

with greater self-confidence. Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea and its subsequent direct confrontation with China were the two decisive situations in which each of the parties to the contract became aware of the interests and capacities of the other.

It seems that Soviet assistance played a significant part in Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea. While it is true that this attack was mainly carried out by Vietnamese troops, there were indications that several Soviet advisors were present and that AN-12 transport planes with Soviet crews were used to supply Vietnamese troops on the ground. In addition, new missiles were put in place all along the frontier between China and Vietnam, particularly in the regions of Hongay, Lang Son and Cao Bang.<sup>53</sup>

Vietnam's open clash with China in February 1979 marked an even more crucial moment in its relations with the Soviet Union since it put article VI of the Friendship treaty to the test. Throughout the seventeen-day war, the Soviet Union acted with great caution although it steadfastly maintained that it intended to support its "ally." It set up a military airlift and, together with reconnaissance flights and numerous other signs, this showed the Chinese the limits beyond which they could not go. When questioned about this very important period in Vietnam's relations with Moscow, the Vietnamese to whom the author spoke in Hanoi confirmed that the Soviet Union had never been asked to intervene directly and that it had supplied all the help that had been asked for.<sup>54</sup> In view of the difficulties the Chinese troops soon encountered, there is reason to believe that the Vietnamese and the Soviets soon came to the conclusion that the attack could not last very long and that any direct intervention on the part of the Soviet Union was unnecessary. As far as the Vietnamese were concerned, this demonstration of their ability to deal with the Chinese forces on their own was the best possible proof that their confidence in their military skill and their attachment to their independence was justified.

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<sup>53</sup> Thai Quang Trung, *op. cit.*, page 11, see also D. Pike *op. cit.*, pages 203-204.

<sup>54</sup> Interviews which the author had in Hanoi, July 1987.