protest, nor all students hostile. At West Point several members of the graduating class voiced quite other sentiments. One dedicated cadet proclaimed that “every American has a definite commitment to go to Vietnam and do his part.” The image here conjured up of a vast influx of Americans floundering around in Vietnam, each looking for the part that is his to do, almost excuses that cadet. But a rather different emotion is aroused by the cadet who saw the war in Vietnam as “a chance to keep up with the changing methods of warfare.” On the basis, apparently, of never putting off till tomorrow etc., he said, “As an Army officer trained to fight, I feel we need this conflict in order to learn what we may face later.” Neither anxious nor personally hostile, this is the kind of student that makes a number of people nervous.

J. F.

in the magazines

In an article in New Blackfriars (April), a monthly review edited by English Dominicans, Brian Wicker asserts that “the problem of politics is essentially the problem of reconciling personal relationships to public or impersonal human relationships.”

At the start of life, he says, there are only “personal relationships,” and “these become the paradigms of our social life, the norms by which we evaluate and judge all social interaction. A social relationship which falls short of the personal is almost automatically felt to be, to that extent, a less than fully human relationship, despite the fact that entering into impersonal relationships with the circumambient atmosphere of humanity is as inescapable and natural a process as growing up itself.” Thus arises the problem: “How to reconcile the fact of the impersonal social atmosphere which is as necessary to life as food and drink, with the experience of something by comparison with which it seems almost unnecessary, or even hostile?” Polities, “which is about the artificial structure—the social institutions—which we need in order to breathe in the rarified atmosphere of impersonal social life,” falls heir to our dilemma.

Wicker examines some movements and institutions which reflect man’s tendency for “dealing with the political problem in purely personal terms”; where the attempt is made “to project the structure . . . of personal relationships into the outer atmosphere of politics—where it cannot function because it was not designed to do so.”

Among these he cites liberalism, which “simply accepts the diagnosis that I have indicated, admits the existence of the disease so to speak, and then avoids its implications by systematically choosing, at all the crucial points, to follow the way of personal relationships and to ignore, or even defy, the impersonal atmosphere of wider humanity. Having allowed that there has to be a choice between the two, the consistent liberal always prefers the familiar world of personal relationship to that of politics.”

The author charges that “the tradition of Christian [and particularly Catholic] thinking about social problems has been predominantly liberal in its stress on the primacy of personal relations. . . . The universal Church itself has been thought of as an extended family. And the parish—the one social experience offered by the Church to the majority of its members—has succeeded only when it could be organized and known as a family-based society with its own spiritual ‘father’—the parish priest—at its head.”

While Wicker recognizes a “certain validity” in this ideal, he nonetheless finds it “characteristic of an immature, or childish perspective. It deals with the political problem by mostly ignoring it.” On the other hand, “the very Catholicity of Christianity, the universality of its message, implies an embracing of all human relationships,” he notes. “Thus, precisely in so far as the Church succeeds in converting the world, the family-analogy must break down. . . . The vast majority of my fellow believers must always remain, to me, part of the anonymous atmosphere of unexplored humanity which surrounds me but which I cannot know. To pretend that the Church is an extended family is therefore hypocritical and dangerous. For not only is it a
false analogy: it blocks the development of a more adequate one." Indeed, he states, "this built-in hypocrisy is possibly the most damaging feature of contemporary Catholicism."

- Two affirmative responses to the question, Can national self-defense be morally justified in a nuclear armed world?, are provided in the March-April issue of The Intercollegiate Review, journal of the Inter-collegiate Society of Individualists.

Dr. William Kintner, deputy director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, concludes his essay on "The Relation Between Power and Values in the Nuclear Age," with a summary of his main points: . . . Modern technology is forcing the human race to a new type of community and is creating mutuality of interest between nations. The earth is the home of all of us; no longer is it possible to inflict great destruction upon peoples at a distance without inviting the same destruction upon ourselves. No longer can the constraints of peace be restored after a war begins. Nuclear pacifism offers no escape from our dilemma. The balance must be struck between the defense of values and the defense of life. Pure physical survival cannot be raised to the Number One value of humanity, for we must be concerned not only for life itself, but also for the quality of life. Without jeopardizing all that is noble in man, indiscriminate destruction of mankind can be equally debasing to man's humanity. For this reason we advocate the discriminating use of force to defend values that would otherwise be destroyed. The design of strategic forces which can be employed with discrimination and restraint confronts the leaders of free societies with a moral obligation from which they cannot escape. Whether or not we come safely through the atomic minefield may well depend upon our willingness to recognize that power and values cannot be divorced from each other but must be fused into a single 'breastplate of justice' by statesmen of right moral intention, of prudence, of courage, and of deep sympathy for man."

Dr. Gerhart Niemeyer of the University of Notre Dame also calls for "the elaboration of weaponry and strategy which, to speak in Paul Ramsey's terms, makes 'just war possible,'" but he is especially concerned here with the political and moral consequences to a nation which refuses to face "war" as "a possibility on which one must count."

He writes that "the ideological rejection of self-defense by those whose minds are totally obsessed with the fear of nuclear war amounts to a version of nihilism. To say, 'In the atomic age, no society is worth defending' is tantamount to saying that sheer physical existence is preferable to the love of the good that constitutes a people. 'We lose our values which are worth defending and then lose our arms and language, and with the loss of civilizational identity become incapable of governing ourselves' said Vico, in the eighteenth century, and in the twentieth Raymond Aron adds this comment: 'The costs of servitude for a people and a culture may be higher than the costs of a war, even an atomic war.' The renunciation of a society's self-defense becomes one prong in a multi-pronged nihilistic subversion, others being the tearing down of sexual inhibitions, the undoing of a common religious orientation, the rejection of anything that speaks of authority, of up and down, more important and less important, sacred and profane."

Earlier in his analysis, Dr. Niemeyer noted that "when the will to self-defense dies, the 'common love' that holds a people together dies along with it. Citizens become fear-struck demi-animals, each scrambling for whatever small tangible possession has the strongest hold on him at the moment. The impression of the disintegration of France in the spring of 1940 must have been General de Gaulle's overriding experience. He perceived then that without the readiness to self-defense there can be no people and no political order and that without a vigorous participation in a common political existence men fall into total disarray. Whatever mistakes de Gaulle may have made subsequently, this insight rather than any cheap nostalgia for past glories of totalitarian design has been his basic motive."

- In the May issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Betty Goetz Lall gives some numerical evidence of the impracticality of continuing to follow a policy which is dedicated to the containment of communism. The globe of today, she says, "is made up of something like 33 democratic states, 14 Communist states, and about 74 states with diverse forms of non-Communist authoritarian regimes, of which about 14 lean toward democratic and about five lean toward Communist concepts." It is "these 74 dictatorships and other regimes" which "could become battlegrounds in the future, as the United States, the Soviet Union, and China vie for their support," Mrs. Lall contends. "Already most of them are being subjected to outside pressures, economic and military aid programs, and friendly courtships in an effort to influence them. What is troublesome is that in many of these states, because they are authoritarian and poor, there will be violent internal uprisings and difficulties. If these three major powers intervene often, especially with armed personnel or equipment, to turn these local situations to their own advantage, the resulting bloodshed, terror, and destruction are bound to increase considerably."