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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

**THE FIVE-POINT PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT,
THE FOUR-POINT PROPOSAL OF PHAM VAN DONG AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENEVA ACCORDS**

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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THE FIVE-POINT PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT,
THE FOUR-POINT PROPOSAL OF PHAM VAN DONG AND
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENEVA ACCORDS

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese Communists -- including spokesmen for both the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the DRV -- generally tend to shy away from any positive discussion of "negotiations" and prefer instead to talk about their terms or conditions for "settlement" of the war in Vietnam which, of course, they blame entirely on "US aggression". Over the past nine months, Communist remarks about such a settlement have generally been based on or at least made reference to the so-called Five-Point "Program" of the NLF, the Four-Point proposal of Pham Van Dong and, particularly, to the "Geneva Accords". Both Hanoi and the NLF claim that, in essence, they are asking for nothing but a strict observance of the agreements made at Geneva in 1954, and, further, that the Front's program and Dong's four points are really nothing but a condensation or "explanation" of the essential elements of these Accords. (On 4 January 1966, for example, the DRV Foreign Ministry stated that Dong's four-point proposal is "a concentrated expression of the essential military and political provisions of these agreements".)

Hanoi and NLF comments on Communist conditions for a Vietnam settlement have generally been confusing, full of calculated and frequently disingenuous ambiguity, involved a considerable measure of distorted historical half-truths, and sometimes, contained outright perversions of historical fact. To sort out the Communists' real aims and discern the objectives their proposals are intended to achieve, it is necessary to examine not only the actual texts of these proposals but also to take a careful look at what the Geneva Accords really were, what they actually said, and what the real relationship is between their provisions and the programs enunciated by the Front and Hanoi.

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II. THE 1954 GENEVA ACCORDS

The term "Geneva Accords" is a loose description for a series of four interrelated documents produced by a conference on Indochina convened in Geneva on 8 May 1954 (the day after the fall of Dien Bien Phu) and attended by representatives of the USSR, the United Kingdom, the Chinese Peoples Republic, the United States, the DRV, and the three "Associated States" of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. These documents include three "Agreement(s) on the Cessation of Hostilities", dated 20 July 1954 (one each for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) and a "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference" dated 21 July 1954. An appreciation of the relevance of these documents to the present situation in Vietnam requires a clear understanding of the precise ends they were written to serve, the climate in which they were drafted, and the position taken on their substance by the United States and the legal predecessor of the present GVN at the time they were issued.

Each of the three cease fire agreements bears two signatures. In all three cases Ta Quang Buu (then DRV Vice Minister for National Defense) signed on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief of the Peoples Army of Vietnam. The agreement on Cambodia was countersigned by General Nhiek Tiouloung on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief of the Khmer National Armed Forces. The cease fire agreements for Vietnam and for Laos were both countersigned by a French general (Brigadier General Delteii) on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces in Indo-China. The representative of the legal predecessor of the present GVN (Tran Van Do, now the GVN's Foreign Minister) did not sign the cease fire agreement and, on 17 July 1954, filed a formal protest with the French Delegation on the grounds that his government was not being kept fully abreast of all the developments in the negotiations and, further, took specific exception to several provisions subsequently embodied in the final document. On 22 July 1954 Ngo Dinh Diem, then Prime Minister of the Associated State of Vietnam, formally denounced the cease fire agreement as an "iniquity" against which his government had raised "a most solemn protest".

-2-

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The United States did not sign any of the Four 1954 Geneva documents. On 21 July President Eisenhower issued a statement which said, in part, that the United States had not been a belligerent in the war and

"Accordingly, the United States has not itself been party to or bound by the decisions taken by the conference, but it is our hope that it will lead to the establishment of peace consistent with the rights and needs of the countries concerned. The agreement contains features which we do not like, but a great deal depends on how they work in practice ... as loyal members of the United Nations ... the United States will not use force to disturb the settlement. We also say that any renewal of Communist aggression would be viewed by us as a matter of grave concern".

On the same day (21 July) the US Delegate to the Concluding Plenary Session of the Geneva Conference (Under Secretary Smith) reiterated in a formal statement that the US was not "prepared to join in a declaration by the conference such as is submitted". They went on to make a unilateral declaration of US position which, echoing President Eisenhower, contained the stipulation that the US would "view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security."

