

2003**Tran Quang Co: A Memoir****Citation:**

"Tran Quang Co: A Memoir", 2003, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated by Merle Pribbenow. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300472>

Summary:

The memoir of Trần Quang Cơ (1927-2015), former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), brings to light the intense diplomacy among great powers and regional players over the continued conflicts in Indochina after the unification of Vietnam as well as the bitter disagreements within the Vietnamese leadership over the country's political priorities during the period of 1975-1993.

Cơ put together his memories and thoughts on "many sensitive developments" in Vietnamese foreign relations that he believed had been "intentionally or unintentionally" forgotten (rơi rụng) in the state-endorsed history "to 'smooth over' (tròn trĩnh) the historical record." Completed in Vietnamese in 2001 (updated in 2003) and informally circulated on the internet, Merle Pribbenow's English-translation makes this valuable historical source available to wider audiences.

Original Language:

Vietnamese

Contents:

Translation - English

*Tran Quang Co: A Memoir*¹

[Hồi Ký Trần Quang Cơ]

Translated by Merle Pribbenow, July 2023

¹ Translator's note: Tran Quang Co's memoir was formerly available on a number of websites, including <http://www.diendan.org/tai-lieu-hoi-ky-tran-quang-co>; <http://vietsuky.wordpress.com/hoi-ky-tran-quang-co>; <http://tailieu.vn/xem-tai-lieu/hoi-uc-va-suy-nghi-tran-quang-co560316.html>; and http://timsach.com.vn/viewEBOOK_38_7503_hoi-ky-Tran-Quang-Co.html. As of the time of publication of this translation, the memoir is no longer available at any of these pages, the last two of which were based in Vietnam. However, as of writing (January 2023), a lightly modified version of text is still available at <https://anhbasam.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/hoi-ky-tran-quang-co.pdf> (archived copy at <https://web.archive.org/web/20221102093857/https://anhbasam.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/hoi-ky-tran-quang-co.pdf>), and at <https://tailieu.vn/doc/hoi-uc-va-suy-nghi-tran-quang-co-560316.html> (archived copy at <https://web.archive.org/web/20230711144106/https://tailieu.vn/doc/hoi-uc-va-suy-nghi-tran-quang-co-560316.html>).

Introduction

The memoir titled “Memories and Thoughts,” written by Tran Quang Co (1920 -), has been circulating inside Vietnam since early 2003. The author was formerly a member of the Party Central Committee, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a member of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to the Paris Conference on Vietnam (1968-1973)

Prior to going to work for the Foreign Ministry in 1954, Tran Quang Co was a People’s Army officer who was working as a lecturer at the High-Level Diplomatic School. He served as a diplomat for 44 years, from 1954 to 1997. In 1994 he was assigned as the First Secretary at a DRV Embassy abroad. In 1966 Tran Quang Co returned to Hanoi. In 1976 he became the head of the Ministry’s North American Bureau and was later transferred to become the head of the Ministry’s European Bureau. In 1982 he was assigned as Vietnam’s Ambassador to Thailand. He became a member of the Vietnamese Communist Party’s Central Committee in 1986. For twelve straight years, beginning in 1979, Tran Quang Co participated in negotiations aimed at ending the war in Cambodia. After the Vietnam War ended, he participated in negotiations to normalize relations with three different countries - the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. In February 1991 he asked to be allowed to withdraw his name from the list of candidates for election to the Party Central Committee during the 7th National Party Congress, but his request was rejected. In July of that same year, he met with Party General Secretary Do Muoi to turn down the offer to appoint him as Foreign Minister, replacing Nguyen Co Thach. In 1993, during the mid-term session of the Party Central Committee, he resigned his membership in the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Party Committee.

Seeking to engage in dialogues with former enemies, McNamara suggested that scholars and former leaders from both sides should sit down together to reexamine the decisions that were made during the war in order to be able to learn lessons from the Vietnam War that the entire world could use. Six of these conferences were held in Hanoi between November 1995 and February 1998. A seventh conference was held at the Rockefeller Institute in Bellagio, Italy. Tran Quang Co, Nguyen Co Thach, and a number of scholars, generals, and former leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam attended these conferences, the most important of which were the meetings held in June 1997 and February 1998.

The information in this document records important events in Vietnam's diplomatic relations with socialist countries large and small, with the United States, and with the ASEAN bloc, as well as information about internal clashes that occurred inside the Vietnamese Communist Party.

By recording significant information about modern Vietnam's problems over the course of more than 40 years - information that the author personally witnessed and that was kept secret and never disclosed to the public - along with the author's own personal thoughts as a loyal Communist Party cadre, this memoir will provide outside observers and authors with additional information that they can use to analyze events in Vietnam, both during the years following the end of Vietnam's civil war as well as in the future.

Whether a thousand years ago or during modern times, relations between China and Vietnam have always been a source of concern for the Vietnamese people, especially in light of the tremendous losses, damage, and threats that Vietnam has endured in recent years along its northern border and in the Fatherland's portion of the South China Sea. This memoir clearly

exposes the consequences of the thinking and actions of individuals who were responsible for ensuring the safety and defense of our people and our nation during the past few decades. It provides valuable lessons to all Vietnamese who are concerned about the fate of our nation.

The appendix, the index, and the notes at the end of this memoir are in-tended to help the reader to more easily understand this memoir and to use to conduct additional research if that is considered necessary. The appendix is an assessment provided by Tran Quang Co in “Communism Magazine” [Tạp chí Cộng sản], Issue 31, 2003, as well as excerpts from articles written about this memoir prior to 2005.

The Editors

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Memoirs and Thoughts

During my 44-year diplomatic career (1954-1997) I lived through many different eras and I personally witnessed and participated in noteworthy diplomatic activities and events during both of our resistance wars and the post-war eras, such as the peace talks with the United States in Paris (1968-1973), the talks with the United States about normalizing relations (1977 in Paris and 1978 in New York), the diplomatic struggle over the Cambodian problem, and normalization of relations with China. The reason I selected this particular time period, 1975-1991, for this memoir is that during this period there were many sensitive developments in our foreign relations, and especially in our relations with the three great powers, that could easily be forgotten (either intentionally or unintentionally) in order to “smooth over” the historical record. To allow this to happen would lead us to make incorrect assessments, reach incorrect conclusions, and derive incorrect “lessons learned.” In addition, this was a period when there were a number of things about our relations with the major powers that should concern us and make us think, not only for the present but possibly also for the future.

The international situation at that time was extremely complicated. The Cold War had entered its final phase, and all three major powers – the Soviet Union, the United States, and China – had made changes in their strategies, moving from ferocious confrontation with each other to bi-lateral and then tri-lateral détente. The constantly changing political situation in the Asia-Pacific region directly affected Southeast Asia and Vietnam. Southeast Asia at this time was also in the process of transitioning from a relationship of conflict to a relationship of dialogue between the two sides – the countries of Indochina on one side and ASEAN on the other. This environment demanded that Vietnam quickly and boldly transform its thinking about its

external relations in order to develop a policy that was appropriate to the objective actual conditions in order to escape from its isolated posture and to be able to integrate itself into the overall pace of development in the region and in the world. But no! Rigid political concepts and thinking had locked us into a difficult position for a long time now. It is for that reason that the diplomacy of this period has left me with many concerns and thoughts about what was right and what was wrong, what we should do and what we should not do. I think that if we conduct an honest, sincere, and responsible study and analysis of the events of this period in history we can arrive at a number of useful and worthwhile lessons for our current and future diplomacy, with the ultimate goal of protecting and ensuring our national interests in any and all eventualities.

For this reason, I have divided my writing into two parts: “Memories” and “Thoughts.” In the “Memories” section I have striven to record in an objective and honest manner the things that occurred during the period 1975-1991 on the basis of documents and work diaries that are still in my possession. As for the “Thoughts” section, that is the place where I have provided my personal thoughts and opinions, my thoughts and concerns that arose during my study and review of the events in which I participated. These thoughts are purely subjective opinions – they may be right, and they may be wrong.

23 January 2001

(This manuscript was edited and updated on 22 May 2003)

Tran Quang Co

Chapter One:

Vietnam during the 1970s

During the seventh decade of the 20th century Vietnam experienced a number of major events: The 1973 Paris Agreement on Vietnam that ended the “marathon” talks (1968 to 1973) between Vietnam and the United States and the total victory won by the Ho Chi Minh Campaign in 1975, which brought Vietnam to the peak of the National Liberation Struggle and of its international prestige. The victory won by Vietnam in its resistance struggle against the United States was not just a factor that led to a number of extremely important changes in the strategies of the major powers; it also transformed the political face of the Southeast Asia region. Fearing Vietnam’s military strength and its iron will worried that the threat from the gigantic nation of China would increase after the American withdrawal from Southeast Asia, and because of the need for economic development, the SEATO military alliance collapsed and a trend toward peace and stability in Southeast Asia began to develop. After receiving a “dash of cold water in the face” in Vietnam, the U.S. retreated from Southeast Asia, but it was also worried about creating a “vacuum” that would benefit its enemies. Afraid on the one hand that the Soviet Union would take advantage of this opportunity to expand its influence in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, and on the other that China would be able to play the role of the major Asian power to fill in the “vacuum” left by their withdrawal, the U.S. sought to exploit the Sino-Soviet conflict, and at the same time it wanted a Vietnam that was independent of both China and the Soviet Union in order to be able to maintain a strategic balance between the three big powers in the Asia-Pacific region.

The following is a quote from the U.S.'s "Pentagon Papers": *A report from the U.S. Ambassador in Britain to the State Department dated 1 March 1967 records a short exchange between British Foreign Minister Brown and Polish Foreign Minister [Adam] Rapacki in London on 22 February 1967. When Brown asked Rapacki for his assessment of the level of influence Kosygin (then the Soviet Foreign Minister) had with Hanoi, Rapacki replied "Not less that you have with Hanoi." And when Brown asked, "Who has greater influence on Hanoi – China or the Soviet Union?" Rapacki replied, "North Vietnam."*

Vietnam's policy of independence and self-reliance was clearly on display throughout the negotiations with the United States in Paris.

After the talks with the U.S. in Paris ended, in 1973 I was promoted to the post of Director of the North American Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, so I was able to personally monitor and handle our relations with the United States after the war ended.

A little more than one month after the liberation of South Vietnam, we asked the Soviet Union to transmit the following verbal message to the United States:

"The leaders of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) want to have good relations with the U.S. that are based on mutual respect for one another. In that spirit, the Vietnamese side exercised restraint during the liberation in order to allow the Americans to evacuate their personnel. The Vietnamese side tried to do everything it could to avoid damaging future relations with the United States. Vietnam bears no hostility to the United States, and it hopes to see the same attitude from the U.S. side."

On 12 June 1975, the U.S. sent the following response to our embassy in Paris: *"In principle, the U.S. bears no hostility toward the DRV. We suggest that this should form the*

foundation for any relationship between the two parties. The U.S. is prepared to listen to any suggestion that the DRV may wish to put forward.” This was the message that the U.S. Embassy in Paris sent to our embassy. The message did not clarify whether this was a message from the U.S. State Department or from some other level of the U.S. Government.

On 11 July 1975, we sent a message to the United States. The primary content of this message was the substance of a statement Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh had read to our National Assembly on 4 June 1975: *“The U.S. Government’s respect for the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people, its total abandonment of any intervention in the internal affairs of South Vietnam, and its willingness to carry out its duty to contribute to the work of binding up the wounds of war and postwar reconstruction will create conditions conducive to the establishment of normal relations between the DRV and the United States in the spirit of Article 22 of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam.”*

The first postwar meeting between Vietnam and the U.S. occurred in Paris on 10 July at the first secretary level (Embassy First Secretaries Do Thanh and Pratt). The meeting focused primarily on discussing the MIA issue. Specifically, the U.S. asked us to give them the remains of a number of American pilots who had been shot down in North Vietnam. At the follow-up meeting on 5 September 1975, also between Do Thanh and Pratt, we agreed to turn over the remains of three “sky pirates,” but it was not until December that we finally granted permission for a delegation of four U.S. Congressmen led by Chairman of the POW/MIA Committee G. V. Montgomery to come to Hanoi to pick up these remains. This delegation was received by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong.

In 1976, the U.S., through the Soviet Union, sent out a feeler about meeting with us. However, at the same time the U.S. stated that it would not implement Article 21 of the Paris Agreement. This diplomatic note, dated 26 March 1976 and sent by then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, thanked us for receiving the Montgomery delegation and said that the U.S. was prepared to begin discussions on establishing relations between the two countries. On 30 April our Foreign Minister sent a response that laid out the problems that remained between the two nations - the issue of war reparations and the issue of Americans missing in action - and said that when these two issues were resolved we would be ready to normalize relations with the United States in accordance with Article 22 of the Paris Agreement. We were prepared to consider concrete American suggestions for opening negotiations between the two sides. We said that we would not take too long to give them an answer, but that we would not be able to answer until after the U.S. Congress discussed ending the embargo against Vietnam. At almost the same time, Gerald Force rejected the recommendation of the U.S. Congress for a six-month temporary suspension of the embargo on commercial dealings with Vietnam. The U.S. State Department sent us a message affirming that it was ready to quickly begin discussions with Vietnam, but it stated that our concept of conducting negotiations on the basis of "a selective application of the agreements that were signed" would not yield constructive results. It also said a "full accounting" for the MIAs would be one of America's first priorities, and only after this issue was "basically" resolved could there be true progress toward normalization of relations between our two countries. The State Department suggested that Vietnam reconsider whether or not a meeting to discuss the outstanding issues would be useful.

This situation dragged on until Jimmy Carter was elected as President in 1977, replacing Gerald Ford. The new Democratic Administration had a different strategic concept and a softer, more flexible attitude toward Vietnam. An important reason that caused the Carter Administration to be immediately interested in establishing a new relationship with Vietnam was America's strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Andrew Young stated this point clearly: *"We view Vietnam as an Asian Yugoslavia. It does not belong to China or to the Soviet Union, but instead is an independent nation. A strong and independent Vietnam is consistent with America's national interests"* (January 1977).

On 6 January 1977, the U.S., through the Soviet Union, laid out for us a three-step plan for normalization of relations with Vietnam:

- 1.-Vietnam would provide information about "American MIAs".
- 2.-The U.S. would agree to Vietnam's admission to the United Nations and would be prepared to establish full diplomatic relations and to begin trade with Vietnam.
- 3.-The U.S. could contribute to the rebuilding of Vietnam by commercial development, supplying equipment, and other forms of economic cooperation.

On 3 March 1977, the Carter Administration decided to loosen the embargo against us. It granted permission for foreign ships and aircraft carrying goods to Vietnam to stop at U.S. ports and airports for refueling, but it still barred Americans from doing business with Vietnam and barred American ships and aircraft from going to Vietnam. On 9 March 1977, the U.S. granted permission for American citizens to visit Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, and Cambodia, effective 18 March 1977.

In mid-March, we received Leonard Woodcock, U.S. President Carter's special emissary, for a visit to Vietnam. On 17 March 1977, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong received L. Woodcock and four members of his delegation, one of whom was Senator Mansfield, at the Office of the Chairman of the Council of State in Hanoi. That same day the American delegation paid a visit to Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh.

After this visit to clear the way, the two sides agreed to open talks in Paris about normalizing relations between Vietnam and the United States. At that time our delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien. The other members of the delegation were me (the Director of the North American Bureau), Vu Hoang (Director of the Consular Bureau), and several cadres from the North American Bureau – Bui Xuan Ninh, Cuong, Ha Huy Tam, and Le Mai. Le Mai, who at that time was assigned to the North American Bureau, served as the interpreter for the chief of our delegation. A couple of officials from our embassy in Paris – First Secretary Do Thanh and Press Attaché Nguyen Thien Can – also were members of our delegation. The American side was headed by Richard Holbrooke. The talks went on for quite a while and there was a total of three rounds of talks – in May, June, and December 1977. The site of the discussions rotated between our embassy and the American embassy in Paris. During round one of the talks (3-4 May 1977), the American position was that the two sides would immediately establish full and unconditional diplomatic relations and that the other issues between the two sides would be resolved later. The U.S. side said that the U.S. would not block Vietnam's entry into the United States. As for Article 21 of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, the U.S. side said that it had a legal problem that made it impossible to implement that article of the agreement. The U.S. side promised to implement that provision after we had established

relations with one another, after the commercial embargo had been dropped, and said it would consider humanitarian aid. In accordance with the instructions we had been give before our departure, we resolutely demanded that there must be a “package” solution of three issues: Vietnam and the U.S. would normalize relations with one another (including the ending of the embargo and the establishment of full diplomatic relations), we would help the U.S. resolve the MIA issue, and the U.S. would give Vietnam 3.2 billion dollars in aid as it had previously promised. The biggest obstacle to normalization of relations was our demand that the U.S. give us 3.2 billion dollars in aid because the U.S. Congress was absolutely opposed to agreeing to grant aid as a condition for the normalization of relations with Vietnam. On 2 and 3 June, the second round of talks, the U.S. again made the same suggestions that they had presented to us in May. On 19 July 1977, in the UN Security Council the U.S. decided to withdraw its veto of Vietnam’s admission to the United Nations. After the second round of talks, Phan Hien had to fly back to Hanoi to report and to request instructions. In reality, the purpose of his trip was to recommend that we take a more realistic stance and be softer and more flexible in our demands. However, I heard that all four of our key leaders at that time unanimously agreed to maintain our original position. Faced with our firm and unshakable demands, during the third round of talks (19-20 December 1978), the U.S. suggested that if we could not agree on the establishment of full diplomatic relations, then perhaps we could agree to establish Interest Offices in the capitals of our two countries, but that would mean that the embargo would not yet be ended. Once the Interest Offices were set up, depending on the situation the U.S. might consider ending the embargo. However, we continued to maintain a rigid position of demanding a “package” solution of the three issues.

It is clear that in 1977 the Carter Administration truly wanted to normalize relations with Vietnam. On 10 January 1977, U.S. Secretary of State Vance announced that *“a move to normalize Vietnamese-American relations is in the interests of both of our countries.”* In 1977, there was a realistic chance for us to normalize relations with the United States, but we missed that opportunity. At that time, egged on by Beijing, the Pol Pot government started a border war against us (the war began on 30 April 1977), and it unilaterally cut diplomatic relations with our country on 31 December 1977.

In early 1978, relations between the three big powers (the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China) began to shift from bi-lateral conflict between each of the parties against the other two to a U.S.-Chinese collaboration in opposing the Soviet Union. Taking advantage of the U.S.'s weak position following its defeat in Vietnam, the Soviet Union strove to strengthen its influence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America through the Brezhnev's *“limited sovereignty”* doctrine in Asia. The Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan in 1979 and at the same time implemented a policy of encircling China. Vietnam was viewed as one link in the siege ring around China. In late February 1979, Deng Xiaoping told journalists in Beijing that, *“We can forgive the fact that the Soviet Union has 70% of the influence in Vietnam as long as the other 30% of influence belongs to China.”*

In 1979, the U.S. began to speed up the process of normalizing its relations with China (In February 1973, when Kissinger visited Beijing, China and the U.S. signed an agreement establishing Liaison Sections in the capitals of the two countries and agreed that these liaison sections would enjoy the same rights and privileges as an embassy). Z. Brzezinski's game of *“playing the China card to block the Soviet Union”* gradually overcame the positions of Cyrus

Vance and R. Holbrooke, who wanted to “simultaneously push for improvement of relations with both Vietnam and China.” On 23 August 1978, while the U.S. was holding talks with us in Paris about normalizing relations, U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance visited Beijing. After Deng Xiaoping announced that “China is the Eastern NATO” and “Vietnam is the Eastern Cuba” (on 19 May 1978) and after Brzezinski visited China (on 20 May 1978), the Carter Administration chose the path of normalizing relations with China and put aside the idea of normalizing relations with Vietnam.

On 21 August 1978, the U.S. Congress sent a delegation of seven Congressmen from both the Democratic and Republican parties and headed by Democratic Congressman G. V. Montgomery, the Chairman of the POW/MIA Committee, to Vietnam for the primary purpose of holding discussions with Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien about the issue of locating American MIAs. We gave the Americans a number of sets of remains to demonstrate our good faith cooperation on the MIA issue. At their request, I escorted Montgomery down to South Vietnam where we visited the Cao Dai Holy See and a Cambodian refugee camp along the border in Tay Ninh Province. That was the first time since the liberation of South Vietnam that we had allowed an official U.S. delegation to visit Ho Chi Minh City.

Exactly one month later, I traveled to New York to continue the talks about normalizing relations with the United States. The fourth round of discussions about normalizing U.S.-Vietnamese relations did not last as long as had the 1977 talks in Paris. This time the head of our negotiating team was Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. The U.S. side was again headed by R. Holbrooke. At this time, we had decided to abandon our demand that *“the U.S. must pay war reparations by providing us with 3.2 billion dollars in aid before we will normalize*

relations” and we had accepted the American proposal of *“normalizing relations without any preconditions,”* but by then it was too late. The only reason that the U.S. wanted to continue the talks on normalizing relations with us was to try to make Vietnam hesitant and make us think again about our relations with the Soviet Union and about the Cambodia problem.

Meanwhile the U.S. had shifted over to China’s side. R. Holbrooke told us, *“The U.S. views Asia as important; the U.S. needs to normalize relations between our two countries. However, the U.S. is concerned that the Soviet Union will establish a base at Cam Ranh.”*

While waiting for a final answer from the U.S. about normalizing relations, sometime in early November Thach returned to Hanoi first, while I remained behind in New York to maintain our contact with the Americans. On 30 November 1978 R. Oakley, the Assistant to the American Secretary of State, told me in response to my repeated urgings, *“The U.S. has not changed its position on desiring to normalize relations with Vietnam, but normalization will have to be delayed because we need clarification on three issues: Cambodia, the Vietnamese-Soviet Friendship Treaty, and the Vietnamese refugee [boat people] problem.”* Then they gave me a photograph of the puppet government’s embassy on R Street in Washington, told me that they would give us this building to serve as our embassy, and asked us to give them a blueprint of the villa on Trang Thi Street (?) where the U.S. Consulate General in Hanoi was previously housed.

