

longer be relied on. The Vietnamese also believed that China and the US had concluded a secret agreement to maintain the Thieu government in South Vietnam in exchange for the gradual return of Taiwan to China.

Although there was an attempt to preserve appearances, for example, during the visit of Le Duan and Pham Van Dong to Beijing in June 1973, differences between the two countries grew ever more serious. In order to prevent Vietnam from achieving the reunification which it sought and thus gaining control of the whole of Indochina, China encouraged the NLF, supported Laos and, above all, unabashedly encouraged the rise of radical pro-Chinese elements in the revolutionary government of the National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK) which had taken refuge in Beijing.³⁶

In April 1975 Hanoi won. Its troops were in Saigon and the Chinese had no choice but to applaud this as a great revolutionary victory and a triumph for the Maoist doctrine of a "people's war."³⁷

ELEMENTS OF OPEN CONFLICT

As soon as Vietnam was reunited, the latent conflict between China and Vietnam quickly came into the open. Paradoxically, China's determination to keep the Soviet Union out of Indochina only resulted in an ever closer alignment between Hanoi and Moscow. Haunted by the fear that Vietnam would establish a federation in Indochina³⁸ the Chinese made one mistake after another — trying to force Vietnam to join an anti-Soviet front, and supporting the particularly odious regime of the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea.

In May 1975, China and Vietnam signed a protocol for the provision of essential aid, but by September when Le Duan made another visit to Beijing, China and Vietnam began to realize how widely they differed.

³⁶ François Joyaux, "Réflexions sur la politique chinoise en Indochine," *op.cit.*, page 210.

³⁷ See Sheldon W. Simon, "Peking and Indochina: The Perplexity of Victory," *Asian Survey*, May 1976, pages 401-410.

³⁸ On the idea of an Indochinese Federation see for instance Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy. The War after the War*, *op.cit.*, pages 117-118.