

which Vietnam would henceforth play in Soviet strategy. Its importance is all the more evident because the costs to the USSR of maintaining this situation are considerable; however, these costs are minimal if one remembers that the Soviet Union is enjoying its first great success in Asia since 1945.

It is estimated that it costs the Soviet Union between four and six billion US dollars a year to provide this support to Vietnam. In 1986 it was estimated that the war in Kampuchea was costing Vietnam US \$12 million a day; the Soviet Union was directly or indirectly responsible for eighty percent of this expenditure. Military equipment provided to Kampuchea by the Soviet Union increased by 500 percent between 1980 and 1984. The total cost of the military aid provided by the Soviet Union to Vietnam has risen from US \$44.7 million in 1976 to around 1.5 billion in 1986.⁶²

Any analysis of this expenditure would seem to confirm the importance which the Soviet Union attaches to Vietnam, particularly if one remembers that there are also political costs to be paid. The alliance with Hanoi has made it much more difficult for the Soviet Union to achieve the rapprochement it seeks with China. While it has taken care never to provoke the Chinese leaders, the Soviet Union is now suspected of playing a double game, which the Chinese in turn try to use to their advantage in the dispute with Vietnam.

The Soviet Union also runs the risk of provoking serious resentment on the part of other countries in the area, particularly the members of ASEAN. For example, the fact that it supported Hanoi in denying the existence of the refugee problem in 1979 and 1980, has done nothing to improve the Soviet image internationally. In June 1980 Moscow Radio declared that any objective analysis of the position of the refugees "proves that the governments of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea have nothing to do with the problem of refugees. The problem was invented in Washington and Beijing to promote their own political designs."⁶³ That

⁶² Douglas Pike, *op. cit.*, pages 196, 210, 227.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, page 212.