I stayed in New York until late January 1979, after we sent our troops into Cambodia to help our allies drive out Pol Pot and liberate Phnom Penh. On 9 January 1979 American Secretary of State Cyrus Vance said, *“The U.S.-Vietnamese discussions on normalization have collapsed because of Vietnam’s aggression against Cambodia.”* I thought to myself that in fact

the U.S. had decided to end the normalization talks with us at the time we joined the COMECON bloc and signed the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union (on 3 November 1978). The Americans made this decision so that they could then shake hands with China and join China in an anti-Soviet alliance in the Asia-Pacific region. On 15 December 1978, the U.S. and China issued a joint statement officially recognizing one another and establishing formal diplomatic relations between the two countries effective 1 January 1979. Deng Xiaoping's visit to the U.S. (29 January – 4 February 1979) marked the normalization of relations between the U.S and China and officially put the normalization of relations between Vietnam and the U.S. onto the back burner until 17 years later. While I was still in New York, I personally witnessed the scene when the ethnic Chinese community greeted Deng: In the Chinatown area one entire street was lined with Chinese flags (red with five stars), but another parallel street was lined with the flags of Nationalist China. During his meeting with Carter in Washington, Deng Xiaoping indicated to Carter that China would attack Vietnam and he got no reaction from the American side. According to Brzezinski, during his meeting with Carter on 29 January Deng asked the U.S. to cooperate with China in opposing the Soviet Union. Carter was a bit more cautious. He agreed that there should be close consultations between the two countries to block Soviet hegemony [expansionism], but he carefully avoided referring to Deng's request. Later, on 16 February 1979, Carter set forward six principles for what the U.S. would do when China invaded Vietnam. These principles were: The U.S. would not directly intervene; the U.S. would urge both sides to exercise restraint; Vietnam must withdraw its troops from Cambodia and China must withdraw its troops from Vietnam; the U.S. would not reconsider its decision to normalize relations with China; and America's alliances would not be threatened. After that,

the Cambodian conflict and relations with China were placed in the framework of the relationship between the three major powers – the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. And from then on, the U.S. linked the issue of U.S.-Vietnamese relations with a resolution of the Cambodia problem.

As a witness to this history and as someone who personally participated in these diplomatic activities in my capacity as the Director of the Foreign Ministry's North American Bureau and who personally participated in the normalization talks with the United States in Paris in 1977 and then in New York in 1978, I am truly pained and disappointed that we missed an opportunity to consolidate and strengthen Vietnam's peaceful stance so that we could then focus on our country's development after so many years of war, and that we missed an opportunity to keep up with the other countries in the region. In his memoir, [former President of Singapore] Lee Kuan Yew said, *"In 1975 Ho Chi Minh City was comparable with Bangkok. But today (1992), it has fallen more than 20 years behind."*

In my opinion, our rejection of the American suggestion that we "normalize relations without any conditions" and our arrogance when ASEAN indicated that it wanted Vietnam to join this regional organization resulted in extremely harmful consequences for our people and for our country. Would China have dared to help the genocidal Pol Pot clique in its provocations against us or have dared to attack us in 1979 if after our victory in 1975 Vietnam had truly followed a strategy of "more friends and fewer enemies"? It was only 20 years later that we were finally able, after considerable difficulty, to normalize relations with the United States and to become a member of the ASEAN bloc.

I believe that our somewhat rigid concept of foreign relations at that time was not able to keep up with the pace of political change in the world as represented by the changes in strategy made by the major powers after the 1975 events in Vietnam and that it did not allow us to dare to make timely, flexible decisions that would bring great, long-term benefits to our nation. On the contrary, the fact that we missed an opportunity to normalize relations with the United States at that time left Vietnam virtually isolated and alone as it confronted an ambitious, greedy China.

As for China, after the 1973 Paris Agreement was signed it was in China's interest to maintain the status quo in Indochina, and in particular the continued division of Vietnam into two halves under two different types of political systems was in line with their long-term intentions in Southeast Asia. After returning from a visit to China, U.S. Senator K. Mansfield [sic] reported back to the U.S. Congress on 1 February 1975 that *"China would like the two Vietnams to continue to exist. China believes that a single unified, neutral Cambodia is the key to stability in Indochina."*

From 1973, clashes occurred along Vietnam's borders with China. In 1974 China easily swallowed up the remaining portion of the Paracels Island Group that was still held by Vietnam. Some people say that China only began to oppose us after we finally went completely over to the side of the Soviet Union. However, the truth is that China was committing hostile acts against Vietnam before Vietnam joined the SEV bloc in June 1978 and before it signed the Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union in November 1978. In December 1975, when he stopped in Paris after a visit to China, Henry Kissinger said, "The U.S. is considering using China to limit Vietnam's influence in the region."

The most prominent feature of the 1975-1978 period was that Cambodia had become a flash point in a confrontation with China on one side and Vietnam, supported by the Soviet Union, on the other. This confrontation turned into a military conflict early on, beginning in May 1975, and it grew into a full-scale war along our nation's southwestern border. In an interview on 8 January 1978, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Security Advisor to the U.S. President, said, *"The interesting thing is that this is the first example of a proxy war between the Soviet Union and China, a conflict in which Vietnam is supported by the Soviet Union and Cambodia is supported by China."*

And so, only a little more than four years after we were able to liberate our country, we were pushed into a tragic and terrible conflict in Cambodia and a direct confrontation with China, which had previously been our strategic ally during our 30-year battle against Western aggression. After two difficult and arduous resistance wars, our people were only able to enjoy the smell of victory and peace for less than five years. Before the wounds of war had a chance to heal, our people were caught in a situation of "half war and half peace." Although our resistance war against the United States was ferocious and terrible, Vietnam had the support of a broad front made up of the peoples of the entire world, but during the battle against the genocidal Pol Pot clique Vietnam was virtually isolated and alone. The other countries in the region were afraid that after Vietnam had "taken down" Cambodia it would expand its military might throughout all of Southeast Asia. China strove to slander Vietnam by proclaiming that "Vietnam is committing aggression against Cambodia" and claiming that we were plotting to form an "Indochina Federation" in order to govern and control Laos and Cambodia, thereby

erasing the “combating genocide” nature of Vietnam’s action in sending its troops into Cambodia.

During this same time period, because the massive economic and social problems from the wartime period had not yet been eliminated and because we were blockaded, embargoed, and surrounded by the outside world, the “boat people” and “escaping across the border” problem developed inside our country as an element of the population of both North and South Vietnam sought to flee abroad, thereby creating another heavy burden on our foreign relations efforts and further besmirching the image of Vietnam on the international stage. The problem of Cambodia and the “boat people” issue at that time imposed a truly a heavy burden on us on the foreign relations front during the 1980s.

The last half of the 1970s was the period in which we committed the greatest number of errors and mistakes in the history of our effort to build our nation following the revolution (from 1945 up to the present day).

+We failed to maintain a balance between our relations with China and our relations with the Soviet Union, a balance that had been an extremely important factor that ensured our victory during our resistance war against the United States.

+We missed an opportunity to normalize relations with the United States in 1977 when the Carter Administration on its own initiative proposed that the two sides normalize relations without any preconditions.

+We misjudged ASEAN and failed to join the ASEAN bloc in 1976 when all six of its member nations wanted us to join both because of the individual interests of each nation and for the common good of the entire region.

+We involved ourselves too deeply and too long in the Cambodian problem.

These mistakes had consequences that were directly related to one another and that caused great damage to our external relations, to our security and national defense, and to our economic development for a long, long time.

Chapter Two:

A Not-Uninteresting Tour as Ambassador

In October 1982 I was appointed to serve as our ambassador in the Kingdom of Thailand, which was a forward outpost on our foreign relations front during that period because the Thai government at that time was working very closely with China to nourish and support the anti-Vietnamese genocidal clique led by Pol Pot. I cannot say that my tour as our ambassador in Thailand was quiet or uninteresting. Virtually not a month went by that there were not large crowds demonstrating in front of our embassy shouting protests about Vietnam's "aggression" against Thailand and Vietnamese violations of Thai territory. Usually, these activities heated up around the beginning of the rainy season every year, at the same time that military operations began along the Thai-Cambodian border. The demonstrators - who were sometimes "samlor" people,² sometimes members of Thai militia organizations, and sometimes groups of reactionary ethnic Vietnamese residents of the provinces of Northeastern Thailand - usually assembled in Lumpini Park on Wireless Road, near our embassy, to be paid their "demonstration expenses."

During that period, the Thai press seemed to really enjoy following and reporting on the activities of the Vietnamese ambassador, especially when there were unpleasant meetings between the Thai Foreign Ministry and the Vietnamese ambassador. I have to admit that the temperature of the "talks" between me and Thai foreign ministry officials rather accurately reflected the intensity of the fighting along the Thai-Cambodian border. I can never forget the

² Translator's Note: That is, poor people. A "samlor" is a three-wheeled "taxi" that consists of a small car seat mounted on two wheels behind the front end of a motorcycle.

angry statement made by the powerful Thai Army Commander, General Arthit Kamlang-ek, to the press when he said, "We no longer need to have a Vietnamese Ambassador to Thailand." He said this after I had politely but firmly refused to accept two diplomatic protest letters from the Thai Foreign Minister. The Thai letter dated 17 April 1983 protested the Vietnamese army's shooting down of an L-19 observation aircraft, killing the pilot, and the Vietnamese army's later firing on and damaging a Thai Army helicopter. The letter dated 1 May 1984 protested the Vietnamese Army's "artillery bombardment of Thai territory" in Surin Province that killed and injured a number of villagers. General Arthit's angry outburst was seconded by a number of Thai newspapers, including the English-language newspaper "*Daily News*" which published an editorial that said, "The (Thai) Government should demand that Vietnam immediately replace its ambassador in Bangkok as a protest against his refusal to accept the Thai protest demarches." This incident occurred during the early part of the 1984-1985 dry season, when Vietnamese volunteer army troops were conducting an offensive campaign aimed directly at the "sanctuaries" and intended to completely destroy the bases of the three reactionary Khmer factions along the Thai-Cambodian border, bases that were located inside Thai territory. During this same period, there were a number of ground and artillery attacks by the Chinese Army against several border provinces along our country's northern border. These attacks were made to support and try to rescue the genocidal Pol Pot clique fighting on our country's western front.

The Thai press also gave me an opportunity to help the Thai people understand the truth about the Cambodian problem when I was interviewed by the *Kledlap* newspaper on 15 April 1984:

Question: Do you agree with the idea that the war in Cambodia is a conflict between the Soviet Union and Vietnam on one side and China and the Khmer Rouge on the other, while ASEAN and the other parties only have a secondary role in this war. If that view is correct, what do you think about Adam Malik's suggestion for talks between the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and China to resolve the Cambodia problem?

Answer: The true nature of the so-called Cambodian problem today is that China is using one of its most effective and most brutal tools to intervene in and to threaten the security of the countries of Indochina, and especially Cambodia. When someone says that this is a conflict between the Soviet Union and Vietnam on one side and China and the Khmer Rouge on the other, that person has fallen into the Chinese trap. That is a dangerous mistake, because that means that person is unable to see that the great threat to the security of all of the countries in this region is Chinese expansionism and Chinese hegemony. From the beginning, the Soviet Union has only helped the people of the three Indochinese nations to protect their independence and to peacefully build their countries. It is not threatening anyone. Therefore, I respectfully decline to comment on Adam Malik's suggestion.

Question: Since a prolonged war in Cambodia will affect the economies of both Vietnam and ASEAN, I wonder who will be able to endure the pain the longest?

Answer: I think that you should not pose the question in that manner, because that would mean you have fallen for Beijing's line. Their big scheme on the international political scene has always been to "sit on the mountaintop and watch the tigers fight one another." My country is not as big as they are, and therefore we need to be smarter than they are, or at least we should not fall into their trap. It is not in the interests of the peoples of the countries of

Southeast Asia to prolong the current situation of confrontation so that countries standing on the outside looking in can benefit from this confrontation. During the visit to Indonesia of Minister Nguyen Co Thach this past March, Vietnam and Indonesia agreed that allowing the current situation to continue will be harmful to all the countries in the region who are striving to build their economies and improve the lives of their people. The two sides acknowledged that resolving this situation would benefit all of the countries of Southeast Asia. If this is not done, that would only benefit third parties to this situation.

Question: I wonder whether or not you could affirm to us that in the current situation the Vietnamese army will not cross Thailand's borders.

Answer: I can firmly assure you that we have not violated Thai territory.

Question: But the Thai government and Thai army have clearly laid out what has occurred. A number of foreign journalists have also reported this.

Answer: I would like to assure you that during the recent wave of attacks against the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer Rouge are the ones who have violated Thai territory. Our forces have stopped at the border and have not violated Thai territory, even though Thailand has allowed the Khmer Rouge to flee across the border. As for the reports that Vietnamese soldiers have been taken prisoner inside Thailand and that the bodies of Vietnamese soldiers and wrecked Vietnamese tanks have been found on Thai soil, those are complete fabrications.

Question: The Supreme Commander of the Thai Army (Arthit Kamlang-ek) has put out this report.

Answer: The Supreme Commander of the Thai Army himself has confirmed that the Thai Army used A-37 aircraft to destroy a Khmer Rouge weapons warehouse. It is not clear whether

that warehouse was inside Thailand or inside Cambodia. In the fighting that is occurring along the border, the Thai army has not allowed foreign journalists to have access to this area to report on this. Many foreign journalists are very unhappy about this, and they have said that the Thai Army is putting out very confusing and contradictory reports, saying one thing one day and something else the next. For example, initially they reported that they had captured 40 Vietnamese soldiers; then they said they had captured 41 prisoners, and then they said that they had captured only six and that the rest were all Cambodians.

Question: I wonder what measures Vietnam will take to end the fighting quickly?

Answer: In my personal opinion, the sooner the fighting ends, the better it will be for all sides. First of all, we want to maintain our relationship [with Thailand], we want the Thai-Cambodian border to be peaceful and stable, and we want Vietnam and Thailand to have friendly relations. We do not want a prolonged war, but we are also not afraid of a prolonged war.

Question: The cause of the current insecurity is that the Vietnamese Army has moved right up next to the Thai border. If Vietnam was in Thailand's position, Vietnam would also feel insecure with such a large foreign aggressive force on its border. That is what Thailand thinks today.

Answer: If you had been closely following this situation, you would have seen that this is not a new problem. We have already put forward many proposals. In 1980, we proposed establishing a secure zone along the Thai-Cambodian border to ensure the security of this area and to keep Thailand from worrying about the presence of Vietnamese military forces in Cambodia. The only reason that the Vietnamese army is in Cambodia is to destroy Pol Pot's

forces. We have said many times that the Vietnamese army will immediately withdraw when the threat from China has ended.

When they published this interview, the editors cut out the part of my response in which I provided evidence that the Thai Army was helping the Khmer Rouge soldiers and that it had violated Cambodian territory.

While Vietnam continued to be bogged down in Cambodia, the three major powers in the strategic triangle of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China, revised and adjusted their strategies in order to focus on economic development, and they turned toward a status of détente aimed at winning over the other parties while at the same time struggling against one another and pinning down and restricting one another. The Cambodian issue began to be included on the agendas of bi-lateral talks involving members of the great power triangle [the U.S., Soviet Union, and China]. From the very start of the Sino-Soviet talks on normalizing relations between the two sides, held in October 1982 in Beijing, China raised the following items as “obstacles” to normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and China: the Sino-Soviet border conflict, the problem of Cambodia, and the problem of Afghanistan. China presented to the Soviet Union a list of five demands on Cambodia:

1.-The Soviet Union must end its support of Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia.

2.-Vietnam must announce the complete withdrawal of all of its troops from Cambodia.

Talks on normalizing Sino-Vietnamese relations could begin after the first Vietnamese units withdrew from Cambodia.

3.-China would take measures to improve relations with the Soviet Union.

4.-A coalition government would be formed in Cambodia representing all of the Cambodian factions (this meant the legalization of the genocidal Pol Pot faction).

5.-International guarantees for an independent and non-aligned Cambodia.

On 1 March 1983, China made these five points public. In fact, at that time China was putting forward this five-point program for resolving the Cambodia problem mainly for use as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Soviet Union and to put pressure on the U.S. and ASEAN. In fact, at that time China had no intention of resolving the issue because China believed that keeping Vietnam pinned down in Cambodia as long as possible would best serve Chinese interests. During the time that I was serving as the Vietnamese ambassador in Thailand, the Chinese ambassador in Thailand was Zhang Dewei [Truong Duc Duy], and Zhang Qing [Truong Thanh] was the Embassy Counselor [Deputy Ambassador]. I met these two individuals later during the talks with China about normalizing relations between our two countries. The time that I served as ambassador in Bangkok helped me to explore and understand the China's long-term intentions and schemes in Southeast Asia and regarding the Cambodia issue.

The overseas Chinese population was something that China wanted to exploit to gain additional political and economic advantages in Southeast Asia. There were a large number of ethnic Chinese living in Thailand and in the other countries of Southeast Asia, and they played an important role in the local economies. In other places, the ethnic Chinese community usually lived in their own separate areas, but in Thailand they had virtually assimilated into the local population. It was very hard to tell the difference between Thais who were ethnic Chinese from

indigenous Thai people, especially those in the middle class and the higher classes, including in the royal family.

Meanwhile, ethnic Vietnamese resident of Thailand had a much more unfortunate lot in life. We usually called them overseas Vietnamese residents of Thailand, but the Thai Government called them “illegal refugees” from communist Vietnam. They did not consider them to be resident aliens (they were not given a “Tang Da” – which was an ID card identifying them as legal resident aliens) and they were not allowed to become citizens of Thailand. For that reason, tens of thousands of ethnic Vietnamese who had lived and worked in Thailand for many decades still were “restricted” to a few provinces in northeastern Thailand. They had to request a travel permit from the Thai government if they wanted to travel somewhere other than the province where they were residing, such as if they wanted to visit our embassy in Bangkok during the Tet holiday or on our National Day. In addition, our ambassador was not allowed to travel to the provinces in the Northeast where large numbers of ethnic Vietnamese lived to visit our compatriots living there. Shortly before he finished his tour as ambassador, my predecessor, Hoang Bao Son, asked the Thai Foreign Ministry for permission to travel to the Northeast to visit and say farewell to our Vietnamese compatriots living there. He received a very “diplomatic” response that said only that his “safety could not be guaranteed” for such a trip. In order to overcome that obstacle to meeting with our overseas Vietnamese compatriots, in mid-March 1985, without informing the Thai Foreign Ministry ahead of time but after informing the province’s overseas Vietnamese committee, I and several members of our consular section boarded a domestic airlines direct flight to Ubon Thani, the province with the largest number of overseas Vietnamese residents in the entire Northeastern part of Thailand.

When we arrived, the overseas Vietnamese residents of Ubon and the surrounding provinces gave us a very warm greeting that revealed their earnest affection for their homeland. At the same time, however, the provincial government and the province's public security office [Police] also displayed an equal amount of interest in us. As soon as I got to my hotel room, they questioned me, asking, *"Why did you travel here without informing the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Ambassador? Why have you come to Ubon?"* I calmly replied to them, *"I received a wedding invitation from a niece and the invitation arrived rather late, so I had to leave right away. In addition, this is a private, family visit, so I did not want to bother all of you."* In general, while our discussion was initially rather tense, it ended rather smoothly and quietly. In the end, they simply requested that whenever I left the hotel to go somewhere that I should let them provide two motorcycles to drive in front of my vehicle and one police car to drive behind me as an escort. The wedding ceremony the next day turned into a large meeting held out under the open sky, filling one entire city block so that large numbers of overseas Vietnamese residents of Thailand could gather together. This is one of my most unforgettable memories of my tour in Thailand.

In October 1986, after serving for exactly four years in Thailand, I completed my tour as ambassador, left Bangkok, and returned to Hanoi. As soon as I got back to Vietnam, I was assigned the task of conducting research to help our Lao allies in talks with China that were to be held in late 1986 at the request of the Lao Foreign Ministry. I traveled to Vientiane three times in October, November, and December 1986 to exchange ideas with our Lao friends about preparing the political agenda and the plan for conducting the talks. The fact that, even though they continued to refuse to hold discussions with us on normalizing relations with Vietnam,

China responded rather quickly to the statement made by the Lao Foreign Minister (in the public statement issued by the 13th Conference of the foreign ministers of the three nations of Indochina held in August 1986) demonstrated that their goal was to sow divisions between the three countries of Indochina. They wanted to normalize their relations with Laos and improve their relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe in order to put pressure on us on the Cambodian problem. For that reason, during the talks China wanted to draw Laos into discussing specific issues related to bilateral relations between the two countries. Specifically, China raised four issues: establishing diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level; commercial relations; reaching agreement on outstanding issues regarding the border between the two countries; and allowing the residents on both sides of the border to travel freely back and forth across the border. As for Laos, it raised three issues: the tense situation along the Laotian border with China; China's support for Laotian exile forces; and reaching a settlement for all three of the nations of Indochina. Following the guidelines that they had agreed on with us, which were, "do not settle anything, primarily just feel out the other side and maintain this link in order to be able to continue to hold discussions," Laos persuaded China to come to the table to discuss issues of principle and forced them to at least mention issues that Beijing wanted to avoid, such as the Cambodian problem and the issue of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Through the results of both the official talks and the private exchanges in the hallways, we gained a clearer understanding of China's intentions and plans for our region. At that time, although China had not yet changed its policy toward Indochina and Southeast Asia, it was under pressing time constraints. China's immediate goal was to continue to squeeze us, and they wanted to put out feelers to determine the level of solidarity

and unanimity between Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, especially on the Cambodian Problem. Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing [Luu Thuat Khanh], Chief of the Chinese delegation to these talks, viewed the Cambodian problem as having no connection to Laos or to the question of China's relations with Laos, but at the same time he also wanted to use his talks with Laos to try to learn Vietnam's intentions and plans regarding the Cambodia problem.

The talks did not yield any results. Liu invited the Lao to come to Beijing for further discussions. As for me, this was an opportunity for me personally to increase my knowledge and improve my understanding of China's policy toward Indochina and of their hidden intentions at a time when they continued to publicly charge that "Vietnam is planning to establish an Indochina Federation."

