

## CANADA CAUGHT BETWEEN HELPLESSNESS AND INVOLVEMENT

One of the many paradoxes in recent international history is undoubtedly the way in which the conflicts in Indochina seem to have become commonplace. From the end of the Second World War right up to the signing of the Paris Accords in 1973, the West took action and spent money in order to defend that area as if the future of the whole of Asia, if not of the free world, depended on its determination to hold the two most troublesome forms of Communism — those of the China and Vietnam — in check.

Given recent history, perhaps the strangest aspect of the current complicated situation in Vietnam is the absence of the United States and its lack of interest in what is going on. The trauma of Vietnam still lingers on in Washington and Hanoi is not yet ready to let bygones be bygones as it has with France. It is interesting, however, that several Vietnamese leaders continue to maintain that the United States has an obligation to defend the security of Asia. Many things would perhaps never have happened — or so say the Vietnamese — if the United States had not let China take over responsibility for defending the region.<sup>132</sup>

Several prominent Vietnamese agree, albeit with an air of resignation, that it is hard to have any illusions about improving the relationship between the two countries during what remains of the Reagan administration.<sup>133</sup> The Vietnamese leaders declared themselves ready to resume normal relations with Washington but pointed out that in their

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Pham Binh, Director of the Institute of International Relations, Hanoi.

<sup>133</sup> The author's interviews in Hanoi.