The two Geneva documents most directly relevant to the present situation in Vietnam are the "agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam" and the 1954 Conference's "Final Declaration". Both are sloppily drafted and decidedly ambiguous in certain key sections. Both were produced under great pressure, in great haste, and were primarily designed to make possible an early cessation of hostilities which would permit France to disengage militarily from Indo-China. The terms each contained were dictated as much by domestic French political considerations as by the realities and requirements of the situation in Vietnam. The several participants in the Geneva conference each had their own objectives and motives, but all were disposed to believe

-3-

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that an early acquisition of DRV control over all of Vietnam was virtually inevitable. The Accords were an interim settlement of an immediate situation. Longer-term problems were ignored or discounted. In particular, the two documents in question were far from explicit on three key issues: the future political shape of Vietnam, the mechanics of reunification, and the conceptual definition of what the term "Vietnam" was supposed to mean.

On Vietnam's political shape and future, the cease fire agreement simply states (in Article 14) that:

"Pending the elections which will bring about the unification of Viet-Nam, the conduct of civil administrations in each regrouping zone shall be in the hands of the party whose forces are to be regrouped and by virtue of present agreement".

No time frame for these elections is stipulated here, but the "Final Declaration developed this point in more explicit detail:

"In order to insure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that here the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities".

These remarks on elections, coupled with the statement in the Final Declaration that "the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary", make it clear that the participants in the conference were looking to early reunification, almost certainly under Hanoi's domination, and never really addressed themselves to the problems of possible political future of the Associated State of Viet-Nam. At that time, this "State of Vietnam" was very much under French political

-4-

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control and throughout the course of the 1946-54 war the French had adamantly refused to give genuine political authority to any non-communist Vietnamese government. Technically, the Associated State's writ extended over all of Vietnam, though in fact its authority was obviously reduced to that portion of the country which lay below the 17th Parallel. The State of Viet-Nam appears on the roster of participants, but its name does not appear in any of the Four key documents. Instead, the cease fire agreement and the Final Declaration refer simply to the "regrouping zones of the two parties" -- the parties being the French Union and the DRV. At that time, of course, few if any participants in the conference foresaw Diem's political survival, South Vietnamese acquisition of genuine political independence from France, or creation of the beginnings of a non-communist Vietnamese nation.

On this key issue, the representatives of the US and the nascent GVN were diplomatically and politically very much out of step with the rest of the conference participants. President Eisenhower's previously cited 21 July statement, for example, notes that "we already have a Chief of Mission at Saigon, the capital of Viet-Nam and this Embassy will, of course, be maintained." Behind that statement lies an attitude and the germ of a policy which the US has pursued consistently since 1954 in supporting the development of non-Communist Vietnamese independence; but it is an attitude which was repugnant to France at the time of Geneva and, of course, was anathema to the DRV. It is essentially on this matter of the proper role and the legitimate rights of what became the present GVN that current interpretations of the true import or intent of the 1954 Accords differ so radically.

-5-

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III. THE FIVE-POINT "PROGRAM" OF THE NLF

We will not attempt to review here the growth of the GVN, the outbreak and rise of Hanoi directed-insurgency in South Vietnam, the creation of the National Liberation Front and the escalation of the war which led to the situation which existed in the early spring of 1965. On 22 March 1965 the chairman of the NLF, Nguyen Huu Tho, allegedly held a press conference in "a liberated area" during the course of which he made a five-point statement broadcast by the NLF radio on 23 March and subsequently replayed widely by Hanoi. This statement--the so-called "NLF Five-Point Program"--is actually not a program at all but an analysis of the then current situation and an exhortation to the South Vietnamese people and their potential supporters around the world.

Tho began with a review of what he described as ten years of steadily increasing involvement in South Vietnam by the "US imperialists" who (by 1965) had completely revealed their "war mongers' face" and status as the "deadly enemy" of the Vietnamese people. He then went on to make his five points.

(a) The first develops the theme that the US has disregarded the Geneva Agreements, intensified the war in the south and is the enemy of the Vietnamese and all Indochinese people. This sounds a theme which Communist propagandists have played ever since with increasing intensity: that the US sabotaged the 1954 Geneva Accords and is solely responsible for the current war.

(b) Tho's second point stresses that the Vietnamese people are determined to drive away the "US imperialists" and although eager for peace, prefer death to bondage, and with the "support of the people of the world" will certainly defeat the enemy (i.e., the US). It also includes the remark that "at present" all negotiations would be useless "as US troops and material have not been withdrawn from South Vietnam"--strongly suggesting, but without actually saying so, that total US withdrawal is a precondition for negotiations. The most politically significant element of this second point, however,

- 6 -

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lies in Tho's comment that the recently commenced air strikes against North Vietnam were "being made in the hope of forcing the NLF to sell out its fatherland". Here we have a slippery and never explicitly delineated theme that runs throughout all Vietnamese Communist pronouncements about the future political shape of Vietnam: that the country is one nation whose capital is now Hanoi.

