

This episode, along with many others, illustrates the setbacks experienced by ASEAN and the pressures to which it is subject. The Association, which is inherently unstable, most frequently divides into two factions, one supports a hard line toward Vietnam (Singapore and Thailand), and the other (Indonesia and Malaysia) is more willing to negotiate. To make things even more difficult, the Association has to manoeuvre in such a way that it does not find itself opposed to China while continuing to pay lip service to the fictitious unity of the CGDK in which the Khmer Rouge faction is completely under the control of Beijing. In view of all this it is not hard to understand why Vietnam has never ceased to believe that it can quickly bring about the collapse of the whole alliance. The paradox, indeed the irony of this strategy, is that it has backfired against Hanoi, which has been too confident that time was in its favour.

By encouraging Indonesia to play the role of dissident in the Association (as we will see later) and by bringing in external mediators such as Japan and India and particularly Australia, Vietnam has become more self-confident in the field of diplomacy. It has tried to make the most of its advantages by launching three offensives⁷⁶ in an attempt to impose a military solution on Kampuchea. In the spring of 1985 Vietnam was very optimistic; China had taken no action and the "second lesson" which it had promised to teach Vietnam never materialized. The Vietnamese troops had occupied fifteen of the CGDK resistance camps and were successfully sealing off the frontier between Kampuchea and Thailand.⁷⁷ In April the Vietnamese Minister for Foreign Affairs confirmed this optimism by declaring that Vietnam would withdraw its troops from Kampuchea in 1995; a few months later on 16 August, during the Indochinese Foreign Ministers' conference, it was announced that the Vietnamese troops would be withdrawn in 1990.⁷⁸

However, neither the Vietnamese confidence nor the defeats inflicted

⁷⁶ In January 1983, for four months, in June 1984 and especially the third major offensive from December 1984 to March 1985.

⁷⁷ For discussion of the Vietnamese military operations it is interesting to read the article by Elisabeth Becker, "Stalemate in Cambodia," *Current History*, April 1987, pages 156, 180-186.

⁷⁸ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 August 1985.