

any hope there might have been of restoring normal relations between Hanoi and Phnom Penh. Two attacks, on 30 April and 24 September 1977, for both of which the Khmer Rouge were held responsible, persuaded the Vietnamese government to take punitive military action. On 31 December 1977, Kampuchea broke off diplomatic relations with Vietnam, accusing the latter of widespread aggression, while for his part the Vietnamese Prime Minister let it be known, early in 1978, that Kampuchea's military operations were the result of collusion between the United States and China.<sup>2</sup>

From 1975 onwards the Vietnamese leaders had seemed to be pursuing a more moderate policy in the hope of improving their relations with the members of ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations), of minimizing the consequences of the war with the United States, and of resuming their membership in the major international organizations. In 1978, however, there was a radical change in this policy; Hanoi adopted a more stringent position *vis-à-vis* China, and began to expel Vietnamese of Chinese origin, the Hoa, from the whole of its territory, and above all from Cholon, the Chinese quarter in the former capital Saigon. At the same time Vietnamese leaders did not hesitate to align Vietnam fully with the Soviet Union, by agreeing on 29 June 1978 to become the tenth member of Comecon (the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance). Furthermore, on 2 November 1978, the two countries signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation in Moscow. The most significant article of this treaty was number six, which stipulated that in the event of attacks or threats the two parties would consult each other and take "appropriate measures" to deal with the situation.

Emboldened by Soviet support, Hanoi decided on 25 December 1978 to launch an attack on Kampuchea. In less than a fortnight Vietnamese troops had occupied the whole of Cambodia and had appointed Heng Samrin, a former Khmer Rouge officer who had defected to Vietnam in

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<sup>2</sup> On the hostility between Vietnam and Cambodia and the whole situation in Indochina since 1975 see Nayan Chanda's excellent book, *Brother Enemy. The War after the War. A History of Indochina since the Fall of Saigon*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, 479 pages.