Chapter Three:

The “Doi Moi” [Renovation] Party Congress

The 6th National Party Congress, or what is called Vietnam’s “Doi Moi” [Renovation] Congress, was in fact the beginning of a renovation in our economic thinking which then led to a renovation in our thinking about our foreign relations. The Party Congress took place against the background of a developing trend toward peace and stability around the world and with the major powers becoming deeply enmeshed in bilateral relationships of détente – Soviet-American, Soviet-Chinese, and Chinese-American. The thing that had the largest and the most direct effect on the Cambodian problem was Sino-Soviet détente. It is no accident that Politburo Resolution 32 dated 9 July 1986 stating that we had to achieve a political settlement to the Cambodian problem and to begin normalizing relations with China (“...*a solution for the Cambodian problem must firmly protect the successes of the Cambodian revolution and maintain solidarity between the three nations of Indochina*” ...) was issued just a few days before Gorbachev’s 28 July 1986 speech at Vladivostok in which Gorbachev announced the broad outlines of a new Soviet Policy toward the Asia-Pacific region. This new policy was to develop closer ties with China and to resolve the “three obstacles” that China had raised as blocking improved Sino-Soviet relations (withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, ending the Sino-Vietnamese border conflict, and resolving the Cambodian problem). Gorbachev proclaimed, “*The Cambodian problem cannot be resolved in distant capitals or by the United Nations; it must be resolved by Vietnam and China, two socialist neighbors.*”

In addition, during the years 1986-1988 our country’s economic and social crisis reached its height. Faced with the urgent requirements of both the international environment and our

domestic situation, the Party decided that our foreign policy must move into a new struggle phase in which we would establish relationships of peaceful coexistence with China, ASEAN, and the United States in order to be able to quickly rebuild our economy and develop our nation in peace. The struggle phase aimed at achieving complete security for the Cambodian revolution and pursuing the illusory goal of achieving “an irreversible situation” in Cambodia had now ended and we were forced to accept the reality that we needed to strive to gradually, one-step at a time, work toward a political settlement for the Cambodian problem.

After being selected to attend the 6th Party Congress in December 1986, I was elected to the Party Central Committee. Then, in January 1987, I was appointed as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for resolving the Cambodian problem.

[Translator’s Note: The edited 2003 version of Tran Quang Co’s manuscript deleted the following section from the original 2001 version of the manuscript posted on the internet.] On 7 March 1987, the Politburo met to review our proposed diplomatic struggle plan. The Politburo concluded that China was a two-faced country – while it was still socialist, it also was following a policy of hegemony. Assessing China’s strategy toward Indochina, the Politburo laid out three possibilities for the future:

- 1.-Continued confrontation
- 2.-Peaceful coexistence
- 3.-Friendly cooperation

This provided the foundation for our decision to launch a two-pronged diplomatic attack. On the one hand, we would propose that China and Vietnam hold secret talks to work out the framework of a solution to the Cambodian problem while on the other hand Cambodia

would publicly announce a policy of national reconciliation. We decided that working out a solution with China would be our main effort, while at the same time we would also encourage discussion of a settlement in other forums as well. [End deleted section]

On 9 April 1987, to help the Politburo move forward with the implementation of Politburo Resolution 32 and of the 6th Party Congress's resolution on external relations [foreign policy], the Foreign Ministry issued an order directing the formation of an internal research cell designated CP87. The order gave this new cell the following missions:

- To study policies for resolving issues involving our normalization of relations with China, the Cambodian problem, and peace in Southeast Asia and to draft struggle plans to be used before, during, and after solutions were reached:

- To study various forums that might have a positive effect on achieving our goals;

- To study how to make coordinated efforts with the Soviet Union, Laos, and Cambodia to achieve our goals.

The permanent members of CP87 were Tran Quang Co; Deputy Cell Chief Dang Nghiem Hoanh (Chief of the Foreign Ministry's External Relations Analysis and Review Bureau); Nguyen Phuong Vu (Chief of the China Bureau); and Tran Xuan Man (Chief of the Asia II Bureau). The non-permanent members of CP87 included Dang Nghiem Bai (Chief of the North American Bureau); Ta Huu Canh (Chief of the Soviet Union Bureau); Nguyen Can (Chief of the Asia III Bureau); Trinh Xuan Lang (Chief of the Press Bureau), etc. As the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs specializing in the Cambodian problem, I was directly in charge of directing and guiding the activities of CP87.

The Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of Cambodia also formed a component called B1, consisting of Deputy Foreign Minister Dith Munty, Sok An, Chom Prasit, etc. to be CP87's partner in this effort.

Chapter Four:

CP87 and the Three Levels of Relationships to the Cambodian Issue

Because of the increasingly difficult and complex international and regional situation, the Cambodia problem had become very internationalized, and for that reason we had to work together to determine what were the basic factors before we could put forward plans for resolving the problem. Based on our analysis of the situation, we concluded that a resolution of this Cambodian problem that had become so highly internationalized was not only in the interests of the Cambodian parties; it also involved the interests of the other countries in the region, and it was also influenced by the strategic calculations of the world's major powers. Therefore, the parties directly involved in working out a solution to the Cambodian problem could be divided into three separate levels:

Level 1: The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the P5), and primarily the three great powers – China, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

Level 2: The countries of Southeast Asia, primarily Vietnam and Thailand.

Level 3: The Cambodian parties, consisting of the State of Cambodia (SOC) and the three factions that made up the so-called "Democratic Campuchia."

At first glance, one would have thought that the Cambodian parties and the countries that bordered on Cambodia would have to play the decisive role in determining Cambodia's fate, because they were the ones who had the most direct interest in this matter. However, when we considered the matter more deeply, we could see that it was the major powers that were the ones that would play the decisive role in a settlement. Our study of a solution naturally would have to focus on closely monitoring those parties directly involved, the ones in

Level Three, but we could not ignore actions involving the relationships between the countries belonging to Level One, meaning the strategies of the major powers – the United States, the Soviet Union, and especially China.

[Translator's Note: The edited 2003 version of Tran Quang Co's manuscript deleted the following section from the original 2001 version of the manuscript posted on the internet.] We noted that, unlike the Soviet Union and the United States, China's strategy was constantly changing. The year 1978 had been a turning point in China's foreign relations strategy, when it shifted from a strategy of supporting world revolution against American imperialism to one of cooperating with the U.S. and other reactionary forces opposed to the world revolution. In order to win the American sympathy and support that it required because of its need for Western capital and technology to implement the "four modernizations," China had taken a number of very drastic steps in the field of foreign policy: in 1978 it had cut off all aid to Vietnam and Albania, the two strongest opponents of imperialism; it had begun publicly expressing opposition to "the great hegemonist, the Soviet Union" and the "little hegemonist, Vietnam"; it called itself the "Eastern NATO" and called Vietnam the "Eastern Cuba"; it recognized the dictatorial Pinochet regime that had recently overthrown President Allende of Chile; it supported the African counter-revolutionaries fighting against Angola; it supported the Camp David agreement between the U.S., Israel, and Egypt and opposed the interests of the Arab and Palestinian peoples; etc. In Southeast Asia, China had used the Cambodia problem to form an alliance with the U.S., Japan, ASEAN, and the Western nations to blockade and isolate Vietnam. China was using the Cambodia problem and its attacks against Vietnam as its primary tool in their global strategy of changing "friends into enemies and enemies into friends" in

order to support the achievement of their “four modernizations” goal. In 1981, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China began to readjust and alter their strategies and began improving the relations between each pair of countries in this great power group. In October 1982, China reopened the Sino-Soviet talks. At the same time, China shifted from “opposing Soviet hegemony” to opposing “both superpowers” - the United States and the Soviet Union. From mid-1984 on, the Soviet Union began to change its strategy on the Cambodian problem. They began to push both Vietnam and Cambodia to seek a political settlement for the Cambodian problem. They suggested that we might want to meet with Sihanouk and begin discussions with the United States and China on the Cambodia problem.

China had no common interest with Vietnam or with any other socialist country in defending socialism against imperialism. China publicly stated that they were defending socialism, but China never made any public statements about defending socialism in any of the other countries of the world. This meant that China was only interested in defending Chinese socialism and Chinese hegemony. [End deleted section]

In order to direct our actions at a time when a great deal of our knowledge and understanding about foreign relations was still in a state of flux, when we were trying to find the light, we held internal discussion sessions within CP87 in a spirit of “free thinking” in order to try to be able to determine the true nature of the problem. When a person’s knowledge of the outside world is controlled by emotion more than it is by intellect, that person tends to disregard reality and see only the temporary, the fleeting. After the 1988 Spratly Islands incident in which China inflicted heavy losses on our navy and at a time when China was continuing to create tension in its relations with us and was rejecting our proposals to improve

relations between our two nations, many differing ideas surfaced amongst ourselves. Initially the climate was not favorable for normalizing relations with China in accordance with the spirit of Politburo Resolution 13. We could more clearly see China's expansionist, hegemonistic side than we could see its socialist side. Many of us said that at a time when China was opposing us on the Cambodian problem and striving to seize and occupy our border areas and our offshore islands, for us to decide to withdraw our army from Cambodia and amend the introductory section to our Party Regulations would be a rightist mistake for our relations with China. It was impossible for us to fully implement the Politburo's policy decision to cut back on our anti-Chinese propaganda activities. On 20 May 1987, in a true spirit of true objectivity and realism, the Foreign Ministry submitted a report to the Politburo recommending that we change the wording of the Introduction to our Constitution by removing the section stating that China was "our direct and most dangerous enemy," just as we had already changed the wording of our Party Regulations. However, it was not until 26 August 1988 that our National Assembly finally approved the resolution making this change. Some people said sarcastically, "Does the Foreign Ministry plan to get down on its knees and kneel before China?"

However, in 1989, when the crisis within the socialist camp began, in a number of sections and branches of the Central Committee and the government, and even within the Politburo itself, differing opinions arose about the Tiananmen incident and about the situation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At that time, an argument that was often heard was that "even if it is expansionist, at least China is still a socialist nation."

I and the other permanent members of CP87 spent a great deal of time debating whether China's true character was socialism or whether it was hegemonistic expansionism.

Which of these was the primary factor in China's foreign policy? Concretely, what was "Chinese socialism?" What did China want in Cambodia? What did they hope to gain by supporting and supplying the Khmer Rouge in fighting against Vietnam? What were China's intentions toward Vietnam?

We saw that China now had two different faces: the face of socialism and the face of hegemonistic expansionism. Its socialist nature was exhibited somewhat more clearly in its domestic policies, in its social structure, and in its economic structure. However, China's foreign policy was still its ancient, traditional policy of hegemonistic expansionism. The point in China's nature was its hegemonistic ambitions. However, the things that China used as its tools to implement that policy were always changing. Depending on China's interests at any particular point in time, China could view a country as a friend or as an enemy. In Southeast Asia, when China wanted to oppose or to pressure the capitalist governments of the Southeast Asian nations it had either formed or supported the formation of Maoist communist parties in Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, etc. But when China decided that it needed to gain the sympathy and support of the capitalist governments in this region, we saw those communist parties wither and die, one at a time, in order to serve China's goals and objectives. Then, after the Tiananmen Square incident, to try to calm the reactions of the United States and the West, China had sacrificed the entire Malaysian Communist Party. Following Beijing's instructions, the General Secretary of that party, Chin Peng [Tran Binh], an ethnic Chinese, signed a document of surrender to the Malaysian government and dissolved the communist party.

The same thing happened later on to the Khmer Rouge. An article in the newspaper "Khmer Knowledge" published on 17 October 2000 with the headline "China Murdered Pol Pot

to Threaten the Remaining Khmer Rouge Commanders and Force Them to Join Hun Sen,” reported that:

“After meeting with the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok, Pol Pot died not from disease and not at the hands of Hun Sen; he died because China had poisoned him (?). Because China had not been able to persuade the Khmer Rouge commanders to go over to the side of Prime Minister Hun Sen, China murdered Pol Pot as a threat to the other Khmer Rouge commanders...The reason that China wanted the Khmer Rouge commanders to go over to Hun Sen’s side was because China had chosen Hun Sen as a useful political “card” for them to use after Pol Pot no long meant anything to them.”

In the 50-year history of the People’s Republic of China, during more than thirty of those years China opposed first the Soviet Union and then Vietnam. Because of that, I was skeptical that we could ever use our common ideology of socialism to secure the sympathy and support of China.

During our study of China’s intentions both toward Vietnam and toward the Cambodian question, we drew up a list of the changes in China’s position about resuming talks to normalize relations with us during the 1980-1988 time period. The results of our analysis revealed that ever since China unilaterally withdrew from the second round of Sino-Vietnamese talks on normalizing relations between our two nations on 8 March 1980, China had repeatedly raised its conditions for resuming the talks with Vietnam:

a. -(1980-September 1985) China demanded that we withdraw all of our troops from Cambodia, saying that it would then be prepared to resume the talks:

-October 1982: During the first round of Sino-Soviet talks, China gave the Soviet Union a five-point proposal on the Cambodian problem Point 2 of this proposal said: If Vietnam announces a total troop withdrawal, China will begin consultations with Vietnam about normalizing relations between the two nations as soon as Vietnam withdraws its first units. In March 1983, China made this proposal public.

-After a massive campaign of artillery and ground attacks along our northern border lasting for three months (April to June 1984), China announced: *"All Vietnam has to do is to promise to withdraw its troops from Cambodia, and then the two sides will be able to begin talks."*

-On 21 January 1985, in his reply to a letter from Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach dated 8 January 1985 proposing that the two sides resume the talks, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian [Ngo Hoc Khiem] wrote, *"The primary reason that Sino-Vietnamese relations soured was the Vietnamese Army's invasion and occupation of Cambodia...Only after Vietnam publicly promises and implements a troop withdrawal from Cambodia can talks have any practical significance..."*

b. From September 1985 to the end of 1985, when we announced that we would withdraw all of our troops from Cambodia in 1990, China no longer said that it would be "prepared to hold talks" with us but said only that there could be talks between the ambassadors of the two nations.

-On 6 September 1985, the Chinese Ambassador in Hanoi sent a diplomatic note replying to a note that our Foreign Ministry had sent to China on 21 August 1985. This note said, *"Vietnam's announcement prolonged the date of the final troop withdrawal until 1990 and*

raised irrational conditions for this troop withdrawal, which means that Vietnam has not yet shown good faith. It would be difficult for talks of any kind between the two countries to achieve anything. If Vietnam has anything that it needs to say to us, its message can be transmitted between the ambassadors of the two countries."

c.-From the end of 1985 to March 1986, China on the one hand continued to demand that we promise to withdraw our forces but on the other, it raised the condition that China would immediately talk to Vietnam only if Vietnam did not exclude Pol Pot's forces from a settlement.

-On 18 December 1985, after a visit to China Rumanian leader Ceausescu asked Hoang Tung to transmit the following message to Party General Secretary Le Duan: *"China will immediately begin talks with Vietnam if Vietnam agrees that it will not exclude Pol Pot's forces. The talks will start before Vietnam's troop withdrawal from Cambodia is complete, but it must promise to withdraw all of its troops."*

d.-From March 1986 (when the three reactionary Khmer factions put forward their eight-point proposal) up to the present (June 1987), China has demanded that Vietnam must withdraw all of its troops, but it also demands that Vietnam must talk directly with the "Coalition Government of Democratic Campuchia" and with Sihanouk, and it says China will only hold direct talks with Vietnam after the Cambodian issue is resolved in the manner China desires.

-On 25 August 1986 Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing told Vu Thuan, the Deputy Chief of our Foreign Ministry's China Bureau, that China could not hold talks with

Vietnam about the Cambodian problem on behalf of Cambodia. He said that Vietnam must hold direct talks with “Democratic Campuchea.”

-In October 1986, Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang [Ho Dieu Bang] said the following to Erich Honecker, the General Secretary of the East German Communist Party, during Honecker’s visit to Beijing: *“Initially China thought that it could hold talks (with Vietnam) first and that the troops could be withdrawn later. However, after reviewing this issue many times, China has decided that Vietnam must withdraw its troops first and only then can there be talks. That is the best plan; otherwise, talks would have a negative effect on ASEAN and the three factions (Sihanouk, Son Sann, and the Khmer Rouge).”*

-On 14 May 1987 Deng Xiaoping received UN Secretary General De Cuellar and asked him to pass an oral message to us. The message was: *“Only after the Cambodian problem is resolved in this manner (Vietnam withdraws its troops from Cambodia and a quadripartite coalition government is formed headed by Sihanouk and consisting of Sihanouk, Son Sann, Khieu Samphan, and Heng Samrin) will China agree to hold direct talks with Vietnam. Those talks will include discussion of normalization of relations between China and Vietnam. Prior to that, no direct talks are possible.”*

-On 26 July 1987, Thach met with the Chinese ambassador to pass along Prime Minister Pham Van Dong’s “oral message” proposing that the two countries hold secret talks. On 28 July 1987, Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian [Ngo Hoc Khiem] said that China could not respond to that message because China would not accept a “fait accompli” in Cambodia.

And so, after it unilaterally broke off the talks (after China launched a war of aggression against Vietnam in February 1979, we conducted two rounds of talks with China: Round 1, from

18 April to 18 May 1979 in Hanoi, and Round 2 from 28 June 1979 to 6 March 1980 in Beijing), from 1980 to the end of 1988 Vietnam on almost twenty different occasions sent letters or diplomatic messages to China proposing resumption of the talks, but all of these proposals were rejected by China for one reason or another. In addition, China had steadily increased its conditions for holding such talks (on the military side, it demanded that Vietnam withdraw its troops, and on the political side it demanded that Vietnam agree to the formation of a coalition government in Cambodia that included the Khmer Rouge). While they were refusing to hold talks with us, China conducted talks about normalizing relations with the Soviet Union (beginning in October 1982) and with Laos (beginning in late 1986) in order to isolate and pressure Vietnam. In particular, China exploited its talks with the Soviet Union. After Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party (11 March 1985), the Soviet Union and China began discussions on the Cambodian problem during their seventh round of talks, held in Beijing 4 to 20 October 1985. Immediately thereafter, China displayed an arrogant attitude and stopped talking about holding discussions with Vietnam in order to increase its pressure on Vietnam on the Cambodian problem. During the 10th round of Sino-Soviet talks, held in Moscow on 7 February 1987, China again raised the “three obstacles” to normalizing relations with the Soviet Union and said that the biggest obstacle was Vietnam’s aggression against Cambodia. From that point on, the focus of the Sino-Soviet meetings was always on discussions of the Cambodian problem and publicizing that issue.

Chapter Five:

From Opposing Genocide to the “Red Solution”!

It was clear that China was using the Cambodian problem to improve its standing in its relationships with the big powers, and most immediately in its relations with the Soviet Union and its relations with the United States. As for Gorbachev, he was ready to use Cambodia as a “gift” to achieve an early meeting with Deng Xiaoping and to improve relations with China in order to influence Soviet-American relations. It was in this context that the so-called “red solution” was born. It grew out of Gorbachev’s illusory hope that the Cambodian problem could be resolved by two socialist countries, Vietnam and China. That is why they wanted to bring the two hostile Khmer communist forces together and have Pol Pot and Ieng Sary’s pro-Beijing Khmer Rouge forces and the pro-Hanoi State of Cambodia shake hands with one another under the banner of “national reconciliation.”

In early March 1987, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze traveled to Phnom Penh during a visit to the three nations of Indochina. After meeting with Shevardnadze, Hun Sen told Do Chinh, the Chief of Vietnam’s Specialist [Advisory] Group in Cambodia, that:

“The Soviet Union appears to want to encourage a quick settlement of the Cambodian problem as well as of the problem of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union has probably already prepared an outline of a political settlement in Cambodia, but although I questioned him closely on this issue, he would not tell me. I am sure that the Soviet Union will raise this issue during Gorbachev’s upcoming meeting with Nguyen Van Linh in Moscow (May 1987). Shevardnadze talked about Cambodian national reconciliation and asked me whom among the Khmer Rouge we would still be able to use.”

Hun Sen saw a connection between this conversation and the statement that Gorbachev made in Vladivostok on 28 July 1986, and he said it was possible that the Soviet Union was thinking about encouraging the two Cambodian communist factions to make an arrangement between themselves. When he recounted Shevardnadze's statement encouraging Cambodia to strongly push for national reconciliation, Hun Sen said, *"If they [the Khmer Rouge] come back in they will kill the good people, and I will be the first one that they kill."*

After the Politburo meeting held on 7 March 1987, Le Duc Tho traveled to Laos to hold discussions with the Lao Politburo. Then, in late April 1987, Le Duc Tho and Le Duc Anh flew to Cambodia to meet with the Cambodian leaders to discuss pushing for a political settlement in Cambodia and for normalizing relations with China. Tran Xuan Man and I from CP87 were part of their delegation during their trip to Cambodia. At that time, Le Duc Tho put forward the idea of a "red solution." That was the first time that personally I had heard of the so-called "red solution." Briefly, the "red solution" was the product of the illusory idea of resolving the Cambodian conflict by reconciling Phnom Penh with the genocidal Pol Pot clique and establishing a socialist Cambodia that would both satisfy China and our own leaders. In our hearts we – the members of CP87 – all felt that such a monstrous idea was completely unacceptable. This was in part because we were so nauseated by the crimes that the Khmer Rouge had committed against the Cambodian people as well as against our own people that we could not even consider any kind of cooperation with them, and in part because we thought that there was little possibility that such a dangerous game could be successfully implemented. Naturally, the Cambodian leaders gave this idea a cold reception. They advocated "winning the whole pot" through a military solution, and they viewed all of their opponents – the Khmer

Rouge, Sihanouk, and Son Sann – as enemies who had to be eliminated. However, under pressure from their two main allies, the Soviet Union and Vietnam, during the meeting between the Cambodian sides in Jakarta Hun Sen had a trial meeting with Khieu Samphan, but this Khmer Rouge ringleader's only response was an attitude of contempt.

On 22 December 1987, at the Soviet Union's suggestion, we and our Cambodian allies agreed to a Soviet plan to deliver an "oral message" to the Chinese Foreign Minister suggesting that the Soviet Union and China should help to arrange a meeting between the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge. If China agreed, the Soviet Union was prepared to meet with China at the foreign minister level. China did not respond to this suggestion. China did not yet want to resolve the Cambodian problem. It still wanted to use this issue as a bargaining chip with the Soviet Union and to use the "three obstacles" as a brake to slow improvement in relations with the Soviet Union.

