

conditions experienced by the whole population are emptying the country of almost all its Chinese minority and also driving many Vietnamese into exile; 260,000 have taken refuge in China (of whom 30,000 are Vietnamese) and over a million, of whom seventy per cent are Chinese, have fled by sea (more than half these "boat people" have died at sea)."<sup>45</sup>

These draconian measures against the Chinese population in Vietnam were immediately treated by Beijing as an obvious provocation. China even went so far as to declare: "The Soviet Union is behind the expulsion of Chinese residents in Vietnam."<sup>46</sup> From that time on China became convinced that it could not accept such a serious humiliation, the effects of which were likely to be felt in all the states of Southeast Asia where there were large numbers of overseas Chinese.

China stopped its aid to Vietnam in April and in July, and on 1 July the Vietnamese consulates in Guangzhou (Canton), Nanning and Kuming were closed; the question of the overseas Chinese contributed to the rapid deterioration in relations between Beijing and Hanoi. At this point Vietnam aligned itself with the Soviet Union before embarking on its offensive in Kampuchea where it expected, as was noted above, that within several months it would have to contend with Chinese troops.

#### CAUTION AND A HARD LINE

From 17 February 1979, when China launched an attack across the border in the hope of teaching Vietnam "a lesson," right up to its current efforts to initiate a dialogue between the various Khmer factions, China has consistently pursued a policy which combines a cautious approach with inflexible demands.

China showed caution in the way it conducted the 1979 offensive against Vietnam. In announcing its intentions in advance, by means of Deng Xiaoping's remarks in both Washington and Tokyo, the Chinese

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<sup>45</sup> Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "La politique de la Chine populaire à l'égard des Chinois d'outre-mer" in P. de Beauregard et al., *op.cit.*, page 105.

<sup>46</sup> Nguyen Manh Hung, *op.cit.*, page 1044.