

was to have underestimated the ability of the members of ASEAN to line up strong opposition to Vietnam at the United Nations. In 1979, ninety-one countries voted in favour of the ASEAN resolution condemning Vietnam. Since then the same resolution has been put forward every year at the United Nations and by 1986 one hundred and fifteen countries were voting in favour of it.¹⁹ In calling for, among other things, the withdrawal of all "foreign forces" from Kampuchea, the restoration of the country's independence and the right of self-determination for its people, the resolution nonetheless provides somewhat paradoxical juridical support for the Khmer Rouge as the only legitimate representatives, even though it includes an unequivocal condemnation of the Pol Pot regime.

These votes at the United Nations have served, however, to seal Vietnam's isolation by depriving it of any financial or economic aid and thus making it all the more dependent on the Soviet Union. The alignments subsequently became more and more rigid, leading to an impasse in which none of the actors could afford to make the slightest concession to the other side.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

One of the greatest difficulties in any conflict is reaching a complete understanding of the genuine objectives of those most involved. Put somewhat simplistically, it is always easier to tell what people are opposed to than what it is they really want to achieve. This is certainly true of the various groups involved in Indochina since 1979. As time passed and the situation developed, the objectives and intentions of these groups changed although no one is willing to admit this, lest the very existence of a coalition is put at risk. The two main coalitions confronting each other in Indochina are notable for their strange composition and the difficulty they have in staying together.

The first coalition is drawn up along the Phnom Penh, Hanoi, Moscow axis. The group opposed to it is much more divergent and

¹⁹ *ASEAN Newsletter*, no. 17, September-October 1986, page 8.