

The situation in respect to Vietnam and United States foreign policy in general is considerably more complicated than the internal race issue. Nevertheless, it is almost as difficult for me to understand how people like the signers of the *Open Letter* can talk about American foreign policy in Vietnam or elsewhere as the result of specific international conditions, "errors of political judgment," a mixture of "accomplishments in which we may take pride no less than deficiencies against which we must struggle," and can contend that there is not a *pattern*, or even *the* pattern, in our foreign relations which is bad, and which is misrepresented if we speak merely of "counterbalancing errors" in a course about which, on the whole, it seems to be implied, we need not feel too badly.

If the signers of the *Open Letter* have in mind that Johnson has "shown restraint" by not actually following the advice of the hawks in the Pentagon or the psychopathic anti-Communists in the country at large to drop atomic bombs on China now, then my amazement and depression are further intensified. It seems to me like saying that a regime which pursues a policy of brinkmanship somehow amasses political and moral credit because it does not quite shove the nation over the precipice. I do not mean that I am unaware of or insensitive to the "tragic ambiguities" of the present situation and the "dilemma" in which Johnson as a person finds himself. But he was also in a "dilemma" some years ago when he was still voting for segregation.

In the United States the opposition to war and the efforts to achieve peace have in the main proceeded from a basis similar to that of the signers of the *Open Letter*, i.e., within the framework of American institutions, by means of conventional methods of influencing legislators and public opinion; eschewing what are regarded as radical measures; perhaps

opposing war up to the day the government declared war and then going along, even in very messy situations like the one in Vietnam today, doing nothing further than "registering public dissent," balancing deficiencies against accomplishments, tending to regard expressions of disgust and repulsion with the basic trend as indicating unhealthy "alienation," as "systematic anti-Americanism indulged in for its own sake," and so on and on. The plain fact is that these conventional means have not availed, and, while it is undoubtedly the case that there are some persons who are in the anti-war movement here because they want to help the Viet Cong win, it is also true that multitudes of Americans are, objectively speaking, supporting the American government in measures which it is taking to win a war against the Viet Cong. Certainly these people are not, to use a phrase of Thoreau's, "clogging with their whole weight." We are living—let us reflect—at a time when the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on the basis of an exhaustive investigation by that Committee (composed of people none of whom is "alienated" from American society or infected with "systematic anti-Americanism, indulged in almost for its own sake"), can issue a formal statement constituting a sweeping indictment of the whole United States policy in the Dominican Republic. Other Senators of hardly less standing can make comparable indictments of United States policy in Vietnam. *And nothing happens!* Senator Fulbright, as recently as September 15, said: "In the Dominican Republic, hope must be tempered by the fact that the military continues to wield great power—power which it would not now have if the United States had not intervened to save it from defeat."

When concerned people call for negotiations in the traditional manner and do not somehow clog with their whole weight, they are