(c) The third point takes up this theme, stressing "that Vietnam is one, that the South Vietnamese are delighted with the achievements of the North Vietnamese in struggling against the internal 'aggressors'". The political implications of this remark are obvious, but Tho carefully avoids spelling out the present or projected future political relationship between the NLF and the DRV; or the Front's relative degree of political subordination to Hanoi.

(d) The "fourth point" is actually three rather convoluted paragraphs stressing the NLF's primary reliance on "its own force and ability" but simultaneously calling for moral and material assistance from "the socialist countries and nationalist countries, from all world organizations and all peace-loving peoples throughout the world".

(e) The final point, while mentioning the "brilliant victories of the South Vietnamese people, is in essence an exhortation to "rural compatriots, urban compatriots and compatriots throughout the country to continue to struggle against "US aggressors".

As is obvious to anyone who reads the text of Tho's statement, this is hardly a program and it bears little logical relationship to any of the provisions of the 1954 Geneva Accords. NLF and DRV propagandists have confidentially and accurately assumed, however, that few people would take the trouble to analyze the text of this statement (or, for that matter, the Geneva Accords) and hence have billed it as the definitive NLF position on a future settlement. The object of this by no means unsuccessful propaganda campaign has been to purvey widely the notion that the NLF has a simple, reasonable five-point program for settlement closely attuned to "the spirit of Geneva".

-7-

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IV. PHAM VAN DONG'S SPEECH

On 8 April 1965 DRV Premier Pham Van Dong made a very long speech (over 30 close, small type, single spaced pages), presented as a "report of the DRV Government" to the second session of the DRV National Assembly. Dong's celebrated "four points" were appended at the end of the speech, but the speech sets the stage for them and is itself worthy of careful scrutiny. Rambling, contradictory, didactic and intransigent, this oration is not so much a "report" as an analysis of the then current political situation as seen through North Vietnamese eyes, a defense of the "correctness" of DRV policy, a recitation of achievement, an exhortation to better performance on the part of the North Vietnamese people, and an appeal to, particularly, the Socialist (i.e. Communist) countries for assistance in the North Vietnam's struggle. The text makes crystal clear the DRV's conviction of the doctrinal rightness of its cause, the historical inevitability of victory on Hanoi's terms and the firm Vietnamese Communist belief that this victory, (as was the case in their victory over the French), will be materially assisted by rising political pressures on and, above all, within the United States--pressures which will make it impossible for the US to persevere in South Vietnam.

For our analytic purposes, the most significant element of the speech is the way it describes North Vietnam's relation to the South and the war being fought there. The underlying theme is sounded in Pham Van Dong's opening sentence "the US imperialists are intensifying the aggressive war in the southern part of our country." Throughout his speech there are frequent references to "the southern part of our country," "the northern part of our country," or to "our fatherland," a term obviously intended to denote the entire territory of both North and South Vietnam. The import of these expressions is unmistakable but Pham Van Dong quite carefully avoids the spelling out their detailed political implications.

The NLF's 22 March statement (Nguyen Huu Tho's five-point program analyzed above) is mentioned several times, always in laudatory terms. Dong's speech is obviously designed, at least in part, to pick up

-8-

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and amplify the themes there sounded. The NLF is referred to as "the mobilizer and organizer of the patriotic forces in South Vietnam." Dong claims that it has "ever higher international prestige and position, and is being more and more recognized by foreign countries and world public opinion as the sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people." However, he carefully avoids claiming that the NLF is or should be recognized (in the technical, legal sense of the term) as an independent government, and he is equally careful to avoid any clear explanation of Hanoi's view of the political relationship between the DRV and the NLF.

It is quite obvious how Dong envisages the future course of Vietnamese history, though (again) he is murky on explicit details. "The DRV," he proclaims, "a member of the Socialist camp, is steadily advancing to Socialism. This is the common achievement of the Vietnamese revolution, the fruit of the common endeavor of the people of the whole country. It is a strong basis for the patriotic struggle in the south and the peaceful reunification of the country."

