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28 September 1966

MEMORANDUM

North Vietnam's Four Points

1. Premier Pham Van Dong enunciated the four points in April 1965. They were first broadcast by Hanoi radio on 12 April and were clearly Hanoi's response to President Johnson's 7 April 1965 speech at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. These four points have consistently been referred to by the North Vietnamese as the embodiment of the basic provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam. They have been repeatedly offered as Hanoi's official position on what it sees as the basis for a political settlement in Vietnam.

2. There has been no change in the wording of the four points since they were first broadcast. [redacted]

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from time to time that Hanoi has changed its attitude toward one or the other of the four points has thus far

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been borne out. The four points have become so much a part of Hanoi's propaganda that no public change in them is likely.

3. Aside from their propaganda value it is certain that they represent the maximum bargaining position Hanoi would take at any negotiation conference. There are good reasons, however, for believing that some degree of flexibility has been built in. An examination of the North Vietnamese treatment of the four points, element by element, provides a good indication of just where the give is.

Point one: "Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people--peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva Agreements, the US Government must withdraw from South Vietnam US troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all US military bases there, and cancel its military alliance with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva Agreements, the US Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam and completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV."

4. This point was described in the 23 July 1966 issue of North Vietnam's party daily as the 'starting point

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and the basis" of the four points and as the "principle of principles" for a settlement of the Vietnamese problem. It is a basic restatement of some of the points included in the 1954 Geneva Agreements and undoubtedly represents Hanoi's genuinely desired goal in any political settlement.

5. On numerous occasions since April 1965, North Vietnamese leaders and authoritative spokesmen have made it clear that Hanoi does not regard the various elements of this point as proper matters for discussion. They have stated flatly that the withdrawal of US troops from South Vietnam is the "key" to a settlement of the Vietnam problem. Major General Nguyen Van Vinh, the head of both the party and government reunification commissions in Hanoi, stated in September 1965 that in order to have a political solution, "first of all," the US must "approve" the withdrawal of its troops. On this point there has been a great deal of confusion over the past year and a half, that is, whether the withdrawal of US troops was to be a precondition to talks or was to be discussed at the negotiation table when a final solution was being arranged.

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North Vietnamese spokesmen in 1965 helped confuse the issue by being deliberately vague when asked to comment. When asked point blank by the French representative in Hanoi whether withdrawal was a precondition for talks or something to be negotiated, Pham Van Dong replied with a smile, "both."

6. Since that time, however, Dong and other North Vietnamese spokesmen have made it clear that they do not intend the withdrawal of US forces to be a precondition for talks. What they do insist on as a precondition is "tangible proof" that the US will agree to withdraw its troops as part of a settlement. Just how this proof is to be given is not entirely clear. North Vietnamese spokesmen have hinted that it could take the form of a public pledge by the US. In September 1966, however, the French Foreign Ministry reported that both North Vietnamese and Liberation Front diplomats in Phnom Penh stated this would not be sufficient. They claimed, according to the French, that they need "firm material guarantees" of US withdrawal, not "mere promises."

7. North Vietnam has also made it clear that it will not agree to withdraw Communist forces from South

Vietnam in exchange for the withdrawal of US troops. Nguyen Van Vinh stated in his September 1965 article that Communist troops fighting in South Vietnam "will refuse to be regrouped to North Vietnam a second time," a reference to the regroupment north of most of the Viet Minh forces in South Vietnam after the signing of the 1954 Agreements.

8. Although Hanoi will undoubtedly refuse to sign any agreement admitting that it has troops in South Vietnam, it would probably stage a clandestine withdrawal of at least North Vietnamese regulars as US forces were being taken out of the country. Communist documents captured on the battlefield in South Vietnam reveal that the Communists believe that if US forces are withdrawn, the Viet Cong would have nothing to fear from the South Vietnamese army, which the Communists regard as largely ineffectual.

9. The North Vietnamese have also indicated that they are flexible on the matter of the timing of a US troop pullout. On several occasions North Vietnamese spokesmen have stated that if the US will agree to withdraw its troops the Communists will be willing to make arrangements which will enable the US not "to lose face."

There have been hints that Hanoi is interested in exploring unofficially with third parties what sort of timetable might be possible if a staged withdrawal of US troops were arranged.

Finally, although there is some flexibility built into the first point, Hanoi has also used it as the pretext for its refusal to move toward negotiations until the US completely and unconditionally ceases its air strikes against North Vietnam.

Point two: Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is still temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected. The two zones must refrain from entering into any military alliance with foreign countries and there must be no foreign military bases, troops, or military personnel in their respective territory.

10. This point was fashioned primarily for its propaganda value. Hanoi, however, undoubtedly would like to see an agreement which would prohibit the South Vietnamese government from having any foreign military personnel in the country or from signing any sort of military assistance agreement with the US. Nevertheless, if Hanoi really wanted to sign an agreement, this point probably

would not become a stumbling block. Hanoi agreed in the 1962 Laos settlement to allow certain carefully limited French military training personnel to be present in Laos. It now might agree to some French or neutral nation military aid for the South Vietnamese government but would certainly refuse to accept even a limited US military presence on a permanent basis.

Point three: The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the NFLSV without any foreign interference.

