

been skirmishes on the border between China and Vietnam at exactly the time that the Sino-Soviet negotiations were taking place.¹¹¹ Should one conclude from this that the Vietnamese were expressing their discontent and reminding others of how attached they were to their independence? Or should these incidents be interpreted as a signal from Beijing to show Moscow that the occupation of Cambodia remained the most serious obstacle to any rapprochement between their two countries?

One can only speculate as to the correct interpretation of the above. What is undeniable, however, is that on 1 October 1986 the Vietnamese Foreign Minister attended the national day reception given by the Chinese Ambassador in Hanoi. A few weeks later the Austrian Ambassador at the UN served as an intermediary for Vietnam, in passing on to Prince Sihanouk a proposal to hold a meeting in Vienna to be attended by the three groups in the CGDK Coalition as well as the representatives of the PRK. Sihanouk responded with a counter proposal calling for a preliminary meeting with a Vietnamese representative.¹¹²

Since then there have been endless arguments, rumours and vain hopes of success. In all this confusion, much of it intentional, none of the parties has been willing to ask for favours or to risk being accused of weakness by giving ground on even the most minor point of its original demands. Nonetheless, some progress has been made, even if the changes involved are almost imperceptible.

It is clear that the Soviet Union was keen to get the two major opposition groups together at the negotiating table and on 13 March 1987, during the course of a visit to Southeast Asia, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Edward Shevardnadze, took the opportunity to invite Hanoi to restore normal relations with Beijing. At the end of September 1987 the Chinese government also took a significant step forward when its Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian, said that China had no intention of bringing the Khmer Rouge back to power.¹¹³

¹¹¹ *Le Monde*, 20 October 1986, page 1.

¹¹² Nayan Chanda, "Cambodia in 1986, Beginning to Tire," *Asian Survey*, vol. XXVII, no. 1, January 1987, page 123.

¹¹³ *FBIS-EAS*, 2 October 1987, page 18.