This same theme is implied throughout this speech and specifically sounded again when Dong later says "the northern part of our country, the DRV, will bring into play its great impact as the base for the liberation of South Vietnam and the peaceful reunification of the fatherland."

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V. THE FOUR POINTS

The last few pages of Dong's 8 April 1965 speech have the air of being tacked on and are explicitly designed to counter President Johnson's 7 April speech at Johns Hopkins. It is in this concluding portion that Dong spells out what have come to be known as the DRV's "four points", which are prefaced with the comment that "the unswerving policy of the DRV government is to respect strictly the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam and to implement correctly the basic provisions as embodied in the following points:"

(1) Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people--peace, independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the U.S. Government must withdraw from South Vietnam U.S. troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all U.S. 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 U.S. Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam and completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the DRV.

The first sentence of this point states an aspiration with which no one can take issue, though obviously the Communists on the one hand and the US and GVN on the other would attach fundamentally different definitions to the key words involved. The second sentence harks back to Chapter III ("Ban on Introduction of Fresh Troops, Military Personnel, Arms and Munitions, Military Bases") of the 20 July 1954 "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities on Viet-Nam." The third sentence makes a standard DRV propaganda charge. The last sentence is the most interesting. It involves an obvious reference to Article 19 of the same Chapter III ("the two parties shall ensure that the zones assigned to them . . .

-10-

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are not used for the resumption of hostilities or to further an aggressive policy") with the implied inference that the US has taken over the colonialist role of the French Union Forces. It also involves a central element of the whole DRV thesis on the Geneva Accords: that Article 19 prohibits the kind of military support the US is giving the GVN, but not the kind of support the DRV is giving the NLF and the Viet Cong. The rationale for this contention is developed by oblique implication in Dong's succeeding three points.

(2) 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.

Again, Dong is harking back to the concept embodied in the cease-fire Agreement and spelled out in the 1954 Conference's "Final Declaration" that the present division of South Vietnam is only a temporary military expedient, not a permanent political settlement. The second sentence goes directly back to Articles 18 and 19 of the Vietnam cease-fire Agreements Ch. III, but, again, implicitly claims that the provisions of these Articles apply only to what the US is doing, not to what the DRV is doing.

(3) 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.

As Dong and the DRV propagandists are aware, no reasonable man can take issue with the contention that the internal affairs of South Vietnam ought

-11-

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to be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves. To say that they must be so settled "in accordance with the program of the NLF," however, is to say that the South Vietnamese people have no right to a non-Communist, non-Hanoi-controlled government. The really key word in this third point, however, is the word "foreign" in the concluding phrase. Dong is playing on the Geneva Accords' ambiguities and the 1954 Conference's refusal to face the question of who is and who is not a "foreigner" where South Vietnam is concerned. By Vietnamese Communist definition, "Vietnam is one." Involvement by compatriots in the "northern part of the country" in the affairs of their fellow compatriots in the "southern part of the country"--also by definition--can not be classed as "foreign interference." On this semantic sleight of hand, rests the core of Hanoi's whole position on the Geneva Accords and its reason for claiming that while these Accords prohibit US support for southern independence, they do not prohibit DRV support and direction of southern insurgency.

- (4) The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

This is essentially a restatement of point three with a slightly different twist. Again, the key issue involves what is and what is not "foreign interference."

Dong declared that it was the view of the DRV that the four points stand he had expounded was "the basis for the soundest political settlement of the Vietnam problem. If this basis is recognized, favorable conditions will be created with the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam people, and it will be possible to consider the reconvening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam." He also made it quite explicit, however, that in the opinion of the DRV, "any approach contrary to the aforementioned stand is inappropriate; any approach

-12-

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tending to secure UN intervention in the Vietnam situation is also inappropriate. Such approaches are basically at variance with the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam."

-13-

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VI. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE FOUR POINTS AND THE GENEVA ACCORDS

Pham Van Dong's four point proposal purports to be based on the Geneva Accords and the phraseology of these points is obviously intended to echo language appearing in some of the Geneva agreements' key articles. The paragraphs in Dong's speech immediately preceding his statement of the four points -- paragraphs which take up and criticize President Johnson's Johns Hopkins address of 7 April 1965 -- underline this alleged connection between the DRV's present stand and the conclusions of the 1954 conference and develop the complementary argument that the US is the sole violator of the agreements reached at Geneva. ("The US imperialists have never respected the 1954 Geneva agreements on Cambodia and the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos.") These paragraphs introducing the four points also claim that the US has been forced to refer to the 1954 Accords, but does so only with the aim of "distorting" their basic principles, "in order to perpetuate our country's division, and to consider the north and the south as two entirely different nations."

