

security as it can in Kampuchea.²² Everything would seem to suggest — and this point will be developed later — that in the long term Hanoi will only accept conditions for a settlement which ensure that the governments in Vientiane and Phnom Penh toe the party line.

Thus, Vietnam's strict control of Kampuchea implies that the latter must do what it is told and play a passive role rather than initiate action. This means that the leaders in Phnom Penh cannot risk deviating from the official Vietnamese policy as it is laid down at the annual or biennial meetings of the three Indochinese foreign ministers.

The attitude the Soviet Union adopts to the conflict in Kampuchea is also largely determined by Vietnam — however paradoxical this may appear at first sight. While it is true that Hanoi's economic dependence on its big brother has numerous effects on the Vietnamese economy, nonetheless as far as the dynamic of the conflict is concerned Moscow cannot afford to put too much pressure on its only viable ally in East Asia. While fears of a rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China may complicate Vietnam's strategy, in the end, they cannot change the intransigent attitude of the Vietnamese in one fell swoop. Vietnamese spokesmen told me that they were glad to see increased contacts between Moscow and Beijing since this, in their opinion, would inevitably lead to an improvement in Sino-Vietnamese relations.²³ Thus even if the Soviet Union plays a significant part in the coalition, its control is far from absolute in the eyes of the Vietnamese leaders, since the latter believe, with good reason, that Vietnam is too useful for achieving Soviet aims in East Asia for its views to be easily disregarded.²⁴

The members of the large coalition opposed to Vietnam have such a wide variety of interests that this produces very strange and anomalous relationships. The chief member of this coalition, and the one largely responsible for any initiatives, is China. In open conflict with Vietnam,

²² During the interviews which the author had in Hanoi the presence of Vietnamese troops in Laos seemed much harder to justify than in Kampuchea.

²³ Interviews at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hanoi, July 1987.

²⁴ Interview with Nguyen Co Thach, "L'Indochine neutralisée," *Politique internationale*, no. 31, Spring 1986, page 233.