

On 28 July 1986, the General Secretary gave an important speech in Vladivostok dealing with Asia and the Pacific in which he only mentioned Indochina in passing, noting that everything depended on restoring normal relations between Vietnam and China. Gorbachev went on to say: "This is the sovereign affair of the government and leadership of the two countries. We can only express our interest in seeing the border between these socialist states again become a border of peace and good neighbourliness, in seeing a comradely dialogue resumed and unnecessary suspicions and distrust removed."<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, on 8 January 1986, before Gorbachev had made this comment, Michael Kapitsa, a Kremlin specialist on Asia and the Pacific, had spoken in Moscow of a formula for bringing about a settlement in Kampuchea. He foresaw "elections in which foreign observers would take part, followed by a conference which would be attended by the three states in Indochina, the five permanent members of the Security Council, the ASEAN countries, India, and possibly Australia and Sweden."<sup>66</sup> On 22 January China rejected this Soviet proposal maintaining that "the key to the problem of Kampuchea [lies in] the withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea."<sup>67</sup>

This intervention on the part of China served to emphasize its essential role in any peace initiative, and also reminded the Soviet Union that another major hurdle to be cleared in restoring normal relations between the Soviet Union and China continued to be the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea. For the Soviets, who have been actively pursuing a rapprochement with China ever since Brezhnev's speech in Tashkent in March 1982, the link between an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and the reduction of tension between China and Vietnam is of particular importance. Moscow takes great care, however, never to upset Hanoi, by always stating after each meeting with the Chinese that any improvement in its relations with the latter must not be achieved at the expense of a third country.

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<sup>65</sup> *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 30, 27 August 1986, page 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Le Monde*, 10 January 1986, page 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Le Monde*, 24 January 1986, page 4.