

## PROFITS AND LOSSES

Vietnam, a past master in the art of manoeuvre on the field of battle and which now believed that it had won a fresh victory over China, was soon to find itself strategically isolated — a position from which the party to draw the greatest advantage would be the Soviet Union.

Since 1979 Vietnam has received \$1.5 billion of military aid from the Soviet Bloc; this amounts to 43 percent of all the arms given to Third World countries in general.<sup>55</sup> It was also in 1979 that Soviet forces began to set up a base at Cam Ranh Bay, and on 27 March 1979 the first warships — a cruiser and two destroyers — arrived.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet Union could now project its power in Southeast Asia and even further afield.

The Soviet Navy, deployed at Cam Ranh Bay, Danang and Hai-phong, has also been able to rely on the help of its airforce which could use the airports at Cam Ranh, Danang, Bien Hoa, and Tan Son Nhut. With the support of these bases the Soviet Union has been able for the first time to maintain a significant military presence in the area. These bases can service long-range patrol aircraft, and allow the use of electronic listening devices which enable the Soviets to keep an eye on the sea lanes; they can serve as ports of call for Soviet submarines and have the necessary installations required for storing air-to-surface missiles. Moreover Danang and Cam Ranh are important staging points for the Soviet Navy as well as for its merchant shipping, en route between Vladivostok and the Indian Ocean.<sup>57</sup>

The Soviet Union has also been successful in its economic relations with Vietnam. By integrating the Vietnamese economy with that of the Eastern Bloc, Moscow persuaded Vietnam not to follow the Chinese

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<sup>55</sup> Leszek Buszynski, *Soviet Foreign Policy and Southeast Asia*, London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986, page 184.

<sup>56</sup> The Vietnamese leaders refuse to use the term "base" and prefer to speak of port "facilities" granted to the Soviet Union. One of those the author interviewed in Hanoi said that neither Cam Ranh Bay or Danang had any sort of extra-territorial status.

<sup>57</sup> On Soviet military capacity in Vietnam see the very detailed study by Thai Quang Trung in *Indochina Report*, *op.cit.*