On 30 July 1980, during a briefing on the results of the first informal meeting in Jakarta (Jakarta Informal Meeting – JIM1) to the ambassadors and representatives of the socialist countries in Phnom Penh, when the East German ambassador asked about the possibility of inducing Khieu Samphan and moderate Khmer Rouge officials to cooperate, Hun Sen said,

"Those individuals are animals – they are not human beings. Let them stay in the jungle. We can achieve a settlement without them. They will never change, and the Cambodian people will never accept them. We know the Khmer Rouge very well. I hope that you comrades will understand us – we cannot work with those guys. If it was just up to Cambodia, Cambodia does not need the Khmer Rouge. However, the Cambodian problem involves our neighboring countries as well, and Vietnam needs to normalize its relations with China, so we will accept

them politically. ...I say that we should leave them out there in the jungle. That would not be a problem. If Thailand is neutral, then Cambodia can win over Sihanouk and Son Sann so that we can all fight the Khmer Rouge together."

On 12 October 1989, during a confidential conversation with Ambassador Ngo Dien, after criticizing the Soviet Union for making concessions to China and trying to pressure Cambodia into entering into an agreement with China and the Khmer Rouge, thereby equating "the criminal with the victim" and showing a lack of respect for allied countries, Hun Sen said,

"There are also some Vietnamese comrades who say that we must make some kind of concession to allow Beijing to save face. In 1987, I considered this kind of solution. The Khmer Rouge, excluding their ringleaders, could participate. They would have to apologize to the people and then we would have national reconciliation. Now I have thought about this a great deal and have talked to the people in many different areas of my country, and after my meeting with Khieu Samphan and his clique I clearly understand that under no conditions can we play games with those guys. We must completely dissolve and disband their forces."

In January 1989, Hun Sen published a book titled "*Cambodia – the 10 Year Journey*." This book contains a long section that discusses the "*red solution*." The book says that this idea was "*mistaken and dangerous*," that it was "*irrational and immoral to equate the Pol Pot criminals with their victims*," and then concludes that "*the red solution was an extremely dangerous path for the Cambodian people to take. This solution was impossible to implement, because we were not as 'red' as people thought; we were not so 'red' that we could reconcile with the 'red' of Pol Pot's clique*."

[Translator's Note: The edited 2003 version of Tran Quang Co's manuscript deleted the following section from the original 2001 version of the manuscript posted on the internet.] On 1 June 1990, when he met with Thach at Noi Bai Airport on the way to Tokyo to meet with Sihanouk, Hun Sen said,

"The Cambodian Politburo sees many problems with the solution that was agreed upon by the three Party General Secretaries (the red solution). This is because of three factors:

1.-The Pol Pot clique is a very radical, extreme nationalist clique.

2.-After more than ten years of fighting one another, it would not be easy for the two armies to cooperate with one another.

3.-The Pol Pot clique will try to provide a larger number of their Party members than the Cambodian People's Revolutionary Party has in order to secure the majority in a new unified Party."

On the afternoon of 22 June 1990, Phoun Sipraseuth, the Lao Foreign Minister, told our ambassador, Nguyen Xuan, that:

"We should not, and we cannot implement the Red Solution. It would be bad for us. China is now isolated because it is the only country that support genocide. China probably does not want the Red Solution but instead wants a solution that included all four parties in order to be able to maintain the role and the position of the Khmer Rouge without having to bear the burden of being accused of supporting genocide."

The Chinese themselves many times gave us their direct assessment of the "Red Solution." On 17 July 1990, Liu Shuqing told our ambassador, Dang Nghiem Hoanh,

“Vietnam is still not fully committed to resolving the Cambodia problem. Hun Sen’s idea of reaching a settlement with Sihanouk is unrealistic. Vietnam’s idea of cooperation between the two Communist Khmer factions is also unrealistic. A coalition structure is needed to combine all four sides under Sihanouk’s leadership. Only such a structure would be able to receive international recognition and support.”

On 27 July 1990, during a reception at the Egyptian Embassy in Hanoi, Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei told Vu Thuan, Deputy Chief of our Foreign Ministry’s China Bureau, that:

“The Red Solution is impractical because to do something like that would be just inviting everyone to attack you and you would just be isolating yourselves. Currently China’s policy is to defend socialism within our country, but we do not raise high the banner of socialism in our foreign policy.” [End deleted section]

[Translator’s Note: The following paragraphs from the original manuscript posted on the internet were revised in the 2003 edited manuscript. Following is translation of the original section.] So, who was the originator of this monstrous idea? Gorbachev himself was the father of this idea. As for Hun Sen, he certainly did consider such a solution. On 17 June 1987, during a visit to Laos, Hun Sen told Lao Foreign Minister Phoun Sipraseuth,

“We would rather form a coalition with a Khmer Rouge group that does not include Pol Pot than form a coalition with Sihanouk, because the Pol Pot group has forces but it does not have political stature, while the opposite is true of Sihanouk – he does not have forces but he does have political stature.”

However, most of the people who “nourished” and supported the Red Solution were Vietnam’s leaders, or at least some of its leaders. Throughout the period from 1987 to 1991, there were members of Vietnam’s leadership who viewed the “Red Solution” as the best card for us to play and believed that resolving the Cambodian problem in this manner would make China happy. However, this idea was not at all consistent with Deng Xiaoping’s policy of *“winning the sympathy and support of the West in order to pursue the four modernizations,”* and this policy also increased the State of Cambodia’s suspicions of us. In fact, the Chinese themselves told the United States and the Western countries about this idea in order to demonstrate that Vietnam always used devious tricks and that it was not a reliable negotiating partner. They said that to the outside world Vietnam proclaimed its “opposition to genocide,” but internally it was pressuring Phnom Penh to reach an agreement with the Pol Pot clique.

It is truly unfortunate that this illusion of a “Red Solution” continued to survive in our calculations about the Cambodian problem for a quite a long time, even after China had told us directly in the summit meeting in Chengdu [Thanh Do] [a city in China] that they simply could not accept such a “gift” from us!

Chapter Six:

An Effort to Loosen our Shackles: Widening and Diversifying our Relations

In a meeting of CP87 held on 14 May 1987, we had a lively discussion about how to gain the initiative on the issue of resolving the Cambodia problem. Thach suggested the following idea:

“It is not absolutely essential that we work only with China on this. We must recognize that the three big powers – the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China – are now getting together to discuss the framework for a solution. We must remember our experiences back in 1954 and again in 1974. China is still forced to try to exploit the contradictions [disputes] between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and China and the Soviet Union cannot resolve the problem by themselves, going behind America’s back. They must also reach agreement with the U.S. as well. Therefore, it is wrong for us to just continue to charge down one single path, the path of talks with China.”

I personally was very much in agreement with those thoughts. For a long time, I had felt that we were a bit too dependent, in both our thoughts and our actions, on our “oldest brother,” the Soviet Union, and our “second oldest brother,” China. I felt that because of this we had limited ourselves in our diplomatic activities around the world as well as in the Southeast Asia region. If we wanted China to soften up [its policies toward us], we had to make it see that we were steadily making more and more friends. If, on the other hand, we only looked to China and if China saw that we were weak and alone, they would be very rigid in their demands on us. That was the reason that China had forced us to make one concession after another. On the other hand, Gorbachev, for the sake of the Soviet Union’s interests as a great

power, had, whether intentionally or unintentionally, placed Vietnam in a situation in which it had to “work with China to resolve the Cambodian problem.”

We have to admit that with the very warped, overly-rigid way of thinking on the part of “both sides” at that time, a time when just thinking about the issue of establishing relations with Western countries was considered an aberration, the fact that our Foreign Ministry even considered the idea of expanding contacts and cooperation with the rest of the world, outside the socialist bloc, has to be considered to be an earthshaking event. It was not easy for people to accept such an idea. The concept of expanding and broadening our external relationships, of multi-lateralizing our diplomatic relations, hit us a bit late, but at least it was not too late.

Following that line of thinking, we studied and then launched a diplomatic offensive between June and August 1987. This diplomatic offensive had the following special characteristics:

- Our attacks were not aimed at the substance of the solution, as they had been before, but rather at the structure of the solution to the problem.

- We put out feelers in every forum that might possibly lead to a solution, and we made direct or indirect contact with all of our opponents (China, ASEAN, and the United States).

- We cooperated closely with Cambodia in issuing an “announcement of a policy of national reconciliation.”

This offensive yielded the desired results. It revealed that there were two opposing tendencies within the ranks of our opponents, and the contradictions [disputes] within our opponents ranks exploded in a violently open way (between China on one side and ASEAN, the

U.S., and Sihanouk on the other; internal disputes within ASEAN itself; and internal disputes with the tri-partite “Democratic Campuchea” coalition).

Following the developing trend toward dialogue between the Soviet Union and the United States, the announcement made on 29 July 1987 during the meeting between Vietnam (Nguyen Co Thach) and Indonesia (Mochtar), representing the two sides (the nations of Indochina on one side and the ASEAN countries on the other) in which they agreed on the format of holding a “cocktail party” to bring together the different Cambodian parties to discuss the Cambodian problem and its linkage with the problems of Southeast Asia, combined with Vietnam’s announcement that it was inviting foreign observers to come in and witness its 1987 troop withdrawal, transformed the entire situation. The U.S. sent a presidential envoy to Vietnam and Sihanouk announced that he was temporarily resigning his post as Chairman of Democratic Campuchia and that he was prepared to meet with Hun Sen.

[Translator’s Note: The edited 2003 version of Tran Quang Co’s manuscript deleted the following section from the original version of the manuscript posted on the internet.] On 20 May 1988, the Politburo issued Resolution 13, which stated that we would resolve the Cambodian problem by 1990 and that we would strive to normalize our relations with China. The resolution stated very clearly that:

“The effort to normalize relations with China will be a difficult and complex task and it will take some time. After relations are normalized, it is unlikely that the relationship between our two countries will return to what it was during the 1950s and 1960s. Struggle [disputes] will continue in many different forms, but not like the current state of confrontation between us...We must always remain vigilant and we must make excellent preparations of all types when

we enter into this new struggle so that we can defeat all evil plots and schemes aimed at weakening us, at stimulating "peaceful evolution," at sowing internal divisions in our country and sabotaging our internal solidarity, at creating splits between the three nations of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia... We must guard against and overcome warped and distorted thinking that views China only as a hegemonistic power and fails to see that China is also socialist, or that views China solely as a socialist country and fails to see its hegemonistic and expansionist nature."

Regarding Laos and Cambodia, the resolution said,

"Whether Laos and Cambodia move forward into socialism or whether they follow the popular national democratic path of development will be decided by the Parties and the people of those two nations themselves, consistent with the actual conditions and aspirations of the people of those two countries..." [End deleted section]

All of these actions created a realistic possibility for breaking through the stalemate on the Cambodian problem that had then lasted for more than eight years. China was forced to rethink its position. It was no longer able to dominate ASEAN or Sihanouk. As for the ASEAN countries, their greatest worry about Vietnam in connection with the Cambodian problem, the fact that Vietnam had stationed troops in Cambodia, was now being eased by Vietnam's announcement that it was withdrawing its troops from Cambodia. New forums for discussing the Cambodian question had been opened up, thereby putting pressure on China.

In the growing climate of détente between the three major powers, at that time China was still in the most inferior position, while Soviet-American détente was developing at the fastest pace. The U.S. and the Soviet Union had agreed on a resolution of the Afghanistan

problem, an Asian problem, without China playing any role in that agreement. China was worried that, given the current pace of developments, the U.S. and the Soviet Union would resolve the other Asian problems, such as the Cambodian problem, without China playing any role in these matters. China wanted to play the role of being one of the three major powers that resolved the Cambodia problem. This would benefit Chinese interests more than allowing the Cambodian parties to resolve the problem between themselves, or than having the problem resolved between ASEAN and the Indochina nations, or than having the problem resolved between China and Vietnam. That is why China opposed the Vietnamese-Indonesian agreement reached on 29 July 1987 in Ho Chi Minh City; that is why China tried to sabotage the Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks; that is why China demanded that Vietnam hold talks with Sihanouk; that is why China helped Thailand to instigate the Thai-Lao border conflict; and that is why China caused the clashes with our navy in the Spratly Islands in March and April 1988. Against this background, Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea announced the seventh round of withdrawals of Vietnamese volunteer army forces from Cambodia in 1988. This would be the largest round of troop withdrawals since we began the troop withdrawal process in 1982. This announcement created additional difficulties and confusion for China because international public opinion again began to focus on the problem of how to deal with Pol Pot and his genocidal clique, and at the same time China's increased the sense of urgency for reaching a political solution to the Cambodian problem before Vietnam withdrew the last of its troops in 1990, as we had previously announced.

Chapter Seven:

China Makes Changes to Adapt to the Changing World

On 6 December 1988, after Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen [Tien Ky Tham] visited the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union gave us the following report:

“Qian’s statements on the Cambodian issue have changed somewhat, demonstrating that Beijing is gradually beginning to realize that a solution of the Cambodian problem along the lines of the Chinese scenario is unrealistic, and that China is now in the process of abandoning its policy of continuing to prolong the conflict.”

With regard to a solution, China agreed with the Soviet Union that the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops was one part of the solution. As for Cambodian internal issues, China said that “those issues must be resolved by the Cambodian people themselves on the basis of national reconciliation and without outside intervention.” However, China continued to reiterate its old position about the formation of a four-party provisional coalition government headed by Sihanouk and a gradual reduction and eventual dissolution of the armies of all four of the Cambodian factions, which would in effect erase the status quo in Cambodia.

On 24 December 1988, in response to our Foreign Minister’s letter dated 15 December, China invited one of our Deputy Foreign Ministers to come to Beijing for an exchange of ideas between the deputy foreign ministers of Vietnam and China in order to prepare the way for meeting between the Vietnamese and Chinese Foreign Ministers. After ten years of heated confrontation and after eight years of repeatedly refusing to hold talks with us, this was the first time that China had agreed to hold talks with Vietnam on the Cambodian problem and on normalizing relations between the two countries. With this move China had begun

implementing a change in its stratagem in Southeast Asia designed to support an overall change in China's world strategy and in its relationships with the Soviet Union and the United States. This strategic adjustment had been approved in a September 1988 conference of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo in Beidaihe [Bac Doi Ha] [a resort in Hebei Province, China]; this change was later publicized in the Chinese National Assembly in March 1989. China's adjustment in strategy took place at a time when the situation in the world as well as the situation in Southeast Asia and in Cambodia was undergoing tremendous changes, particularly since 1987. Since 1987 the U.S.-Soviet relationship had improved a great deal and had become a two-sided relationship aimed at resolving world problems, and even Asian problems. China could no longer exploit Soviet-American contradictions [disputes] as it had before. At the same time, improvements in the Sino-Soviet relationship were proceeding at a slower pace than the improvements in the Soviet-American relationship, and this weakened China's role in the relationships between the three major powers. In addition, the fact that the Soviet Union and the United States had reduced their external military commitments had encouraged the other nations of the world to take independent stances and had increased the trend toward using regional cooperation to resolve regional problems. Since 1987 the relationships between the Southeast Asian nations had gradually, step by step, begun to move from a state of conflict and confrontation to a combination of cooperation and struggle in the spirit of peaceful coexistence. The JIM 1 and JIM 2 meetings had resolved the international aspects of the Cambodian problem and had created a framework for cooperation between the two separate Southeast Asian country groups to resolve the region's problems. Of particular importance, the Chatichai government in Thailand at that time was determined to break away from China's

policy of confrontation in Southeast Asia and to instead implement a policy of “turning Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace.” In this situation, China’s continued pursuit of a policy of inciting tensions in the region, both on land and at sea, only served to increase concerns about the danger of Chinese hegemony. Now that Vietnam had withdrawn three-quarters of its troops from Cambodia and was going to withdraw all the rest in September 1989, the central core of the Cambodian problem was no longer the issue of Vietnamese troop withdrawal. The problem had now become how to eliminate the genocidal Pol Pot regime. These tremendous changes forced China to shift from a policy of protracting its normalization talks with the Soviet Union in order to exploit Soviet-American contradictions [disputes] and secure American capital investment and technology to a policy of pushing forward toward total normalization of relations with the Soviet Union and achieving a balance between China’s relationship with the Soviets and its relationship with the United States. At the same time China also would gradually, step by step, improve relations with its neighboring countries in order to create international conditions favoring the improvement of China’s position and stature both around the world and in Asia.

In January 1989 we resumed talks with China to try to normalize our relations with China and at the same time we reaffirmed our support for the State of Cambodia’s effort to preserve the fruits of its revolution.

On 5 January 1989 Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh led a high-ranking Vietnamese delegation on a visit to Phnom Penh to attend a ceremony celebrating the 10th anniversary of the formation of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea. At 4:00 that afternoon Nguyen Van Linh met with Heng Samrin in the Royal Palace. Heng Samrin told him:

“Our Politburo agrees that we will continue the diplomatic offensive based on Vietnam’s withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops and a simultaneous ending of outside military support for the hostile Khmer factions and the cessation of all outside intervention against the Cambodian revolution...this will create favorable conditions for Sino-Vietnamese and Sino-Soviet peace talks and will stimulate Cambodia’s negotiations with Thailand. We need to have new troop withdrawal schedule which includes the provision that if there is a political settlement, we will announce the total withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops by September 1989 at the latest. If Vietnam agrees to this, we will announce this in the speeches that you and I will deliver tomorrow.”

Nguyen Van Linh agreed and suggested that the Soviet Union and Laos be informed of this decision. That evening Linh told me to revise his speech to reflect this agreement between the two sides.

On the morning of 6 January 1989, in a solemn, formal gathering, Party Secretary General Hen Samrin announced:

“Cambodia and Vietnam have agreed that if there is a political settlement all Vietnamese troops will be withdrawn by September 1990 at the very latest.”

In his speech Party Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh announced,

“Vietnam is in full agreement with Cambodia that all remaining Vietnamese troops will be withdrawn by the end of September 1990. The withdrawal of all of our troops must be conducted in parallel with the cessation of outside aid to the forces opposing Cambodia and an end to the use of foreign territory against Cambodia. All of these measures must be carried out under international inspection.”

Through the discussions that we had with our Cambodian friends, as a member of the Vietnamese delegation I had a premonition of the problems that would arise when we got deeper into the details of a settlement. The Cambodian leaders were a bit too self-confident, and they wanted us to completely support them in securing total victory, while our tendency was to settle the Cambodian problem in a way that would be support our effort to improve Vietnam's relations with China.

During the first half of 1989 two rounds of talks between Vietnam and China at the deputy foreign minister level were held in Beijing (Dinh Nho Liem on our side and Liu Shuqing on the Chinese side). During the first round of talks (16-19 January 1989), in the discussions China only touched briefly on bilateral relations and then it focused the talks on the Cambodian problem. The two sides relatively quickly agreed on several of the international aspects of a Cambodian settlement (Vietnamese troop withdrawal, international inspection, ending of military aid, general elections). The two sides agreed to push the Cambodian factions to negotiate to reach a quick settlement on Cambodia. China's view was that the international aspects were basically complete and wanted us to agree on the outline of the internal aspects of a Cambodian settlement, focusing primarily on the government and on the problem of how to deal with the armies of the different Cambodian factions during the transitional period (the period from the ceasefire to the holding of general elections). They said that only if an agreement was reached on these two issues could there be a real settlement, because if there was no agreement on this aspect, even if we agreed on the international aspects the problem would still not be resolved, in which case it would be difficult to discuss bilateral relations between China and Vietnam. Our position was that Cambodian internal problems must be

resolved by the Cambodian parties themselves. Worthy of note is that when he received Dinh Nho Liem, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said,

“Four countries – China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Thailand – are the countries that are directly involved and that are responsible for the Cambodian problem, so they need to reach agreement with one another about the provisional four-party government that will lead Cambodia during the transitional period before the Cambodian problem can be finally resolved.”

China had discussed this with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union had agreed to this principle.

On 11 February 1989, the Politburo met to discuss a proposal on how to handle the struggle to resolve the Cambodian problem. The thrust of this proposal was:

-Separate the international from the internal aspects of the Cambodian and then resolve them separately, one at a time;

-Link the resolution of the Cambodian problem with the need for peace and stability in Southeast Asia;

-Use a number of different forums: the second round of Sino-Vietnamese talks, JIM 2, the four Cambodian sides, Thailand-SOC (State of Cambodia), Vietnam-Thailand, and Vietnam-United States.

Following the spirit of that proposal, on 15 February 1989 I and several cadres from CP87 flew to Jakarta for a meeting of the Working Group assigned to make preparations for the JIM 2 meeting (19-21 February 1989). The attendees would be the same as those who attended the JIM 1 meeting (the Cambodian sides, Vietnam, Laos, and the six ASEAN countries). The JIM 2 conference reaffirmed the results achieved the previous year during JIM 1 (25-28 July 1988)

and agreed that the Cambodian problem must be resolved through a political settlement that would contribute to the establishment of a Southeast Asia zone of peace and stability. The ultimate goal was to create an independent, sovereign, peaceful, neutral, and non-aligned Cambodia on the basis of the right of self-determination and national reconciliation. The conference agreed that an International Conference on Cambodia should be convened to discuss a settlement and to arrive at a comprehensive, just, and rational political solution for the Cambodian problem.

On 14 March 1989, the Politburo met. It decided to withdraw all Vietnamese troops from Cambodia by the end of September 1989 and to encourage and push the Hun Sen-Sihanouk forum [Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks].

During the second round of Sino-Vietnamese talks (8-10 May 1989), again held in Beijing, the talks immediately ran into two major obstacles: the issue of genocide and how to deal with Cambodian internal issues (formation of a four-party provisional coalition government headed by Sihanouk and the assembling and reduction in size of the armies of the four Cambodian sides). The talks ended without achieving any results. China suggested that, at least temporarily, we not make any plans for a third round of talks. Qian Qichen told Dinh Nho Liem the following (later he said the same thing publicly):

“Our two countries can only normalize relations after the Cambodian problem is resolved, and not before a resolution is reached.”

Later China bluntly said that:

“Vietnam not only must withdraw all of its troops from Cambodia; it also is responsible for resolving the consequences of Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia. Specifically, this means

the elimination of the government and the army of the People's Republic of Kampuchea that was formed after Vietnam entered Phnom Penh and drove out the Pol Pot government."

In my opinion, the primary reason that China had resumed the talks with Vietnam at the time (talks that China called "internal meetings") was to demonstrate to the world that China held the "high card" in a resolution of the Cambodian problem.

