

## DIPLOMATIC MANOEUVRES: HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

During the whole of 1986 and a good part of 1987 the process gathered momentum, and there were many indications that a more constructive dialogue between the two sides was now underway. At the end of 1985 a Soviet expert confided to the journalist, Nayan Chanda, "The Vietnamese would at some time have to seek an accommodation with China. They cannot afford a hostile China on their border in perpetuity."<sup>104</sup>

This same expert suggested a three-stage plan for achieving a settlement in Kampuchea: 1) a meeting of the various Khmer factions, the holding of elections and the formation of a new government; 2) a regional conference to discuss Cambodia; and 3) the convening of a large-scale international conference in which the permanent members of the Security Council and other interested states would take part.

Oddly enough, on 8 January 1986, Kapitsa, the Soviet Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, had proposed an identical plan, adding that the Vietnamese troops might even withdraw in 1987 if this plan were accepted.<sup>105</sup> On 23 January, the Chinese government rejected the Soviet proposal emphasizing that the "key to the question of Kampuchea lay in the withdrawal of all the Vietnamese forces."<sup>106</sup> This response followed China's categorical refusal to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. The next day the communiqué issued at the close of the twelfth meeting of the Indochinese Foreign Ministers' Conference presented a balance sheet which reiterated in eight points their classic position on Kampuchea. It also referred, however, to their desire to revive the negotiations between China and Vietnam without imposing any preliminary conditions, in the hope of restoring normal relations.<sup>107</sup>

On 17 March the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea responded by presenting a peace plan which was also in the form of eight

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<sup>104</sup> Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy. The War after the War*, *op.cit.*, page 401 and the article by the same author in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 January 1986, page 21.

<sup>105</sup> *Le Monde*, 10 January 1986, page 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 January 1986, page 4.

<sup>107</sup> *Documents d'Actualité Internationale*, 15 mars 1986, no. 6, page 109.