

In 1960, profiting from growing tensions between Moscow and Beijing, North Vietnam set out to liberate the South and created the National Liberation Front (NLF) with this in view. From then on Hanoi tried in vain to act as an intermediary for the "two big brothers who were enemies" and in the years which followed it took great care to treat Moscow and Beijing in such a way that it could not be said to show a preference for one or the other.

Hanoi received help from both the Soviet Union and China throughout the course of the second war in Vietnam, but at the same time it suffered from the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet tensions and from the Cultural Revolution in China, a revolution itself no stranger to conflict. It was not without difficulty that China decided to support the People's war in Vietnam while avoiding any direct intervention by Chinese forces.³⁴ In 1965 the decision put an end to the career of Lo Rui-chin as Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Army. For the Vietnamese the Cultural Revolution was "a great step backwards" and a sign of "socialist decadence."³⁵ From that time on Hanoi began to distance itself from Beijing.

In 1968 Vietnam agreed to enter into preliminary negotiations with the United States. China had not been consulted and had indeed shown itself to be opposed to any such negotiations. On the other hand, Vietnam's policies were coming more and more into line with those of the Soviet Union, whether on such matters as the Czechoslovakian uprising in 1968, the fall of Allende in Chili in 1973, or the coming to power of the Portuguese Communist party in 1974.

China greeted the Paris Accords of 1973 with a great deal of enthusiasm since the continued existence of two Vietnams was part of its traditional strategy. Since the previous year, Vietnam's feeling of resentment towards the Chinese had been growing. Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 convinced Hanoi that the Chinese could no

³⁴ See for instance, M. Yahuda, "Kremlinology and the Chinese Strategic Debate," *China Quarterly*, no. 49, January-March 1972, pages 32-75.

³⁵ Nguyen Manh Hung, "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict: Power Play Among Communist Neighbours," *Asian Survey*, vol. XIX, no. 11, November 1979, page 1038.