Chapter Eight:

Round One of the Paris International Conference on Cambodia

Two months later, the Paris International Conference on Cambodia was convened (30 July to 30 August 1989). Although this conference was unable to resolve the Cambodian problem, it can be said that it opened the way for the final phase. After JIM, this was the apex of all the different forums, and it was the first international conference to discuss the Cambodian problem. The conference was conducted outside the framework of the United Nations, even though UN Secretary General De Cuellar and the foreign ministers of the five countries that were members of the UN Security Council attended the conference. The U.N. Secretary General attended the conference only in the status of one of the conference attendees. During this conference, for the first time the opposing Cambodian parties all sat next to one another under a sign bearing a common name for them all: "Cambodia." In addition to the representatives of the four Cambodian factions (Hun Sen for the PRK, Khieu Samphan for the Khmer Rouge, Ranariddh for the Sihanouk faction, and Son Soubert for the Son Sann faction), delegations from the following seventeen countries, each led by the country's foreign minister, attended the conference: the Soviet Union, China, the United States, Britain, France, Japan, Australia, India, Canada, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei. The Non-Aligned Movement was represented by the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas were the co-chairmen of the conference.

On the morning of 28 July 1989, I arrived in Paris with the bulk of Vietnam's delegation. Our group consisted of Le Mai, Dang Nghiem Hoanh, Ngo Dien, Ha Van Lau, Tran Huy Chuong,

Le Cong Phung, Huynh Anh Dung, and Ms. Ton Nu Thi Ninh. The Ministry of Defense assigned Major General Phi Long to participate in our delegation. Nguyen Co Thach arrived the next day, 29 July. The conference began on the afternoon of 30 July. Although the composition of the conference's delegations did not appear to favor us, we arrived at the conference with the position of strength provided to us by our announcement of a total troop withdrawal by the end of September 1989, and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was firm and self-confident.

At the very start, the Conference laid out an agenda calling for meetings lasting for an entire month – from 30 July to 30 August 1989. This was because this was a very complicated problem and because the solutions proposed by the different sides were still rather far apart. Two major problems stood out throughout the entire course of the conference.

- 1.-Whether to exclude or to accept the genocidal Pol Pot clique.

- 2.-Whether to maintain or to eliminate the current political and military status quo in Cambodia.

The struggle was intense and heated throughout the course of the conference. Our opponents used the pressure being exerted by the five major powers and the majority of the delegations to the conference to demand the establishment of a four-party provisional coalition government headed by Sihanouk and to demand the formation of a United Nations international control and inspection apparatus. As for our side, we demanded that the genocidal Pol Pot clique be excluded; we demanded respect for the principle of no foreign intervention in Cambodia's internal affairs; we demanded that the conference respect the status quo in the Cambodia situation, meaning that there were two governments in Cambodia;

and we demanded that the conference respect the right of the Cambodian people to decide for themselves on the type of political regime Cambodia would have and the Cambodian people's right to form their own government through free general elections. Our side agreed that the U.N. could play a role if the U.N. dropped its slanted resolutions that were prejudiced against us and that supported one side against the other.

Our speech to the meeting of the full conference focused on denouncing Pol Pot's genocide, reaffirming the conclusions reached by the JIM on two key issues (Vietnamese troop withdrawal and denunciation of genocide) as well as the JIM's principle of non-interference in Cambodia's internal affairs, and on playing up and elevating the role of the State of Cambodia. The foreign ministers only attended the full conference meetings held during the first three days and the final two days of the conference, while the bulk of the time was devoted to meetings of the various committees: Committee 1 (inspection), Committee 2 (statutory guarantees [?]), Committee 3 (refugees and Cambodian reconstruction), the Ad Hoc Committee (made up of the Cambodian parties and responsible for discussing Cambodian internal issues), and the Coordination Committee, which was responsible for discussing the actual content of a settlement.

During this time, we worked to arrange private meetings with the different delegations. On 3 August Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Rogachev told us that the deputy chief of the Chinese delegation, Liu Shuqing, said that Qian Qichen could not meet with Comrade Nguyen Co Thach because of time constraints, but he told us that Qian had said that if Comrade Tran Quang Co requested a meeting, Qian might be able to meet with Co (?). The next day Liu Shuqing sent another message to us through Rogachev that said: "*Co has not yet requested a*

meeting, but if he makes such a request, it will be accepted.” On the morning of 7 August 1989, we raised this issue with the Chinese. We said that Nguyen Co Thach and Tran Quang Co would like to request a meeting with Acting Chief of the Chinese Delegation Liu Shuqing for an exchange of ideas (Qian Qichen had already returned home to China). Liu immediately accepted our request. The meeting was held in the Chinese Embassy in Paris at 4:00 that same afternoon. Liu displayed a pleasant attitude toward us even though there was no change in China’s position. Liu said that if Vietnam agreed to a four-party provisional Cambodian government (meaning that the Khmer Rouge would be included with the same status as the other three parties), then the Cambodian problem could be considered to be completely settled. He explained that China did not want the three [resistance] factions to be given three-quarters of the pie and said that all that was necessary was that all four Cambodian parties should be members, and it would be up to them how to decide how to divide up the pie. He said that a government with two sides or three sides was unrealistic and unacceptable. Liu suggested that we not use the word “genocide.” He said that the issue of genocide was an internal Cambodian problem and that they should decide that problem for themselves.

The reason that China attended the Paris Conference at a time when they were still not ready to resolve the Cambodian problem was that they were striving to break out of the isolated position in which they had found themselves after the Tiananmen incident. Meanwhile, they were in the midst of heated internal disputes over both domestic and foreign policy issues. China, ignoring the actual situation, put forward very high demands, which were to eliminate the current situation, the status quo, in Cambodia before the general elections were held and to divide power among the four factions in order to weaken the Cambodian revolution and to

create divisions between the three nations of Indochina. The United States, the West, and ASEAN all disagreed with China about the Khmer Rouge issue, but they agreed with China's position of refusing to accept the status quo situation in Cambodia, and also, they did not want to cause any further deterioration in their relations with China.

On the afternoon of 10 August, Assistant Secretary of State Lambertson and four members of the American delegation came to our delegation's office at the Kleber Conference Center and asked to meet with me to discuss the Cambodia problem. Le Mai and I met with them for one hour. They briefed us on the U.S.'s thoughts about the Cambodian problem. They said that a complete resolution of the problem was needed, and that the U.S. would not accept a partial settlement. They said that power must truly be shared with the non-communist Khmer factions and that Sihanouk must be given real, not just symbolic, power. They said that they hoped that Vietnam would influence Hun Sen to get him to soften his position. As for the issues of genocide and the Khmer Rouge, they continued their habit of talking about this issue from both sides of their mouth. They talked about the prospects for establishing good relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, but they also did not forget to mention the MIA issue. On 11 August 1989 Thach returned home to Vietnam and did not return to Paris until 25 August. The rest of our delegation stayed in Paris and split up to work with the various different committees.

Although we tried to avoid arguments with the Chinese delegation in the general meetings, as we had agreed during our meeting with Liu Shuqing, during a meeting of Committee 1 (the committee on international inspections) on 16 August to discuss the

genocide issue, after I spoke out denouncing the Khmer Rouge and provided clear evidence of their genocidal crimes, the Chinese representative counterattacked, saying,

“Vietnam’s demand for a charge of genocide is aimed at covering up its own acts of aggression and its abdication of its responsibilities. Vietnam used the excuse of genocide to send their troops into Cambodia. If we charge them with genocide, the Khmer Rouge will not be allowed to participate in the government, so they will go back into the jungle and continue to fight. Then there will be no peace in Cambodia.”

The Chinese representative said that Vietnam would have to bear the responsibility for this conference’s success or failure. I could not fail to respond to those arguments, so I insisted that we had to resolve the issue of preventing genocide, because only if we did so would it be possible for us to resolve the other issues. I clearly laid out the historical facts, which were that during the years 1975 to 1978, the period when the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime was in power, Vietnam was not in Cambodia and that during that time the only people in Cambodia were Chinese advisors.

After our statements on the genocide issue, no one except China and Singapore talked about cutting out the use of the word “genocide.” Sihanouk announced that he would not allow the Khmer Rouge to serve as the representative of the three factions, the committees all had to make note of and discuss the genocide issue, and even those who demanded that the word “genocide” not be used still had to acknowledge the brutality of the Khmer Rouge.

On 29 August 1989, in accordance with the agreed-upon agenda, all of the foreign ministers, except for the U.S. Secretary of State and the Chinese Foreign Minister, returned to Paris to attend the final portion of the conference. On 30 August, after a discussion with the

two conference co-chairmen about the draft statement that was to be issued by the international conference, Thach waited in the conference hall until 12:00 noon but then, for health reasons, had to return to our embassy to rest. We told the Conference Secretarial Committee that Deputy Foreign Minister Tran Quang Co, as the acting chief of the Vietnamese delegation, would attend the foreign minister-level meeting that would close out this conference.

The informal restricted foreign minister-level meeting began at about 2:00 in the afternoon and lasted for almost five hours. Because it was a restricted session, only two members of each delegation were allowed to attend, and so Le Mai and I were the only members of our delegation in the conference room. This session was primarily devoted to arguments about the chief of the Canadian delegation's suggested amendment to the draft statement that would be issued at the conclusion of the conference. The Canadian amendment was based on China's position. It implicitly rejected the conclusions of the JIM 2 meeting on the two key issues of a settlement. Because he did not fully understand our opponent's intentions, Hun Sen said that he accepted this amendment to the statement. To avoid a mistake and to prevent our opponents from being able to take advantage of a difference in opinion between Vietnam and Cambodia, I asked the chairman for a short recess so that the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao delegations could hold a private discussion. After explaining things so that our friends could see the dangerous scheme of our opponents that was embodied in these recommended changes, I suggested that all three of our delegations meet with the two co-chairmen to request that this amendment be edited to prevent our opponents from being able

to exploit the vague wording to claim that the Paris International Conference had rejected the JIM's conclusions about genocide.

After the draft Conference's draft statement was approved, the final official meeting was held to close the conference after one month of continuous working meetings. The short, concise joint statement of the Paris International Conference on Cambodia noted that this conference was a significant step forward. The conference temporarily adjourned and appealed to the Cambodian parties and to the involved countries to continue to work to reach a complete resolution of the problem.

The very limited results of the conference reflected the extremely complex and difficult nature of the Cambodian problem. Vietnam's troop withdrawal in September 1989 and the prospect that the State of Cambodia would be able to survive and hold firm had pressured our opponents into holding this conference, but things had not yet reached the point that they were forced to accept the political and military status quo in Cambodia. There were many reasons for the conference's lack of success, but the primary cause was the desire of China and our other opponents desire to reach a settlement on the basis of eliminating the State of Cambodia. In addition, China still hoped to be able to change the situation after Vietnam withdrew all of its troops. As for the State of Cambodia, after Hun Sen's visit to Thailand on 25 January 1989 at the invitation of Prime Minister Chatichai and after a number of meetings with the [Thai General Chavalit [Yongchaiyudh] faction beginning in June 1988, our Cambodian friends had developed some illusions about Thailand, and they had also made an inaccurate assessment of their own strength. For that reason, the 9th Plenum of their Central Committee held in July 1989, just before the Paris Conference was convened, decided to try to "win it all"

through a military solution. At that time, a number of difficult and complicated developments in the situation in Eastern Europe had begun to occur, beginning with Solidarity's taking over the reins of power in Poland.

On 5 October 1989, responding to a question in a press interview, I talked about the reason that the Paris International Conference had not been successful:

"From the very first day, public opinion both inside and outside the conference saw that the primary and the only obstacle to the conference's ability to make progress was the group representing Pol Pot, which received its primary encouragement and support from a number of countries that were pursuing only their own private interests. The closer we got to the end of the conference, the clearer this situation became. In order to try to cover up their own responsibility, they falsely accused Vietnam and the State of Cambodia of being too rigid, thereby causing a stalemate in the conference.

"How could we possibly reach an agreement when our opponents were stubborn to the point of blatantly contradicting themselves in both their positions and their arguments? They talked about respecting the principle of the sovereignty of the Cambodian people but then they demanded that foreign countries participate in the resolution of Cambodia's internal affairs and they wanted to force the Cambodian people to accept a form of government that they had arranged; they said that they were absolutely opposed to Pol Pot's murderous crimes and yet they demanded that his genocidal organization be legalized and that it be allowed to share power in governing Cambodia. The international community has a duty to eliminate the danger of genocide. In particular, the countries that have for so long loudly threatened Vietnam if it did

not withdraw its troops while at the same time avoiding any denunciation of genocide now have a duty to prevent genocide and civil war in Cambodia.

“With regard to prospects for improved relations between the nations of the region, given the rate of progress on the Cambodian issue, that still depends on subjective as well as objective factors, including our ability to transform the more positive objective factors in order to achieve our goals. For example, our ability to implement our formula of “more friends and fewer foes” in our foreign policy requires a broader concept of the meaning of the word ‘friend.’ Naturally, expanding our circle of friends does not mean eliminating struggle [disagreement] and such an effort must be based on properly defending our own national security interests.”

It should also be noted that with respect to the issue of genocide in Cambodia, because of its own strategic interests, the Soviet Union’s policy on that issue was virtually the same as that of China. During a meeting he had with Nguyen Van Linh in Hanoi on the night of 5 September 1989, Heng Samrin said that he had just returned from taking a rest in the Soviet Union and told us that,

“Before my departure for the Soviet Union, I asked for a meeting with Gorbachev in order to brief him on the situation in Cambodia and to discuss a number of issues. The Soviet Union agreed. However, after I arrived in the Soviet Union Comrade Gorbachev did not meet with me but instead had the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, who was an alternate member of the Politburo, meet with me. I understood that the reason that Gorbachev did not meet with me was because the Paris International Conference did not achieve any results. During my meeting, the Soviets came right out and said that we had to accept the formation of a four-party coalition government that included the Khmer Rouge and that had Sihanouk as its

Chairman. That government and Sihanouk would have real power and authority. The Soviet Union explained that the only bad elements in the Khmer Rouge were Pol Pot and a few of his followers and they said that Phnom Penh should accept the rest of the Khmer Rouge and allow them to participate in the government. We do not agree with the Soviet position."

At this point in time, based on their own individual best interests the Soviet Union and China were in agreement about using pressure from the great powers [the large nations] to intervene in the internal affairs of Cambodia in violation of Cambodia's national sovereignty.

Chapter Nine:

Deng Xiaoping Meets with Kaysone Phomvihane to Pass a Message to Vietnam

The tremendous changes in the outside world's situation during this time had a powerful effect on our leadership's thinking about the direction of our foreign relations strategy. Political crises in many of the socialist countries had begun to explode in 1989 and these crises were spreading. In June 1989 there was the Tiananmen incident in China. During that same year, 1989, the socialist regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe, including the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary all collapsed. In early October 1989 Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh attended the 40th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic's national day, but by the time he got back to Hanoi the Berlin Wall had fallen and Honecker had been overthrown. Rumanian leader Ceausescu, with whom Linh during his visit to Berlin Linh had discussed how to rescue the cause of world socialism, which was in such danger, was hunted down and arrested right after his arrival back in Bucharest. The situation in the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly chaotic as a result of Gorbachev's "new way of thinking."

In the face of this situation, many differing opinions surfaced within the ranks of our leadership regarding the Tiananmen incident as well as the tidal wave of changes occurring in the Eastern European socialist countries and in the Soviet Union. One view that arose stressed China's socialist nature and held that no matter what the cost we must immediately join hands with China in order to defend socialism and to oppose the United States and other imperialist forces. That view created a rather abrupt turning point in our attitude toward China. Our simplistic view was that there was no reason for us to be at odds with China, especially since

the Soviet Union had normalized its relations with China in May 1989. Laos had also agreed to again exchange ambassadors with China and to normalize relations between the two countries, and these moves were marked by the official visit to China made by Kaysone Phomvihane, General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, in October 1989.

It was during a discussion with Kaysone on 7 October 1989 in Beijing that Deng Xiaoping revealed, at least partially, his deepest calculations and plans toward Vietnam: to create division between Vietnam and Laos, between Vietnam and Cambodia, between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, and to even create internal divisions inside Vietnam itself. Deng told Kaysone that Vietnam had showed signs of opposing China even back when Ho Chi Minh was still alive. He said that after the Americans were defeated, Le Duan turned on China, opposed China, and committed aggression against Cambodia. He said that Vietnam had decided to follow the Soviet Union and had sent its troops into Cambodia, and that was the only reason that China had attacked Vietnam. Initially, he said, China believed that Vietnam had invaded Cambodia only at Brezhnev's urging, but in fact, according to Deng, the true reason was that Vietnam planned to form an Indochina Federation and did not want Laos and Cambodia to be independent. Deng said that Vietnam opposed China because China was the obstacle blocking the formation of an Indochina Federation.

While Deng was harshly critical of Le Duan, Deng had praised Nguyen Van Linh to the skies. Deng told Kaysone that when he was serving as the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1963, he had arranged for Nguyen Van Linh to travel from South Vietnam to Hong Kong so that Linh could then come to Beijing to meet with him. He praised Linh as "a good man, a brilliant and talented man," and he asked Kaysone to convey his best wishes to

Linh. He also suggested that Kaysone advise Nguyen Van Linh that he should finally resolve the Cambodian problem because if Linh was able to that he would be able to restore Vietnam's national prestige. He said that this was something that Vietnam had to do because everything that Vietnam was now doing was wrong. He said he hoped that China's relations with Vietnam could be normalized before he retired. With regard to the conditions for normalizing Sino-Vietnamese relations, Deng stressed that Vietnam must withdraw all of its troops, withdraw completely and irrevocably withdraw from Cambodia, and if that was done then relations between the two countries would be normalized (he said this even though we had completed our final troop withdrawal from Cambodia on 26 September 1989).

According to the report provided by the Lao Ambassador to China, during his 70-minute conversation with Kaysone, Deng spent 60 minutes talking about Vietnam and Sino-Vietnamese relations.

On 21 October 1989, our Politburo met to assess Deng Xiaoping's statements to Kaysone. The Politburo concluded that, as long as China was still playing tough with us, we needed to display a patient and appropriate attitude, not heated, not one that might provoke anger, but also not too conciliatory. We should continue to carry out the policy guidelines laid out by the 6th National Party Congress and Politburo Resolution 13, recognizing both China's socialist side and its big power hegemonistic side. While we tried to draw China in, we also needed to simultaneously take actions in many other areas, such as strengthening our ties with Laos and striving to create divisions between China and the U.S., the Western countries, and the ASEAN countries.

Following those guidelines, on 6 November 1989 Thach sent an oral message from Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh to Deng Xiaoping through the Chinese ambassador in Hanoi. The message expressed our hope for a rapid normalization of relations with China. Three weeks later, Thach sent a letter to Qian Qichen referencing the 6 November oral message and saying that Vietnam was prepared to meet with China again in December 1989 at either the foreign minister or the deputy foreign minister level and saying that the meeting could be held either in Hanoi or in Beijing. However, China did not reply either message – neither to the message from our Party General Secretary nor to Thach’s letter.

Finally, on 12 December 1989, the Chinese ambassador met with Thach to transmit China’s oral response to Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh’s message. China’s response again imposed conditions for resuming talks with us. The Chinese response was as follows:

“Comrade Deng Xiaoping and the rest of China’s leaders sincerely hope for the rapid normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations. The Cambodia problem is the primary reason that the current poor state of relations between our two countries has not yet improved. A restoration of friendly relations between our two countries is impossible if we try to ignore the Cambodia problem. Comrade Deng Xiaoping has said that a total and complete Vietnamese troop withdrawal and the establishment of a four-part provisional coalition government headed by Sihanouk are the two key realistic measures that need to be taken simultaneously. The Chinese side is prepared to consider Vietnam’s proposal for holding a new round of talks at the deputy ministerial level if Vietnam agrees to an international inspection apparatus presided over by the United Nations and including all four of the Cambodian parties for the purpose of

monitoring the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the formation of a four-party government headed by Sihanouk during the transition period.”

[Translator’s Note: The edited 2003 version of Tran Quang Co’s manuscript deleted the following section from the original version of the manuscript posted on the internet.] On 11 November 1989, the Politburo met and approved a plan for our diplomatic struggle on the Cambodian issue. Based on our assessment of the military and political situation on the battlefield and the overall trends in the world, it was decided that we must try to achieve a political solution for the Cambodian problem. The plan laid out four different plans for the projected governing authority that would administer Cambodia prior to the general elections. The lowest level plan would retain the governmental structures of the two current governments and establish a two-party coalition government at the national level to organize the general elections and to implement measures on which both sides agreed.

On 1 December 1989 Thach traveled to Cambodia for discussions with the Cambodian Politburo. He told them that in our analysis the war in Cambodia was a civil war and Vietnam could not send its troops back into Cambodia (four days after Vietnam withdrew its last troops, Son Sann’s forces captured Thmar Pouk and on 22 October 1989 the Khmer Rouge captured Pailin and then threatened Battambang City; at the request of our [Cambodian] friends, we had to send special forces in [into Cambodia] to assist them). Thach gave a detailed explanation of the international aspects of the Cambodian problem and of the current world trends. He discussed with our friends the need to reach a political settlement in order to be able to secure victory gradually, one step at a time. The Cambodian Politburo was in total agreement and

decided that it should utilize the role of the United Nations, following the proposal presented by Australian Foreign Minister G. Evans on 24 November 1989.

During our Party's Politburo meeting on 6 December 1989 the Australian suggestion was discussed, and the Politburo agreed to a United Nations role in a settlement. After an exchange of ideas, the Cambodian Politburo completely agreed with our Politburo's idea. Our Cambodian friends held the 10th Plenum of their Party's Central Committee from 10 to 25 January 1990 to discuss reaching an agreement on a political settlement. On 18 January 1990, the Cambodian National Assembly approved a resolution on allowing the United Nations to hold general elects and giving Hun Sen authority to conduct negotiations on this issue.

