

same month, even though the Soviet leaders had assured President Carter at the end of December 1979 that Vietnam would not cross the border into Thailand, Vietnamese troops crossed the Thai-Cambodian border to attack the refugee camps, and also, no doubt, to show that they could act independently of Moscow.⁶⁴ From the perspective of the states of Southeast Asia, incidents of that kind illustrate not only the duplicity of the Soviet Union but also the difficulty of knowing whether or not Hanoi is acting on directives from Moscow.

GORBACHEV'S EFFECT ON THE CONFLICT IN INDOCHINA

It would be premature to maintain that the advent of a new General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1985 has led to new objectives being pursued in Indochina. Here, as with other areas and issues, the difference is more one of form and of greater flexibility, and of the need for the Soviet Union to promote a climate in foreign affairs conducive to the far reaching reforms it hopes to carry out at home. There is no change in the strategic importance which the Soviet Union attaches to Vietnam, but it has tried to consolidate Vietnam's membership in Comecon in such a way that Vietnamese production will more adequately compensate for Soviet expenditures, while avoiding waste and the use of economic aid for military purposes.

As for Kampuchea, the Soviet Union is carrying on more intensive negotiations with China, in an effort to reduce the antagonism between Hanoi and Beijing — essential for any solution. Moscow has not, however, abandoned its original position. It continues to support Vietnam in arguing that the situation in Kampuchea is the result of meddling by China, ASEAN and the United States, that the whole conflict must be settled through negotiation, and that any solution must involve the continued existence of the Heng Samrin regime, though possibly reorganised in the form of a coalition which includes other Khmer factions. It also supports the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops in 1990, or even earlier if a satisfactory settlement is reached, and proposes its good offices in the conduct of such negotiations and in guaranteeing an eventual agreement.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, page 208.