

The U.S. position consists of 14 points, including acceptance of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements as a basis for negotiation. These accords provided for withdrawal of foreign troops from both North and South Viet Nam, and for free elections leading to reunification of the country. The U.S. says it is willing to discuss North Viet Nam's four-point program, which includes the demand that South Viet Nam's affairs be settled "in accordance with" the National Liberation Front's own policies. The U.S. explicitly supports the idea of free elections, agrees that Southeast Asian countries can be neutral if they so choose, and offers representation for the Viet Cong's views at a peace conference once the fighting has stopped.

Not one of the American 14 points is of a tone or substance that should discourage their opponents from entering discussions; taken together, they appear to offer a tempting opportunity to test U.S. good faith on the question of self-determination for the Vietnamese people.

At the very least, the Communists now have a clear chance to bring the U.S. to the conference table and to get continued relief from the bombing of North Viet Nam while negotiations are going on.

If Hanoi is interested in peace on any terms short of outright conquest, and if it is free enough of Chinese influence to act, it will seize that chance. It would be helpful if world opinion, so suspicious of American motives, would now shift some of its pressure to the side which is really reluctant to negotiate--the Communist side.

The Toronto Telegram, January 4, 1966

Ordeal In Patience

The patient pursuit of peace in Southeast Asia--initiated by the United States--has been punctuated by the sound of war gongs struck by the Communist leaders in Hanoi and Peking.