The fact that we and our Cambodian friends had agreed that the U.N. should play a role and were considering Australia's proposal to resolve the power-sharing issue that had created the stalemate at the Paris International Conference provided powerful encouragement to the various forums that were discussing the Cambodian problem: the IMC meeting in Jakarta on 26 March 1990; the P5 meetings,³ and the sixth round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk meetings held in Bangkok on 22 February 1990. [End deleted section]

The Informal Meeting on Cambodia (IMC) was held from 26 February to 1 March 1990 in the Indonesian capital. Attending the meeting, in addition to the four Cambodian parties, Vietnam, Laos, and the six ASEAN countries (the participants in the JIM meetings), were representatives of the U.N. Secretary General, France, and Australia. The conference was not able to issue a joint statement because the Khmer Rouge exercised their veto power.

³ P5: The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: The United States, the Soviet Union, China, Britain, and France.

[Translator's Note: The revised and edited 2003 manuscript continues with the following paragraph that was not in the original manuscript.] On 8 March 1990 Advisor Le Duc Tho summoned Dinh Nho Liem and me to his home at No. 4 Nguyen Canh Chan Street to give us his ideas about the Cambodian problem. He said that we needed to change our strategy for the effort to solve the Cambodian issue. He said we had to resolve our problems with China because if we did not, we could not solve the Cambodian problem. According to Le Duc Tho, we could not push the Khmer Rouge aside and suggested that instead we could say that we must not allow a return to the misguided policies of the past. He said that we must not agree to allow the U.N. to organize the general elections. He said that we should suggest a plan for the formation of a two-sided coalition government made up of the four Cambodian sides, which would then organize the general elections. He said that we needed to make substantial progress on the Cambodian issue before our 7th National Party Congress in order to clear the way for the Congress to deal with other issues. Two days later he said the same thing to Nguyen Co Thach. [End revision.]

On 3 April 1990 China suddenly indicated that it would welcome a visit by Deputy Foreign Minister Dinh Nho Liem to Beijing to "inspect the embassy" and it announced that China would hold talks with the Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister on the Cambodian problem.

By this time CP 87 had been disbanded. The permanent members of CP 87 had all been reassigned to important positions abroad. Dang Nghiem Hoanh had been appointed to serve as our Ambassador to China. Tran Xuan Man had accepted the post of Ambassador to Algeria. Nguyen Phuong Vu, who had been on his way to take over the post of ambassador in the

Philippines, had been killed in the crash of an airliner in Thailand. To take CP 87's place, the Foreign Ministry established an ad hoc team on the Cambodian problem, and this team was given more concrete responsibilities because the time had now come to settle the Cambodian problem. I was again placed in charge of this team, which also included Tran Huy Chuong, Le Cong Phung, Huynh Anh Dung, and Nguyen Can.

Our team studied a Cambodian settlement and concluded that there had been several reasons that China had softened its attitude toward Vietnam on the Cambodian problem. These were:

-The Soviet-American relationship was changing rapidly. In the space of only six months, from December 1989 to May 1990, there had been two summit meetings between the Soviet Union and the United States. Meanwhile China's relations with the United States and the Western countries were very slow to recover after the Tiananmen incident.

-New disagreements were surfacing between China and the U.S., ASEAN, and the Western nations over the Cambodia issue, primarily in regard to how to deal with the Khmer Rouge. During the meetings of the Five Permanent Members of the U.N. Security Council in February and March 1990, China had been isolated and had been forced to make concessions and accept a major role for the U.N. in a settlement.

-The Sihanouk-Hun Sen talks were making progress. On 9 April 1990 Sihanouk made some concessions when he presented a nine-point solution, accepted the formation of a Supreme National Council (SNC) made up of an equal number of representatives from the two governments – six from the Phnom Penh government and six from the “Government of Democratic Kampuchea” – just as Hun Sen had suggested, and did not demand the dissolution

of the State of Cambodia (SOC). However, he continued to demand that the actual government power in Cambodia during the transition period must be the United Nations power structure.

[Translator's Note: The following section of the original manuscript was re-revised in the edited 2003 version of the manuscript. Following is translation of this section in the original manuscript.] On 10 April 1990, the Politburo met to discuss guidelines and directions to be used to push for a political settlement of the Cambodian problem. The proposed struggle stratagem in the Cambodian problem was a draft prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The draft said that we would use the U.N. to raise the issues of genocide and allowing the Khmer Rouge to participate in a Cambodian coalition government and that we would accept Sihanouk's role. The Politburo felt that we should not give the U.N. responsibility for organizing general elections but instead should return to the "Plan 4" that the Politburo had approved on 6 December 1989 (the formation of a coalition government for the purpose of holding general elections). The vast majority of the Politburo agreed. Comrades Nguyen Van Linh, Le Duc Anh, Dao Duy Tung, and Dong Si Nguyen also stressed the importance of the plans and schemes of the American imperialists in the wake of the political crises in Eastern Europe. The Party's General Secretary [Nguyen Van Linh] expressed the following ideas:

"Vietnam and China are both socialist countries that are both opposed to the imperialist plots aimed at eliminating socialism, so they must fight together against imperialism. The first thing that must be done is to develop and expand relations between our two countries. Other problems can be resolved later ...a Cambodia that is friendly toward China and friendly toward Vietnam is the best solution. We can use these points of agreement to resolve the Cambodian

problem in a way that is beneficial to Cambodia...Plan 4 is good. We should not allow the U.N. to get involved because the U.N. is the United States, Thailand is the United States..."

However, Nguyen Co Thach explained that the Foreign Ministry's concept is that we needed to win China's friendship, but at the same time we had to be prepared for three possible contingency situations regarding China's attitude on this matter:

First Possibility: China and Vietnam work together to defend socialism.

Second Possibility: China allies itself with the U.S. to work against us, just as before.

Third Possibility: China normalizes relations with us while at the same time it places its primary focus on securing the friendship and support of the United States and the Western nations. [End original version from the 2001 edition.]

[Translator's Note: Following is the 2003 edited manuscript's revised version of the above section.] On 10 April the Politburo met to discuss the Foreign Ministry's draft of the stratagem we should use for Cambodia: We would use the U.N. to deal with the genocide issue, to allow the Khmer Rouge to participate in the Cambodian coalition government, to reach agreement on the role that Sihanouk would play, to form the coalition government that would organize general elections, etc. The majority of the Politburo members approved the Foreign Ministry's draft. However, Comrades Nguyen Van Linh, Le Duc Anh, Dao Duy Tung, and Dong Sy Nguyen placed their emphasis on the schemes of the American imperialists following the crises in Eastern Europe. They said that Vietnam and China should work together to defend socialism and to influence the formation of a Cambodian government that would be friendly toward both China and Vietnam and whose policies would be oriented toward building socialism. They said this would be in the best interests of both China and Vietnam.

However, Nguyen Co Thach explained that the Foreign Ministry's concept was that we needed to win China's friendship, but at the same time we had to be prepared for three possible contingency situations regarding China's attitude on this matter:

First Possibility: China and Vietnam work together to defend socialism.

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Third Possibility: China normalizes relations with us while at the same time it places its primary focus on securing the friendship and support of the United States and the Western nations. [End revised version from the 2003 edition.]

At that time, I had the feeling that many members of the Politburo did not agree with this concept because they had made up their minds to "work with China to defend socialism against imperialist attacks."

On 16 April 1990, pursuant to the Politburo's decision to try to quickly heal our relationship with Beijing, Nguyen Co Thach visited Phnom Penh and met with the four key leaders of Cambodia's Politburo – Heng Samrin, Chea Sim, Hun Sen, and Sar Kheng – to try to persuade them to consider the use of a suggested stratagem on the genocide issue and not rejecting the Khmer Rouge. However, our Cambodian friends did not agree. They said that they wanted to maintain an independent policy in regard to resolving the Cambodia problem and that they did not want us to negotiate with China about Cambodian internal issues. Our Cambodian friends were very tough on the genocide issue, saying that if we dropped that issue, we would not have any weapon left to counter our opponents' slanderous accusations that "Vietnam committed aggression against Cambodia" and that "the Phnom Penh government is a

Vietnamese-installed government.” In addition, they said, the West was now actively bringing up the issue of denouncing genocide.

[Translator’s Note: The revised and edited 2003 manuscript continues with the following paragraph that was not in the original manuscript.] We have to admit that we advised our Cambodian friends to accept the “red solution,” beginning all the way back in 1987. Our having persuaded our Cambodian friends to accept a role for the U.N. to play (in December 1989), then telling them to reject any role for the U.N. (in March 1990), and then our advice to Cambodia to accept Plan 4 (forming a two-party coalition government) in April 1990 caused Cambodia’s leaders to become suspicious of Vietnam. The Cambodian leadership’s rejection of our Politburo’s suggestion during the 17 April 1990 meeting marked a new turning point in Vietnam’s relations with Cambodia, following Vietnam’s withdrawal of all of its troops from Cambodia.

On 2 May 1990, using the excuse of going to “inspect our embassy,” Dinh Nho Liem arrived in Beijing to hold an “unofficial exchange of ideas” with China. This time his interlocutor was not Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Shuqing but was instead Assistant to the Foreign Minister Xu Dunxin [Tu Don Tin]. Liem was assisted in these talks by Dang Nghiem Hoanh, who had taken over as Vietnam’s ambassador to China in February 1990. The talks made only a tiny bit of progress. With regards to normalizing relations between our two countries, the Chinese side did not seem interested in our idea of our two socialist countries moving closer together in order to rescue the cause of socialism in the world, a cause that was at that time in great danger. China only viewed its relations with Vietnam in the framework of peaceful coexistence with a neighboring country, just like any other neighboring country.

[Translator's note: The following section of the original manuscript was deleted from the edited 2003 version of the manuscript.] Our "exchange of ideas" focused primarily on the Cambodian issue. We took a softer line, saying that we could exchange ideas on a comprehensive settlement but that we could not make any decisions on Cambodian internal issues. Xu Dunxin reiterated what Deng Xiaoping had said: Three things must be done to resolve the Cambodian issue. Xu said:

"First, Vietnam must truly withdraw all of its troops, withdrawn them completely and irrevocably – that is the prerequisite for resolving the Cambodian problem. Second, after Vietnam has withdrawn all of its troops, the four Cambodian parties must form a coalition. Third, the coalition government must be headed by Prince Sihanouk. Pol Pot is unacceptable, and so is Hun Sen. If those issues are resolved, then we can say that we have concluded all of our past problems and that this will open the road to the future." [End deleted section.]

This time the Chinese went directly into purely internal Cambodian matters, demanding that we discuss the amount of power that the SNC would be given and how to handle the armies of the "four Cambodian parties." With regard to the question of the Cambodian government during the transitional period (from the time that Vietnam finished pulling out all of its troops to the time when general elections were held), Xu Dunxin said that China believed that the best solution would be to form a four-sided coalition government – which could also be called the Supreme National Council – and that if this was not done then government power should be given to the United States. He said that the government during the transitional period must include all four Cambodian parties (with the implication that the Khmer Rouge would be officially considered to be one of the parties participating in the government) because

such a government would be able to demonstrate a spirit of national reconciliation. He said, “If you comrades have a problem with saying ‘the four parties’ then you could use the term ‘the Cambodian parties.’ He said that no side could be left out and no side could be allowed to have a monopoly of power. During a discussion with Dang Nghiem Bai on the morning of 4 May 1990, Deputy Bureau Chief Zhang Qing also reiterated this idea. He said that this council could consist of representatives of the two governments, or of the four parties, or of the “Cambodian parties” – China did not care what term was used. Xu Dunxin said, *“If we compare the plan that China has put forward for a provisional coalition government with the plan in which the U.N. administers the country, we believe that China’s plan is better.”* With regard to the issue of genocide, Xu Dunxin said in a threatening way that if we continued to insist that the Khmer Rouge were criminals, then the other side would say that Vietnam was an aggressor, and that Phnom Penh was just a puppet government. Therefore, he said, this subject should not be mentioned anymore.

During the talks, the Chinese side clearly revealed their desire that the SNC would in reality replace the Phnom Penh government and that the armies of the “four Cambodian parties” would have to assemble at designated locations and then be totally disbanded; or at least they would initially have to be reduced in size to the greatest extent possible. The goal was to strip away the strength of the State of Cambodia, both on the governmental side as well as regarding its armed forces. China’s tactic was truly an effort to “kill two birds with one stone,” to erase the successes of the Cambodian revolution and at the same time to create a split in Vietnam’s relations with Cambodia. In order to avoid discussing this difficult subject, Liem said that he would take these two issues back for further study and would provide a

response later. At the same time, acting on instructions from our superiors, we agreed that Vietnam would not mention the word “genocide” again. We agreed that we would not talk about the past but said that we had to mention the future. We said that we would find some other appropriate form for discussing this issue. The Chinese also suggested that Vietnam’s leaders should meet with Sihanouk as Sihanouk had suggested, in order to “create favorable conditions for pushing for a settlement.” It is worthy of note that Xu Dunxin suggested that after Vietnam and China were able to agree on a Cambodian settlement, China, Vietnam, and Thailand would all get together for a meeting. This demonstrated that Thailand was playing a not insignificant role in working with China to support and nourish the Khmer Rouge and in “making Vietnam bleed” via the Cambodian problem.

With regards to normalizing relations between our two countries, the Chinese side did not seem interested in our idea of our two socialist countries moving closer together in order to rescue the cause of socialism in the world, a cause that was at that time in great danger. China only viewed its relations with Vietnam in the framework of peaceful coexistence with a neighboring country, just like any other neighboring country.

In part because the situation demanded a quick Cambodian settlement and in part because he was pleased with the results of this meeting, Qian Qichen agreed that in early June he would send Xu Dunxin to Hanoi under the guise of being “a guest of China’s ambassador in Hanoi” to continue the exchange of ideas with us. This was the first time in ten years that China had agreed to come to Hanoi for talks with us, because that vast bulk of the past rounds of Sino-Vietnamese talks had been held in Beijing. This action was understood by our leaders as an indication of particular good will by China toward Vietnam.

Chapter Ten:

Bitter Medicine That Fails to Cure the Illness

On the morning of 30 May 1990, the Politburo met to discuss the talks with China. Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh briefed the Politburo on his meetings with the General Secretaries of the Lao and Cambodian Parties on 20 and 21 May and told the Politburo that he planned to meet with the Chinese ambassador and Xu Dunxin when Xu visited Hanoi. Politburo Advisor Pham Van Dong and a number of the members of the Politburo indicated that we should be cautious in our dealings with China. Brother To [Pham Van Dong's Party alias] said, *"After thousands of years, China is still the same old China. We cannot trust them. We need to feel them out and push things along, but we must be vigilant and not give our opponent any openings."* Do Muoi also advised Linh that he should not meet with the Chinese ambassador or Xu Dunxin before we held the scheduled talks with them. However, Le Duc Anh indicated that he agreed with Linh's plan and said that we needed to feel them out, analyze China's strategy, figure out how to handle our relationships with the three major powers and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, win the support of the third world, and support all of the socialist countries. The majority of the members of the Politburo said that we should not mention the "Red Solution" to China again. In the end, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh decided that he would only meet with the Chinese ambassador and would not meet with Xu Dunxin. The only one of our leaders who would meet with Xu would be [Nguyen Co] Thach. Nguyen Van Linh also said that during his meeting with [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei he would only discuss bi-lateral cooperation and request a summit meeting with the Chinese, and he said that he would not mention the "Red Solution." However, in reality, during his meeting

with the Chinese ambassador a few days later, Nguyen Van Linh did in fact raise that subject during the meeting.

On 5 June 1990, a few days before Xu Dunxin arrived in Hanoi, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh invited Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei (who had just returned to Hanoi from Beijing) to the Party Central Committee guest house for an intimate conversation to show our respect for Beijing. During this meeting, as if he was admitting the truth of Deng's criticisms (that had been transmitted to us through Kaysone), Nguyen Van Linh said,

"Many mistakes have been made in relations between our two countries. Some mistakes have already been corrected, such as the mistake contained in the introductory section of our Constitution, and other mistakes are now being corrected."

He eagerly indicated that he wanted to visit China to meet with China's leaders in order to *"discuss the issue of defending socialism"* because, he said, *"the imperialists are now plotting to destroy socialism...they are scheming to create peaceful evolution, and every Party is forced to independently oppose these schemes. The Soviet Union is the bulwark of socialism, but it now has many problems. We want to hold discussions with true communists about how to defend socialism...I am prepared to travel to China to meet with high-ranking Chinese leaders in order to restore friendly relations between our two countries. Just say the word and I will come to China right away...China needs to hold high the banner of socialism and stalwartly defend Marxism-Leninism."* Regarding the Cambodian problem, Linh implied that the "Red Solution" should be used to resolve the problem, saying, *"There is no reason that communists cannot hold discussions with other communists"* and *"They have both met with Sihanouk so certainly they should be able to meet with each other."*

On the morning of 6 June 1990, Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh had a private breakfast meeting with Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei. This was a private meeting involving only the two men. Zhang had previously been an interpreter and was very fluent in Vietnamese, so there was no need for an interpreter. He said nothing about the content of this meeting until 19 June, when during a meeting of the Politburo held to assess the results of my talks (11 to 13 June) with Xu Dunxin, Le Duc Anh finally admitted that he had met with Ambassador Zhang to provide additional concrete details about the three things that Linh had said to the Chinese Ambassador the day before (summit meeting between the leaders of the two countries; the two countries should work together to defend socialism; the two Khmer communist factions should talk to one another). However, prior to that, on 6 June the Chinese side (Embassy Counselor Li Jiazhong [Ly Gia Trung] and First Secretary Hu Qianwen [Ho Can Van]) had already told us the content of the conversation between Le Duc Anh and Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei. In addition, the Chinese ambassador had also told Ngo Tat To, the Chief of our Foreign Ministry's China Bureau, that during a meeting the Chinese ambassador had with Le Duc Anh on 6 June Le Duc Anh had spoken about the "Red Solution" in the following rather concrete manner:

"Sihanouk will play only a symbolic role, a role of honor, while the key forces of the two Cambodian sides will be Heng Samrin's forces and Pol Pot's forces. China and Vietnam will each talk to their Cambodian allies and will make arrangements for the two Cambodian parties to meet to reach an agreement. The meeting could be held in Vietnam, or it could be held in China, but I think that China would be the best place for the meeting. This would be an internal, private

meeting, while the two sides would continue their regular diplomatic activities...In the old days Pol Pot was my friend in battle, my comrade-in-arms in the trenches..."

[Translator's Note: The following paragraph in the original manuscript was deleted from the 2003 edited version of the manuscript.] At noon on 9 June 1990, Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei told our Foreign Ministry's China Bureau that the Chinese had extracted the following three main ideas from the Ambassador's meeting with Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh:

1.-Comrade Nguyen Van Linh spoke very earnestly about relations between the two countries. He said that during the past ten years many mistakes had been made. Some mistakes had been corrected, such as the words in the introduction to the Vietnamese constitution, and some other mistakes were now being corrected. He said he wanted to meet with high-ranking Chinese leaders to discuss the major problems in relations between the two countries.

2.-With regard to the international situation, he said that the situation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had undergone many changes. The Soviet Union had previously been the bulwark of socialism, but now that bulwark had grown unsteady and had become wobbly. He said China needed to hold high the banner of socialism and stalwartly defend Marxism-Leninism. Vietnam is also a stalwart defender of Marxism-Leninism. He said that true communists must unite to defend socialism. Imperialism is constantly attacking socialism. The imperialists have announced that by the end of this century they will have made socialism disappear.

3.-With regard to Cambodia, Linh had asked why communists could not cooperate with one another? He said that Pol Pot and Hun Sen must cooperate with one another.

On the afternoon of 10 June 1990, Chinese Embassy First Secretary Hu Qianwen told Vu Thuan, the Deputy Chief of our Foreign Ministry's China Bureau, the following:

"Although Xu Dunxin is just an Assistant to the Foreign Minister, he is someone who has authority and power in the area of resolving problems in Asia. In some ways it could be said that he has more power than even a Deputy Minister. The decision to send Xu Dunxin to Vietnam was made by the highest levels of China's leadership and not by the Foreign Ministry." [End deleted section]

According to First Secretary Hu Qianwen, on 23 May 1990 the Director of the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense's External Relations Department, Vu Xuan Vinh, had invited Chinese Military Attache Zhao Rui [Trieu Nhue] to come see him to inform him that Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh would meet with Xu Dunxin when Xu visited Hanoi. These unusual actions on our part, taken outside of normal diplomatic channels, had made China believe that there was an internal split in Vietnam's leadership and that the Foreign Ministry was not playing the same role that it once did.

On 8 June 1990, after learning that this time I had been designated as the person who would replace Dinh Nho Liem in the talks with Xu Dunxin, Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh telephoned me to instruct me to avoid bringing up the issue of the "Red Solution." Le Duc Anh said,

"Contacts between the two Red parties are a long-term issue that will require long-term stability. China will influence the pro-Chinese Cambodian side and we will influence the pro-Vietnamese Cambodian side to reduce their hostility toward one another. This matter will take time. It cannot be done quickly. We cannot demand an immediate answer from them. Don't

push them. Just let them take the initiative. Whenever they are finally able to give us an answer, they will give us an answer. ... This must be kept very secret. It would be very dangerous if it leaked. Only mention this in private conversations, and not during the official talks. You should also not ask about Nguyen Van Linh's statement to Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei that he was prepared to travel to China for a summit meeting with China's leaders. Don't say anything about this unless they bring it up."

His instructions to me were really unnecessary, not because I understood the need to maintain secrecy on such matters, but because from the very beginning I had felt very uncomfortable about the idea of the so-called "Red Solution," the idea that we should shake hands – even if it was only indirectly – with those genocidal maniacs just to make China happy.

However, this issue became complicated and difficult at noon on 11 June 1990, after I returned to the Foreign Ministry from my first round of talks with Xu Dunxin to report back to Foreign Minister Thach. Thach was in the middle of a diplomatic conference meeting being held to discuss the situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. After I finished briefing him on the talks, he immediately questioned me closely about whether I had said anything to Xu Dunxin about the "Red Solution." I replied, "*Comrade Le Duc Anh instructed me to carefully avoid any mention of that subject during the talks.*" Thach then asked me, "*So, are you listening to the opinions and ideas of the Minister of Defense or are you listening to the ideas of your Foreign Minister.*" I replied, "*I am a Foreign Ministry officer, and I am ready to carry out your ideas and instructions, with the understanding that you are speaking in your capacity as a member of the Politburo.*" I was very surprised at Thach's reaction, but at the same time I sensed that the cracks in the Politburo had become rather deep.