The Geneva theme has been stressed repeatedly by DRV spokesmen and propagandists since publication of Pham Van Dong's speech. The DRV's obvious intent to play on the emotional connotations which mention of these agreements arouse throughout the world (and in the United States itself,) and to portray the DRV's present conditions for a political settlement as but the logical extension of the interim arrangements devised to stop the fighting in 1954. Hanoi also wishes to direct world attention from its own violations of the 1954 agreements by making the US the villain of the piece and claiming that it is the US alone who has sabotaged them. The DRV's case is based on selective references to certain provisions of a complicated series of agreements, which Hanoi's propagandists can confidently assume that most of their target audiences have never studied in detail. Hanoi apparently hopes that by constant, repetition it can have its interpretation of the 1954 Accords generally accepted, more or less uncritically, as constituting the agreed parameters for any current discussion of

-14-

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the present situation in Vietnam. The DRV's settlement conditions -- and even more so the so-called Five-Point Program of the NLF -- really have very little to do with the details of the '54 Agreements when studied carefully as a total package. Hanoi's references to the 1962 Laos settlement involve an even more blatant violation of historical accuracy, again perpetrated to play on the emotional overtones of "Geneva" in the confident belief that few will examine the historical record with sufficient care to recognize the deception involved.

Actually the 1962 Laos settlement is a very dangerous precedent for Hanoi to cite. The situation that existed in Laos in 1962 was demonstrably caused by persistent and willful NVN/Pathet Lao refusal to abide by the provisions of the 1954 cease fire Agreement for Laos. What the Communists insisted upon for Laos then is precisely what they would adamantly deny the US and the GVN the right to request for Vietnam now: a new set of agreements based on the realities of the existing situation and not tied or bound by the technical provisions of language drafted in 1954 to handle a quite different set of problems.

-15-

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VII. COMMUNIST OBJECTIVES

The DRV's Four-point "settlement" proposal and the NLF's "five points" to which it is closely related were initially propounded and have been insistently repeated for a variety of reasons. One, as we have seen, has been to appropriate the mantle of "Geneva" and establish a climate of international political and diplomatic opinion in which the import of crucial passages of the 1954 Accords are interpreted in a manner useful to Hanoi's ends. A more basic objective, however, has been that of employing the proven propaganda technique of prolonged and insistent repetition to establish an advantageous political position from which Hanoi can bargain if it should ever decide that its interests would be better served by some form of discussions or negotiations rather than--or in addition to--physical combat.

The DRV's Four-Point proposal, if its key terms are defined according to the Communist lexicon, is tantamount to total North Vietnamese victory and the eradication of everything US policy has been framed to support and achieve in South Vietnam. On the face of it, Hanoi's position is unrealistic and palpably unacceptable. By sticking to this position for almost a year, however, by repeating it time without number, by directing attention away from its intrinsic faults and arrogant assumptions to peripheral issues (e.g., whether it is a "pre-condition for negotiations" or "basis for settlement"), Hanoi is endeavoring to have its adherence to this position become so familiar to the rest of the world that any movement from this stance will be universally hailed as a great "concession" which, in turn, will generate severe domestic and international political pressure on the US and the GVN to be equally "forthcoming". In short, Hanoi seems to be acting on the assumption that a noisy insistence on an outrageous position, over a sufficient period of time, will stand a good chance of making a subsequent preposterous position tolerably palatable to its enemies. This is an ancient technique of Asiatic bazaar bargaining and as well as a commonplace tactic in Communist diplomatic

-16-

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procedure. It was effectively used by the Chinese Communists in Korea in the early 1950's. It is almost certainly the technique Hanoi plans to use should the present Vietnamese war ever come to the conference table.

-17-


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MEMO NO.: **IN. 020/66**

SUBJECT: **The Five-Point Program of the National Liberation Front, the
Four-Point Proposal of Phan Van Dong and Their Relationship
to the Geneva Accords**

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: **DDI**

DISSEMINATION: **Routine internal and high-level external dissem.**

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

RESEARCH MEMORANDUM NO. 0483/65 DATED 5 JANUARY 1966

SUBJECT: The Five-Point Program of the National Liberation Front, The Four-Point Proposal of Pham Van Dong and Their Relationship to the Geneva Accords

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REQUESTED BY

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: Category B, routine internal GRAPHICS?
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