11. Point three is designed to give legitimacy to the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and to ensure its inclusion in any negotiation conference. Expanding on point three, Hanoi has insisted that the Liberation Front is the "sole," genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people and that the US must deal directly with the Front if it wants to negotiate. Hanoi further asserts that the 10-point program of the Front enunciated in January 1961 is the embodiment of the "basic demands" of the South Vietnamese people for national independence, democracy, peace, neutrality, and the reunification of the country and as such should be the only program discussed at a final conference.

12. Despite the extensive campaign by the Communists to create the illusion that the Front is the legitimate voice of the South Vietnamese people, there are good indications that Hanoi will not insist on its demand that the Front be the only representative from South Vietnam at any multilateral negotiating conference on Vietnam. Polish Foreign Ministry official Michalowski, who has been in direct touch with Hanoi on the subject of negotiations, told the US Ambassador to Warsaw in August 1966 that it was his judgement that if Hanoi really believed the US was interested in a peace conference, it would not block the participation of other South Vietnamese "groups."

13.

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It is a good bet that Hanoi will not insist on exclusive Front representation at a multilateral negotiating conference. The Polish Foreign Ministry has also assured the

US Ambassador that Hanoi will not insist that only the Front program could be included in final discussions for a settlement.

Point four: The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

14. North Vietnamese spokesmen have made it clear that they consider this point as a long-term prospect. They have even attempted to portray their willingness to accept a delayed reunification as a concession to the US. Major General Nguyen Van Vinh, for example, in January 1966 stated that had the US allowed the elections called for in the 1954 Geneva Agreements to take place, the country would now be reunited. He claimed that Hanoi's current willingness to postpone reunification was a clear concession to the US.

Four Points As Preconditions

15. Pham Van Dong concluded the four-point statement with the assertion that "if this basis (the four points) is recognized, favorable conditions will be created for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, and it will be possible to consider the reconvening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva conference on Vietnam." The North Vietnamese have never

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been clear as to just what the word "recognize" was intended to mean. At one time some North Vietnamese hinted that a statement by the US that it accepted the four points as a basis for a settlement would suffice.

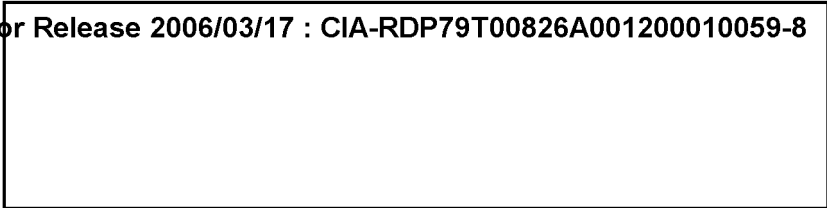
16. More recent remarks, such as those quoted

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indicate that Hanoi's position on this point is tougher than often had been indicated. It now seems likely that the "tangible proofs" or "actual deeds" demanded by the North Vietnamese as an earnest of US intentions in order to convene a final, multilateral conference must include a total and permanent cessation of air strikes against North Vietnam, a cessation of the buildup of US forces in South Vietnam, and probably at least a token withdrawal of some forces from that country.

The Viet Cong Peace Terms

17. The so-called "peace terms" of the Communist-controlled Front group in South Vietnam were set forth on 23 March 1965 interspersed within a rambling five-point statement. Essentially, the Front's five points were as follows:

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- a. A condemnation of US policy in Vietnam along with a catalogue of US war "crimes" there since 1954.
 - b. An expression of the determination of the Vietnamese "people" to "kick out" the US "imperialists" from Vietnam and to "liberate" South Vietnam. According to the statement, the Vietnamese will never stop fighting until their ultimate objectives of "independence, democracy, peace, and neutrality" have been obtained. The "only way out" for the US is to "withdraw" from South Vietnam. The statement declared that "at present, all negotiations are useless" on the war as long as "the US imperialists do not withdraw all troops, weapons, and means of war from Vietnam, and as long as the Liberation Front does not have the decisive voice." By this the Front apparently meant that it should have a dominant voice in any political settlement of the conflict.
 - c. A pledge of determination to "advance toward" the reunification of Vietnam.
 - d. A declaration that the Front has the "full right" to receive international assistance. While relying primarily on its own force, the Front "will buy war materiel from any country," and will call "if necessary" for foreign volunteers.

- e. A call on all South Vietnamese people to join in the fight to "liberate" the South.

18. At its publication, the Front statement was primarily touted by the Viet Cong as a manifesto of their intent in the war. It was not until after Phan Van Dong's speech setting forth the DRV's four-point peace proposal that both Hanoi and the Viet Cong began to point to the Front statement as containing the Viet Cong peace terms. Subsequent Front statements have largely echoed the 22 March manifesto, differing only in that several of them hardened the Front's position on the withdrawal of US forces. A statement of 14 June 1965, for example, claimed that all negotiations are useless" if the US imperialists "have not yet withdrawn" from South Vietnam. A Front central committee statement of 25 November 1965, however, did not attach any condition of timing to a withdrawal as a preliminary to a settlement.

19. Although there is no explicit evidence to support the contention, we believe the apparent hard Front position on US withdrawal is maintained

primarily for tactical reasons by the Viet Cong.
Hanoi's own final position on this point would
probably be the deciding word if the Vietnamese
Communists decided to move toward a political
settlement.