Naturally, China did not let all this just slip by them, because they were the ones who wanted to influence our internal debate. The very unusual, excessively conciliatory, and overly exposed and careless attitude displayed by our leaders on 5 and 6 June 1990 caused considerable problems for our diplomatic efforts during this round of talks. From the very first day that he arrived in Hanoi and throughout the talks, which lasted for several days, Xu Dunxin constantly employed an arrogant tone and used the power and stature of our own leaders to put pressure on our diplomatic cadres. During his official reply to a toast in a party I hosted for the Chinese delegation on the night of 9 June 1990, Xu Dunxin said,

“After hearing Ambassador Zhang Dewei’s report, I am even more confident, and I trust that Deputy Minister Tran Quang Co and the other officers of the Vietnamese Foreign Minister will act in accordance with the desires and the spirit of Vietnam’s leaders by putting those desires into concrete form in their discussions with us so that we can reach a quick resolution of this problem.”

During the first round of talks on the morning of 11 June 1990, Xu Dunxin sought to bring together points that benefited China’s stance or that at least were in line with their intentions by laying out “Five very useful common understandings” that the two sides had reached during the meeting in Beijing in early May 1990.

“1.-The two sides both believe that the Cambodian problem requires a comprehensive, just, and logical solution.

“2.-The Vietnamese side said that it had withdrawn all of its troops from Cambodia, accepted U.N. inspections, and promised that it would not move back into Cambodia.

“3.-The two sides both believe that a Supreme National Council should be formed for the transitional period in Cambodia after the completion of the Vietnamese troop withdrawal, the ending of all outside assistance, and the implementation of a cease-fire. In principle, both sides agree that the Supreme National Council must be a power structure that has real power and authority. With regards to how this council should be organized, the ideas put forward by both sides are basically in agreement. As to precisely who should be nominated as Council members, the Cambodian parties should select the members. China and Vietnam will respect these selections. We agree that none of the sides will be excluded from membership in the Supreme National Council and that no side will hold a monopoly of power. As for Prince Sihanouk, the two sides both maintain that Prince Sihanouk should be the Chairman of the Supreme National Council.

“4.-With regard to military issues during the transitional period, both sides believe that to avoid civil war and maintain peace in Cambodia, suitable arrangements need to be made for the armies of the four Cambodian parties. Naturally, exactly what those arrangements should be requires further discussion between our two sides.

“5.-One additional point: the Vietnamese indicated that from now on they would not raise the subject of genocide again, and that this subject should not be mentioned in any international documents.”

Therefore, Xu Dunxin suggested that we focus on discussing the two points that were still left unsettled in the previous meeting. The two points were the scope of the SNC's powers and the problem of how to handle the armed forces of the different Cambodian sides during the transition period. During three days of talks, every time that China saw that we refused to

accept their illogical demands on these two issues, which were in fact Cambodian internal issues, and especially when we steadfastly maintained the formula of the “two Cambodian sides” – meaning the Phnom Penh government and the Government of Democratic Kampuchea, or when we said that the term “the Cambodian sides” could be used but still steadfastly rejected the use of their term, “the four Cambodian sides,” which implied that we approved a legal role for the Khmer Rouge, and when we mentioned the Tokyo agreement, Xu Dunxin would loudly accuse me of going against the ideas and wishes of Vietnam’s leaders. He argued that the Vietnamese leaders had put forward the idea of “cooperation between the two communist Khmer factions,” which he said meant that the leaders had accepted the use of the term “the four Cambodian sides” (this meant that the Khmer Rouge would be given the same status as the Phnom Penh Government). Xu said, *“The statements made by you comrades should not contradict those of Vietnam’s leaders. The ideas and opinions of the Foreign Ministry should be in agreement with the ideas of your highest leaders. There should not be two contradictory voices being heard.”* I had to put Xu in his place by saying, *“Comrade, you can put your mind at ease. You do not need to worry about us from the Foreign Ministry saying something different than our Central [National] leadership. Our Party is unanimous, from top to bottom. The Foreign Ministry is an organization that is directly under the close and direct leadership of our Politburo.”*

With regard to the Cambodian Supreme National Council, China steadfastly held firm on three points:

a.-The SNC had to be the only legal supreme governmental organization representing Cambodia’s independence, sovereignty, and unity. In foreign relations, the SNC would

represent Cambodia in the international community and would occupy Cambodia's seat at the United Nations. Domestically, it would exercise legislative and administrative power and would directly control the important branches that could affect free and fair elections, those being defense, foreign affairs, interior [the police], propaganda, and finance (implicitly, this was understood to mean the abolishment of the five Phnom Penh ministries responsible for those matters).

b.-No side could be excluded (meaning that the Khmer Rouge could not be excluded) and no side would have a monopoly of power.

c.-The composition and number of members of the SNC would be discussed and determined by the four Cambodian sides. Sihanouk would be the chairman of the SNC (in practical terms, this meant the rejection of the Tokyo joint statement that had agreed that the SNC would be composed of 12 members, divided equally between both sides with each side having six members).

I affirmed that the SNC would have responsibility and authority to implement the agreements that were signed regarding Cambodia, to carry out national reconciliation, and to conduct the general elections. The two currently existing governments could not do anything to obstruct the authority and power of the SNC for the above-mentioned areas. However, I said that how much of the Chinese idea the Cambodian sides would accept was up to the Cambodian sides; Vietnam and China could not arrange internal matters over the heads of the Cambodian sides.

With regards to the question of the armed forces, China demanded that the minutes of our agreement state that the armies of the four Cambodian sides must assemble at locations

designated by the U.N.'s inspection committee. As to whether there would be troop reductions or disarmament of these forces, that decision would be left up to the SNC or to the government that would be formed after the general elections.

[Translator's Note: The edited 2003 version of the manuscript has deleted the following section of the original manuscript.] I said,

"Vietnam respects the agreement reached by the Cambodian sides in Tokyo, which was that armed forces units were to remain in place, wherever they were located. The principles governing the armed forces of the different Cambodian sides should be that civil war must be ended as soon as possible, maintain a ceasefire, non-intervention in political affairs, and non-intervention in the general elections in order to guarantee that the general elections were truly free and fair. As for the measures that will be taken to implement these principles, that will be up to the Cambodian sides to reach agreement between themselves."

After displaying his displeasure at our position, Xu Dunxin said,

"I would like to tell you the truth - if we do not make the right step here, this will have consequences in the future. Not only will the two of us be disappointed; the results will directly contradict the desires and goals that Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and other leaders have talked to us about. We are now at a fork in the road, and we must choose which way to go. We have no time left. In mid-July, the five permanent members of the Security Council will meet again. China cannot fail to express its attitude. If China and Vietnam do not achieve a resolution of the Cambodian problem, then our dreams will suffer serious consequences." [End deleted section.]

As if to try to persuade us to accept their position, Xu presented a Chinese five-step proposal to resolve the Cambodia problem:

1.-China and Vietnam would agree on a solution to the Cambodian problem and would record that agreement in an internal [private] memorandum for the record.

2.-The foreign ministers of China, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and Laos would meet and issue a joint statement.

3.-A regional conference would be held comprised of the five above-mentioned countries plus the four Cambodian sides.

4.-There would be a meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council plus the four Cambodian sides.

5.-The Paris International Conference on Cambodia would hold a meeting.

Xu said that that this proposal was only for internal discussion between us, and that this proposal should not be mentioned to the four other permanent members of the Security Council and especially not to the Soviet Union in order to avoid external problems and disruption. I avoided making any concrete comments on the proposal, saying only that this was an interesting suggestion that was worthy of consideration. However, I said that we needed to take action to ensure that our initial step here achieved some results, because only then would there be any possibility that the entire plan could be implemented.

On the afternoon of 12 June 1990, at the request of the Chinese, a restricted meeting was held involving just the leaders of the two delegations. In the meeting Xu asked me to transmit to Vietnam's leaders the response of China's leaders to the ideas that Nguyen Van Linh

and Le Duc Anh had raised in their meetings with the Chinese ambassador on 5 and 6 June 1990. The response was as follows:

“China’s leaders consider the Sino-Vietnamese relationship very important. China’s leaders also consider the ideas that Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Comrade Le Duc Anh expressed to Ambassador Zhang Dewei to be very important. The Chinese side believes that sooner or later China’s relations with Vietnam will be normalized. The two sides need to work together to achieve this. The Cambodian problem and the war in Cambodia have gone on for more than ten years. This is a problem that had attracted the concern of the entire world, and the nations of the region, and especially ASEAN, are very much concerned about it. With respect to our two countries, China and Vietnam, the most urgent matter that must be resolved at present is, on the basis of the common understandings that have already been reached, to continue to exchange ideas about the two remaining issues (the problem of the power of the Supreme National Council and the problem of how to handle the armies of the different Cambodian sides) so that progress can be made on these two issues. If this can be done, we will have contributed to a true solution of the Cambodian problem. This step is extremely important. Only if this step is completed will we be able to think about the next steps. This also means that only if this step is completed will the Chinese leaders consider a possible summit meeting and consider encouraging reconciliation between the two communist Khmer factions.”

[Translator’s Note: The revised, edited 2003 text of the manuscript omits this final sentence of the response from the Chinese leaders plus the following section from the original text of the manuscript.] After Xu finished reading the response, I asked him,

“Does that mean, then, that only after the issue of the SNC’s power and the issue of the different Cambodian armed forces are resolved will China consider holding a summit meeting?”

Xu said that I was correct and added,

“The resolution of these two issues will mean that China and Vietnam have reached basic agreement on the resolution of the Cambodian problem. We will write up a joint memorandum of conversation recording the points on which we have reached agreement and our agreements will be used to stimulate and encourage resolution of the Cambodian problem, to influence each side’s friends and allies, and to open the way for normalizing relations between our two countries.” Tu said, *“It is vital that we resolve these two remaining issues in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement. We must not try to bypass the Cambodian problem. Once the Cambodian problem is resolved, the next steps involving high-level leadership meetings and normalization of relations between our two countries will be easy.”* [End deleted section.]

Immediately after this meeting, I went to see Prime Minister Do Muoi to brief him on the talks in order to prepare him for his meeting with Xu Dunxin that was planned for the afternoon of the next day. I said to him,

“It was only because Linh and Le Duc Anh met with [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei before Xu Dunxin’s arrival in Hanoi that the Chinese side dared to be so arrogant and pushy in the talks. Therefore, at this time I believe that neither you nor Linh should meet with him again.”

After I finished my briefing, Do Muoi said that the reason he had thought about meeting with Xu was that on the morning of 10 June 1990 Le Duc Anh had come to see him to ask Do Muoi to meet with Xu. He said that in view of the current situation, there was no longer a need

to meet with Xu. Do Muoi told me to immediately go to see Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and brief him on the situation because Linh also planned to meet with Xu. After hearing my briefing, Linh was silent for a moment, as if he was stunned. I thought to myself that the General Secretary was probably surprised by the very cold response from the Chinese leaders to the earnest ideas that he and Le Duc Anh had discussed with Ambassador Zhang Dewei. Finally, Linh said that given the current situation, there was no need for Do Muoi or any of our other senior leaders to meet with Xu Dunxin.

In general, the three days of talks with Xu were tense, but the storm only really broke when Xu Dunxin went to pay his respects to Minister Nguyen Co Thach on the afternoon of 13 June 1990, before the Chinese delegation left Hanoi. Right from the start the tone of the conversation was not very warm. Then, however, Xu said the following:

“You comrades have told us that we should urge the two Cambodian communist factions to reconcile with one another. You say that is Vietnam’s sincere desire. However, in reality, you are just trying to destroy the Khmer Rouge. If the Vietnamese leadership wants to have reconciliation between the two Khmer communist factions, then you must accept the ‘four sides.’ We cannot understand the two different kinds of things that are being said to us. We don’t know which one is true and which one is false. If we listen to what one voice says to us, another voice tells us that it is a lie, and if we listen to what the second voice says, the first voice says that what has been said to us is a lie. I hope that in the future you comrades will not do this kind of thing again.”

Thach reacted strongly to Xu Dunxin’s words, saying,

"We do not demand that you comrades say that there are only two Cambodian sides, so you cannot demand that we say that there are four sides. We say simply "the Cambodian sides" without excluding any of the sides and that is enough. If we say something different, that will contradict the results of the Tokyo Conference. I will tell you the truth, using a tactic of misrepresentations and lies makes it very difficult to hold discussions...I have great respect for you, but I am very displeased with the things you have said because you have distorted and misrepresented things. That makes our discussions very difficult."

The conversation ended with Xu Dunxin's farewell in which he said, *"Goodbye, Your Excellency!"* And Thach responded using the same word, instead of the word *"Comrade."*

I was not present during Thach's meeting with Xu Dunxin, but when I heard the story, I was not surprised. I will never forget Xu's arrogant tone of voice, like he was the "emissary of the Celestial Court" [an allusion to the ancient Chinese imperial court] when we met on 13 June 1990: *"Today I have come to Hanoi primarily to discuss the Cambodian problem with my Vietnamese comrades, and at the same time to consider the aspirations and desires of our comrades. We have prepared ideas about relations between our two countries, China and Vietnam."* When he said the words *"the aspirations and desires of our comrades,"* Xu was referring to the things that Linh and Le Duc Anh had said to Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei on 5 and 6 June 1990. These were talks between two nations that were equals, so how could China possibly talk about *"considering the aspirations and desires"* of Vietnam's leaders? In addition, Minister Nguyen Co Thach's mind during that period was burdened with many different considerations and thoughts.

After the clash between Minister Nguyen Co Thach and Chief of the Chinese Delegation Xu Dunxin, Chinese pressure on our internal political process increased even more. Throughout the last half of 1990 and into 1991, China ignored the Foreign Ministry and would only talk to the [Party Central Committee] External Relations Department. Foreign Minister Qian Qichen refused to meet with Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach at the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September 1990. [Translator's Note: The edited 2003 version of this manuscript deleted the second to the last sentence of this section from the original version of the manuscript that was posted on the internet. Following is translation of the last three sentences of this section from the original manuscript.] Even before that, China's plan to create a split within our ranks had become quite apparent: China wanted us to replace our Foreign Minister. That was not all – China also exploited the gullibility of our leaders to destroy the reputation of our foreign relations efforts by intentionally leaking this information to other countries.

The dose of medicine that the Chinese "masters" prescribed to us was bitter, but it still did not cure the disease! [End deleted section]

Chapter Eleven:

The Politburo Assesses the June 1990 Talks

On 19 June 1990, the Politburo met to assess the results of the talks. Unfortunately, for some reason on the morning of the Politburo meeting [Party General Secretary Nguyen Van] Linh left to travel down to Ho Chi Minh City. He asked Nguyen Thanh Binh to recommend that the Politburo go ahead with the meeting without him but did not leave any instructions about the direction the meeting should take.

As the official who had conducted the talks with the Chinese, I presented to the Politburo the Foreign Ministry's report on the talks, which included the following conclusions about China's plans and intentions based on what we had learned in these talks:

+China's intentions regarding relations with Vietnam and regarding the Cambodian problem have been clearly exposed during this meeting. China's strategy is to give its highest priority to gaining the friendship and support of the United States, the West, and ASEAN in order to support its "four modernizations" goal. China has decided that its policy toward Vietnam, and toward the Soviet Union as well, must serve that supreme interest of theirs and must not have any negative effect on China's relations with the United States, the West, or ASEAN. That is the reason that China did not respond to the suggestions that Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Le Duc Anh made to the Chinese Ambassador prior to these talks.

a.-With regard to our proposal to hold a summit meeting between the leaders of the two countries as soon as possible, China replied to us that only after the Cambodia problem is finally resolved will the Chinese leaders consider that proposal and only then will it be possible to discuss the normalization of relations between our two countries.

b.-With regard to our suggestion that our two countries join together in the fight to defend socialism, they stated very clearly that in their view China's relationship with Vietnam in the future will only involve the area of relations between two neighboring countries and be based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence. They also said that they cannot allow the U.S. and ASEAN to become worried about China's relations with Vietnam.

c.-With regard to our proposal that our two countries jointly encourage the two communist Khmer factions to reconcile with one another, they replied only that the Cambodian problem must be resolved first; only then will the Chinese leadership consider that proposal. China's plan for resolving the Cambodia plan is in fact aimed at totally eliminating the State of Cambodia's government and its armed forces so that real power can be turned over to the SNC, headed by Sihanouk. The two current governments – the State of Cambodia and Democratic Kampuchea – are both primarily controlled by communist forces, and the strongest Cambodian military forces are those that belong to the two Cambodian factions. China demands either that Sihanouk and the pro-Western forces be given the preeminent position in Cambodia with support from the U.N.'s military forces, or that the U.N. be allowed to govern all of Cambodia. Contrary to what we had thought, in order to accomplish its strategic intentions China is prepared to follow the plan supported by the U.S. and the Western nations.

+China did not respond to the suggestions made by our leaders, and at the same time they have mistakenly concluded that Vietnam is weak. China believes that Vietnam faces many problems, both from Vietnam's own internal situation and because of the impact of the changing situation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. As a result, they believe that Vietnam needs China very much. Therefore, they have used the fervent desire of our leaders to

cooperate with China to put heavy pressure on us in these talks. At the same time, ever since the unofficial meeting with us in Beijing, China has constantly put out news reports and information about China's activities in the Spratly and Paracel Islands in order to put pressure on us, and also to make the U.S. and ASEAN feel confident that China's relations with Vietnam are no better than China's relations with the other nations in Southeast Asia.

+China's goal in pressuring us to accept their position on the two outstanding issues involving Cambodia's internal affairs is also aimed at creating a split between us and our Cambodian allies. This comes after China's efforts to win over Laos by detaching Laos from Vietnam and from the Soviet Union.

+China was not happy with the Tokyo Joint Statement because it played up Japan's role in Asia while at the same time it eliminated any role for the Khmer Rouge, who are China's main card in the effort to resolve the Cambodia problem. ... On 4 and 5 June 1990 a meeting was held in Tokyo between the Cambodian sides and Hun Sen and Sihanouk issued a joint statement agreeing to a voluntary ceasefire to take place at the moment when the SNC was formed. The statement said that the SNC would consist of an equal number of members from each of the two sides (6+6). China does not dare to publicly oppose this statement, so they are trying to lure us into taking a position contrary to the Tokyo joint statement.

+China's objective in putting forward the five-step plan for resolving the Cambodia problem is to give China the central role and to give it the initiative in the entire process of resolving the Cambodian problem, which will then demonstrate that Asia's problem cannot be resolved by the U.S. and the Soviet Union by themselves without participation by China. China views their talks with us as the first and most decisive step in their "five step plan" to resolve the

Cambodian problem, because China believes that the Soviet Union is not able to pressure Vietnam. China believes that only through China's use of the lure of normalizing its relations with Vietnam will they be able to pressure Vietnam into agreeing to eliminate the Phnom Penh government or at least restrict its power as much as possible.

+China faces two limitations on its relations with us: on the one hand, China does not want to do anything with Vietnam that might adversely affect its relations with the U.S., with the West, or with ASEAN, and on the other hand, China also does not want to be too tough with Vietnam because that might make it impossible to resolve the Cambodian problem quickly. In addition, maintaining tense relations with Vietnam is not consistent with China's interests at this time, because China's primary interest is to create an international environment favorable for it to stabilize its own domestic situation and to implement the "four modernizations."

After listening to my report and to the recommendations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Politburo members did not make any immediate comments but instead discussed the events that had occurred during the talks. With regard to the shouting match between Thach and Xu Dunxin on the afternoon of 13 June, Dao Duy Tung said, *"He [Thach] should have responded even more forcefully."* Dong Si Nguyen commented, *"We would not have understood it if he had NOT reacted strongly."* With regard to Linh and Le Duc Anh's meetings with Ambassador Zhang Dewei prior to the beginning of our talks with the Chinese side, Brother To [Pham Van Dong] said,

"During the Politburo discussion about the talks with China, three times I said that we must not give them any openings and that we had to be very cautious about China. Instead, he turned over our cards and let them see our entire hand, and as a result this is what happened."

The Chinese think they can use their old 'Greater Han' methods⁴ with us and as a result they try to pressure us. Diplomacy is a boxing match. We must hold our ground. We cannot always turn over all of our cards and let our opponent see them. We cannot stick out our chin just so that our opponent can punch us in the face."

When Le Duc Anh tried to justify his actions by saying that the only reason he had talked about the "Red Solution" to the Chinese Ambassador was that the Cambodian Politburo had asked us to probe China's position, Vo Van Kiet commented, *"But our exploratory probe was too open and sincere."* Vo Chi Cong said, *"China is primarily concerned about its own national interests, not the common interests of socialism. They are not like us. Even though we want to cooperate with them, they will not accept our cooperation. We must not have any illusions about them."* On 12 June, when he was informed of the content of China's response to the suggestions made by Nguyen Van Linh and Le Duc Anh, Le Duc Tho commented, *"The meetings that Nguyen Van Linh and Le Duc Anh held with the Chinese ambassador made China harden its position. Those meetings should not have taken place."* (At that time, Le Duc Tho was very ill and was lying in bed at his residence).

On 22 June, while giving instructions to Dang Nghiem Hoanh, our ambassador in Beijing, Le Duc Anh said, *"Linh's conversation with [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei was a little too honest and open about a few points. However, that is not the reason that they think we are weak."*

I believe that, in the final analysis, at that time within our ranks we had two different camps with two different assessments of China and two different assessments of the political

⁴ Translator's Note: Reference is to the expansionist policies of the Chinese empire of ancient times.

crisis in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and that is why there were two different ideas about how to deal with the situation. Xu Dunxin told us that we were speaking with “two different voices” and that he “did not know which one was true and which one was false,” and he advised us that “the ideas and opinions of the Foreign Ministry should be consistent with the ideas of your highest leaders.” This meant that China knew that we had chinks in our internal armor, and they were smart enough not to miss an opportunity to exploit those chinks in order to gain an advantage for their side.

