

soon realized the advantages it could reap from having Australia take on the role of "honest broker." The ASEAN countries, on the other hand, showed considerable reservations about Australia's intentions when the latter made them known in Manila at the ASEAN ministerial meeting in April 1983.

In October 1983, when Australia announced that it would no longer be a co-sponsor of the annual ASEAN resolution at the UN and that it would abstain from condemning the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, ASEAN's misgivings rapidly turned to hostility.⁸⁵ Throughout 1984 Australia spared no efforts in an attempt to establish its credibility. The visit to Canberra in March 1984 of the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Co Thach, confirmed the fact that Australia had begun to play a significant part in the progress of negotiation. Hanoi was obviously delighted to move the diplomatic struggle, in which it was both an actor and a target, onto new ground, and was well aware of the advantages to be gained by weakening the solidarity of the Western coalition which had been so vociferous in condemning its presence in Kampuchea.

In July, when he was in Jakarta, the Australian Foreign Minister, William Hayden, surprised everyone by proposing that a conference on Kampuchea be held by the ASEAN countries, Vietnam and Laos. Before there was time to discover whether this project had been agreed to by Hanoi and discussed during Nguyen Co Thach's visit to Canberra, ASEAN quickly rejected the proposal making it clear that: 1) any negotiations between ASEAN and Indochina would be useless until such time as an agreement had been reached about the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from Laos, and 2) that such negotiations would enable Hanoi to exploit the situation so as to obtain recognition for the Heng Samrin regime.⁸⁶

The beginning of 1985 witnessed several incidents indicative of the role Australia would have played had such an international conference

⁸⁵ H.S. Leng and S. Silwood, "Australia and the Kampuchea Crisis," *Australia Outlook*, vol. 40 no. 2, August 1986, page 102.

⁸⁶ Justus M. Van der Kroef, "The Kampuchean Conflict: Edging Toward Compromise?" *op.cit.*, page 11.