On 25 June 1990 Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh sent a cable to the Politburo from Ho Chi Minh City saying that he had read the minutes of the 19 June 1990 Politburo meeting and that he had a number of opinions that he would present later. He did not approve of informing the Central Committee and our Party Committees at various levels of these top-secret matters (by which he meant the things that Le Duc Anh had said to Ambassador Zhang Dewei on 6 June 1990). He said that the Central Committee and the Party committees should only be told that the recent round of Sino-Vietnamese talks had not been successful because the Chinese had sabotage the discussions. He said that the Foreign Ministry should come up with an explanation along those lines to give out to the public. He recommended that Sau Nam (Le Duc Anh) immediately visit Cambodia to inform our Cambodian friends. He directed the Foreign Ministry to monitor whether the Chinese side leaked any of the things that we had said to them out of a spirit of friendship and said that if any of those things were leaked, we should issue an immediate denial rather than letting two or three days go by before putting out a response.

The round of talks held in June 1990 did not achieve anything, but China did not cut off the link with us as they had in the past. Instead, they suggested that we exchange ideas with them through the ambassadorial channel. This meant that after the failure of the talks two different types of activities were carried out in parallel with one another: the two sides continued to talk to one another while at the same time they continued to attack one another on the public opinion front.

In order to seize the initiative in the battle for international public opinion, on 21 June 1990, utilizing the format of giving an answer during a press interview with Vietnam News Agency, I said that the only reason that the talks with China had not made progress was that Vietnam had firmly held to its principle of non-interference in Cambodian internal affairs. I said that the primary obstacle to a Cambodian settlement was that China was still trying to cling to and protect the genocidal Pol Pot clique. However, the thing that caused China to scream the loudest was when I said that *"China does not agree with the Tokyo joint statement, but they do not want to oppose it all by themselves. They want Vietnam and China to jointly take a position opposed to the Tokyo joint statement."* That was the reason that, right after my interview the Beijing People's Daily newspaper (5 July 1990 edition) published an article written by Cai Ximei [Thai Tich Mai] of the New China News Agency and titled, *"Hanoi's 'Killing Two Birds with One Stone' Plan."* The article said that Tran Quang Co was trying *"to lure the people of the world into their trap by using a whole series of stratagems designed to 'kill two birds with one stone. ...Hanoi's first scheme is to use a ceasefire in place to conceal the continued presence of the Vietnamese army in Cambodia. Hanoi's second scheme is to form the SNC around the*

framework of the Phnom Penh government. Its third scheme is to use a dialogue between two governments to replace the principle that there are four sides.”

The most damaging thing that China did was to inform a rather broad spectrum of countries of the things that Nguyen Van Linh and Le Duc Anh had said in private to [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei regarding the “Red Solution” and socialist solidarity. Their intent was to create a bad impression of us among those countries that were concerned about the Cambodian problem, including even the Soviet Union and other countries friendly toward us.

In Beijing, on 22 June 1990 the Chinese Foreign Minister briefed the ambassadors of the EEC (the European Economic Union) on the Sino-Vietnamese talks in Hanoi and commented that Vietnam was extremely anxious to normalize relations with China because it was afraid of the increasing weakness of the Soviet Union and the chaotic situation in Eastern Europe. He said that Vietnam was extremely devious and very rigid and hardline. On the morning of 26 June 1990, during a meeting between the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany and our Foreign Ministry’s Europe II Bureau, the ambassador said that on 22 June China had briefed the ambassadors of the EEC in Beijing on the content of the talks held between Xu Dunxin and me and that China had concluded the briefing by saying,

“The Vietnamese are very devious, very evil, and very hardline people. They want Hun Sen to wield sole power and authority. They refuse to make concessions on anything...Nguyen Co Thach is a very crafty man, a hard-liner who is filled with hatred for China.”

On 26 June 1990, the Australian Ambassador in Hanoi told Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach,

“China informed the Thai Prime Minister that Vietnam had proposed that China and Vietnam cooperate with one another on the Cambodian problem. Vietnam proposed that China and Vietnam participate in arranging a socialist solution for Cambodia.”

However, following our steadfast policy of pushing for normalization of relations with China for the sake of our own strategic interests, during this period I continue to hold weekly meetings to exchange ideas with the Chinese Ambassador in order to keep this channel to China open.

Chapter Twelve:

An Unwise Choice

During a meeting with me on 25 June 1990 at the Foreign Ministry, for some reason [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei read to me once again the response that the Chinese leaders had sent to the Vietnamese leadership. He said that this copy was “more accurate” (than the copy that Xu Dunxin had transmitted to us on 12 June). The final portion of the message, the part about Cambodia, had been changed to read as follows:

“The Cambodian problem has lasted for eleven years and has become a major international problem in which the international community, and especially the ASEAN nations, has great interest. We believe that this is what should be done right away: First of all, as soon as possible the two sides, China and Vietnam, should agree on a number of important elements of a political solution to the Cambodian problem in order to push forward and strengthen progress toward a comprehensive solution to the Cambodian problem. If this step goes well, that will be beneficial for consideration of the subject matter for future steps, it will create the conditions required for a summit meeting between the leaders of China and Vietnam and will result in reconciliation of Cambodia’s internal problems.”

In fact, there was nothing different in the content of this section; the only difference was that the wording had been changed in order to reduce the insolent and arrogant tone of the message.

On 2 August 1990, before a meeting of the Politburo, the Party General Secretary asked Nguyen Co Thach whether we should remind China about our suggestion for a summit meeting and say something about the “Red Solution.” During the Politburo meeting, Thach said that

China had rejected the “Red Solution” three different times. Vo Chi Cong added, *“That [the Red Solution] is an illusion. It is naïve.”*

During my meeting with [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang on 5 August 1990, I again raised the points on which the two sides had reached agreement regarding the Cambodian problem as well as the points that still remained to be settled. At the same time, I gave a clear explanation of Vietnam’s position on the role of the U.N. and on the formation of the SNC. I emphasized that it was a matter of principle for Vietnam that the internal affairs of Cambodia could only be decided by the Cambodians themselves. Zhang Dewei agreed that Cambodia’s internal affairs were under Cambodia’s sovereign authority, but he said that if there was no outside intervention it would be difficult to achieve a comprehensive settlement. During our exchange, the Chinese Ambassador had to admit that other countries could discuss these issues but that the Cambodians had to make the decisions in order for the decisions to be implemented. With regard to relations between our two countries, [Ambassador] Zhang read from a statement from a piece of paper that had been prepared ahead of time:

“We believe that at present the international situation is changing very rapidly and it will not wait for us. We hope that Vietnam seizes the opportunity by making quick decisions and coming up with decisive policies to eliminate obstacles in order to create conditions for the early normalization of relations between our two countries.”

The Ambassador then added, *“China considers relations between Vietnam and China to be important, but normalization must be accomplished out one step at a time.”*

During our meeting on 13 August 1990, acting on instructions given to me by Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh during a Politburo meeting on 12 August, after applauding

the statement made by Li Peng in Singapore on 12 August (Li Peng said “China hopes that soon it will normalize relations with Vietnam and hold discussions with Vietnam on issues about which there is conflict, such as the Spratly Island group”), I said to the Chinese Ambassador,

“My leaders are very happy that the two sides are considering meeting with one another. We believe that our two countries need to cooperate with each other, both in the immediate future as well as over the long term, on concrete issues such as the Cambodian problem as well as larger issues about which the two countries share similar concerns.”

[Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei presented China’s seven-point position on the Cambodian problem, which included the formation of an SNC made up of the four Cambodian sides headed by Sihanouk, an SNC whose composition and size would be determined by the Cambodian sides, and which would be the only legal governing structure.

There was nothing new in the other points in the Chinese position statement. In an effort to reduce China’s pressure on us, I briefed China on the 6 August 1990 discussion we had with the U.S. in New York on the Cambodian problem and said that Vietnam and the United States would continue these discussions (During the 6 August meeting the U.S. was primarily interested in probing our position and trying to persuade us to approve two P5 documents on a Cambodian settlement).

In August 1990, the international situation as well as the Cambodian problem continued to experience difficult and complicated developments. Early 1990 had marked the beginning of an era of détente between the three major powers, and at the same time the three major powers had begun to use the P5 (the five permanent member nations of the U.N. Security Council) structure to resolve the crisis in the Persian Gulf. Ever since Vietnam completed its

troop withdrawal from Cambodia and as a solution to the Cambodian problem drew nearer, Cambodia's interests and our interests increasingly began to conflict with one another. We faced a situation in which the five big powers were determined to reach agreement on a political settlement for the Cambodian problem. Cambodia, on the other hand, was facing a situation in which it was caught between a rock and a hard place. It would be difficult for it to prolong the civil war because of both domestic and international economic and political difficulties, but if it entered into a political settlement, it was afraid that it might lose the elections. On the other hand, the American attitude was changing. On 18 July 1990 U.S. Secretary of State James Baker announced that the U.S. no longer recognized Democratic Kampuchea (meaning the three-faction government headed by Sihanouk), the U.S. denounced the Khmer Rouge, and it agreed to open a dialogue with Vietnam through our U.N. delegation in New York. On 6 August 1990 we met with the U.S. in New York. The U.S. primarily used that meeting to feel out our attitude toward a U.N. framework document on a Cambodian settlement.

On 8 August 1990, the Foreign Ministry submitted to the Politburo a proposed plan on the Cambodian issue, a plan that clearly differentiated between the international and the internal aspects of a solution. On the international front we would suggest to our Cambodian friends that they should approve the P5 plan, but our proposal said that domestic questions had to be decided by our Cambodian friends and that we would respect their decision.

On the afternoon of 8 August 1990, I met with Politburo Advisor Pham Van Dong to request his thoughts on our proposed plan. He said,

“The current situation creates a favorable opportunity for reaching a settlement on Cambodia. We need to take advantage of this new opportunity while we still can. We must dare to work with the U.N., with the Security Council, with the United States, and with the West. We need to make use of the American factor in this new situation...In theory the proposal is good, but the question is how to implement it...We should not set too high a goal, a goal such as “firmly preserving the successes of the (Cambodian) revolution”...In the general election, if our [Cambodian] friends are able to secure 50% of the votes, that would be ideal; that would be the best we could hope for...”

On 12 August 1990, the Politburo met to discuss the Cambodia proposal that the Foreign Ministry had drafted. After the proposal was discussed, Linh concluded as follows:

“We will continue the dialogue with the U.S. in line with the Politburo’s ideas. With regard to China, during the 13 August meeting between [Tran Quang Co] and [Chinese Ambassador] Zhang Dewei, we will say that the two socialist countries, Vietnam and China, should cooperate to reach a solution to the Cambodian problem in order to have a Cambodia that has friendly relations with its neighboring countries, and especially with Vietnam, China, and Laos. We will not say that Vietnam and China are two socialist countries that should unite to combat imperialism and to defend socialism.”

However, the Chengdu meeting cause Vietnam’s leaders to move away from this realistic view and to completely fall in behind China, even to the extent that they planned to pressure Phnom Penh to accept Beijing’s excessive demands on the issue of the Cambodian SNC.

Chapter Thirteen:

The Sino-Vietnamese Summit Meeting in Chengdu

On 29 August 1990 Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei requested an urgent meeting with Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh and Prime Minister Do Muon to deliver a message to them from Chinese Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin [Giang Trach Dan] and Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng. The message was an invitation to Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh, Prime Minister Do Muoi, and Politburo Advisor Pham Van Dong to come to Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan Province, on 3 September 1990 for a secret discussion on the Cambodian problem and on the question of normalizing relations between our two countries. Ambassador Zhang vaguely indicated that Deng Xiaoping might meet with Brother To [Pham Van Dong]. China used the excuse that Beijing City was busy preparing to hold the ASIAD (the Asian Games) so that a meeting with high-ranking Vietnamese leaders in the capital city of Beijing would be impossible because it would be difficult to maintain secrecy. That is why they said the meeting would be held in Chengdu.

This truly was a very sudden change on the part of the Chinese. Previously China had told us that only after the Cambodia issue was finally resolved could we have a summit meeting between our two countries and only then could we discuss normalizing relations. Only five days before – on 24 August 1990 – China had again rejected a summit meeting with us, and now they were inviting us to hold a summit meeting on very short notice and had agreed that the summit meeting would talk about both the Cambodian problem and the issue of normalizing relations.

It was not an accident that Beijing had suddenly made this “good will” gesture. There were deeper and reasons and urgent, pressing factors behind it. These were:

a.-All of China’s foreign policy and domestic activities for more than a decade clearly demonstrated that their central and most important strategy was to steadfastly implement the “four modernizations” to turn China into one of the world’s leading great powers and at the same time to demonstrate China’s great power status in Southeast Asia and in the Asia-Pacific Region. In pursuit of that strategy, China and patiently and steadfastly worked to win the sympathy and support of the U.S., Japan, and the West while at the same time it worked to normalize relations with the Soviet Union. However, after more than a decade of reforms and an “open door” policy, China’s was experiencing tremendous political, social, and economic difficulties. After the Tiananmen incident, China’s strategic goal was being seriously threatened. In the area of its foreign relations, the U.S., Japan, and the Western countries had placed China under an embargo. Meanwhile U.S.-Soviet relations were improving at a very rapid pace. The U.S. and the Soviet Union were cooperating closely with one another to resolve world and regional problems without any consideration of China’s role. Even on the Cambodian problem, China’s role was under assault (the Soviet Union and the U.S. were meeting and working together closely to exchange ideas on the Cambodia and the meeting between Sihanouk and Hun Sen in Tokyo had been arranged by the U.S., Japan, and Thailand, disregarding China’s wishes on this matter). The West was continuing to demand that China implement democracy and resolve the Cambodia issue on the basis of suppressing the Khmer Rouge.

b.-Li Peng’s visit to Southeast Asia (6 to 13 August 1990) was prompted by China’s strategic goal of taking advantage of the international’s current peaceful climate to implement

the “four modernizations” in China and had taken place in the midst of a situation in which the alliance that China had built in Southeast Asia over the past decade to oppose Vietnam was in the process of disintegrating following Vietnam’s withdrawal of all of its troops from Cambodia and after the U.S. had revised its own policies. Li’s visit to the area exposed a number of points on which China and the ASEAN countries agreed and a number of points on which they disagreed. The ASEAN countries were still very worried about Chinese expansionism. China was forced to make promises about non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries in the region, about support to communist parties in these countries, and about the problem of the ethnic Chinese residents of these countries. China was forced to announce that it was prepared to negotiate and cooperate to resolve the problem of the Spratly Islands. Continued confrontation with Vietnam no longer was in the interests of China’s policies toward Southeast Asia.

c.-After Vietnam completed the withdrawal of all of its troops from Cambodia, the Western countries, the United States, Japan, and ASEAN had begun improving relations with us in ways that did not favor China’s calculations and plans in Southeast Asia. In the face of this situation, China did not want to be left behind.

d.-With respect of the timing of this invitation: During meetings held on 27 and 28 August 1990 in New York, the P5 [five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council] had approved a framework document for a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian problem (including the issues of the different Cambodian armed forces, general elections guaranteed and supported by the U.N., human rights, and international guarantees regarding Cambodia’s future status). The document on human rights did not directly refer to the genocide

issue but only said that Cambodia would “not return to the policies and actions of the past.”

China had been forced to make the concessions of no longer demanding the formation of a four-sided coalition government in which the four sides all had equal status and of accepting a large role for the U.N. The P5 agreed on a time schedule for the settlement of the Cambodian problem:

From 3 to 9 September the Cambodian sides would meet in Jakarta to form the SNC before the United Nations General Assembly convened. The Jakarta meeting would then be expanded to include the other countries in the region (including China). In the October-November 1990 period there would be a meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Paris Conference on Cambodia to draft an agreement based on the framework document drafted by the P5, the foreign ministers would sign this agreement, and the 15 nations that were members of the U.N. Security Council would approve the agreement.

China arranged this summit meeting between the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders within the context of this schedule. However, China concealed this information and did not tell us anything at all about the agreements that China and the other major powers on the Security Council had made. On the other hand, China also kept its meeting with us in Chengdu secret because they did not want to cause concern in the West and in ASEAN about possible cooperation and unified action between China and Vietnam.

On 30 August 1990, the Politburo met to discuss the meeting with the Chinese leaders. Linh suggested that we should discuss cooperating with China to defend socialism against imperialism and to push for cooperation between Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rouge to resolve the Cambodian problem. He said this even though the Foreign Ministry had just presented a

briefing to the Politburo in which we had clearly stated that there was very little chance that this plan could be carried out because China's strategic direction was still to try to win Western support and friendship in order to support China's "four modernizations." Le Duc Anh supported and supplemented Linh's idea. Le Duc Anh said, "*We must discuss true national reconciliation in Cambodia. If Pol Pot is not included, the war will continue.*" Vo Chi Cong disagreed, saying, "*China will not listen to us about cooperation to defend socialism. China wants to curry favor with the West.*" Thach warned everyone, "*There are still different possibilities for our future relations with China – not just the best possibility for us. I anticipate that China will raise the "6+2+2+2" formula for the SNC in order to emphasize that there are four Cambodian sides (with the Khmer Rouge being only one side) and try to end the mention of genocide...*" Events revealed that in fact China's demands were even higher than Thach thought!

On 2 September 1990, our three top-level leaders arrived in Chengdu right on schedule. They were accompanied by Hong Ha, Chef d'Cabinet of the Party Central Committee; Hoang Bich Son, Chief of the Party's External Relations Department; and Deputy Foreign Minister Dinh Nho Liem. It should be noted that Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach was NOT included in the delegation.

After two days of talks, on 3 and 4 September 1990, the results of the talks were recorded in a document called "Summary Memorandum of Conversation" consisting of eight points. When we studied that eight-point memorandum of conversation, we saw that seven of the points were about the Cambodian problem. Only one point discussed normalization of relations between our two countries, and even that point just reiterated China's old position

linking settlement of the Cambodia problem with normalization of relations between Vietnam and China. Of the seven points on Cambodia, two of the points were points of a general nature regarding international aspects of the problem and about which both sides were still in disagreement (a comprehensive political solution for the Cambodian problem and total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia with verification of that withdrawal). The other five points were all responsive to China's goals and requirements. Not one of the points met our goals and requirements. In the document of agreements, the issue that particularly stood out was Point 5, regarding the formation of the SNC. Our leader had agreed without any fuss or hesitation to the "6+2+2+2+1" formula (the Phnom Penh government would have six members and the "three-faction side" would have seven members – two from the Khmer Rouge, two from the Son Sann faction, two from the Sihanouk faction, and Sihanouk himself) that Chinese emissary Xu Dunxin had just recently presented to us in Hanoi and that I had rejected. This formula was worse for Phnom Penh than the "6+6" or "6+2+2+2" formula (meaning that the two sides would each have an equal number of members) that Sihanouk and Hun Sen agreed on in Tokyo.

As for the "Red Solution" for the Cambodian problem that our leaders had put forward, thinking that the Chinese would give this proposal a warm reception, Li Peng rejected that solution by saying,

"You comrades say that we need to get the two communist parties to cooperate with one another in order to expand and grow. I agree with one part of this idea, but I disagree with another part. Viewed from the standpoint of the strength of their military forces and governmental structures, of the four Cambodian sides the two communist parties are the

strongest and should have a larger role. However, the part with which I disagree is that in fact in Cambodia there are not just the two communist parties; there are other power structures as well – Sihanouk's forces and Son Sann's forces. Their forces are not very big, but they have international support. If we exclude them the SNC will be isolated, and it will not be able to unify Cambodia. We need to let the other two sides have some influence in Cambodia as well."

Then Jiang Zemin added,

"The Western countries are paying close attention to the relationship between us. No one in those countries knows that you comrades are here, and neither do any of the Cambodian sides. We must be vigilant and on our guard about this issue. They believe that if socialist Vietnam and socialist China, both of which are led by Communist parties, get together in a meeting, they must be discussing something. That is why we are keeping this visit secret. Given the current international situation, for our two communist parties to shake hands with one another would not be a beneficial stratagem for us."

Chapter Fourteen:

Was Chengdu a Success or a Defeat for Our Side?

Right after they returned from Chengdu, on 5 September 1990 [Nguyen Van] Linh and [Do] Muoi, accompanied by [Nguyen Co] Thach and Le Duc Anh, flew to Phnom Penh to brief the Cambodian Politburo on the contents of the summit meeting between the leaders of Vietnam and China. In order to increase the persuasiveness of his argument and get Phnom Penh to accept the Chengdu Agreement, Linh told the Cambodian leaders,

“We must recognize that there is a contradiction [conflict] between China and the imperialists over the Cambodian problem. We must use a stratagem to exploit that contradiction. Do not oppose China to the point of pushing them into deciding to cooperate closely with the imperialists.”

Le Duc Anh expanded on this argument by saying that, *“The U.S. and the West want to use this opportunity to get rid of communism. They are not just eliminating communism in Easter Europe; they have announced that they will eliminate communism throughout the entire world. Clearly, they are our direct and most dangerous enemies. We must find an ally for ourselves. That ally is China.”*

However, the response from Heng Samrin, speaking for the entire Cambodian leadership, was still the same:

“We must maintain the principle of non-intervention into our internal affairs. Internal matters involving Cambodian sovereignty must be resolved between the Cambodian sides.”

As for the ‘Red Solution,’ Phnom Penh’s assessment was as follows: *“China does not want the two communist factions in Cambodia to cooperate with one another because that*

would cause complications in their relations with Sihanouk and with the West. Therefore, we believe that it would be difficult to achieve a 'Red Solution' because a 'Red Solution' would be contrary to China's interests."

In spite of the fact that the Cambodian leaders had clearly spelled out their attitude on this matter, Le Duc Anh continued to try to persuade our Cambodian friends:

"We call it the 'Red Solution' but in reality, it is a 'Pink Solution,' one that is both blue and red. It is impossible to achieve it in the immediate future, but we must be patient. We can carry it out via many different routes, we can accomplish it in practical terms, if not openly. Your comrades should try many different avenues to make contact with the Khmer Rouge. Winning over the Khmer Rouge is an stratagem that is of strategic importance...We need to patiently work hard to find a way to ally ourselves with China and bring the Khmer Rouge over to our side...We will not tell China that we are carrying out a 'Red Solution,' but we will implement a 'Red Solution,' one that contains both red and blue elements...but that in reality will be cooperation between the two communist forces."

Nguyen Van Linh added his own contribution, saying,

"I would ask my comrades to make sure that you exploit the contradiction [dispute] in the enemy's camp. Do not miss this opportunity. China wants to walk hand-in-hand with the United States, but the U.S. is pressuring China, so China also wants to have good relations with Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. If we utilize our stratagem properly, we will have a Red Solution."

According to reports from Ngo Dien, our Ambassador to Cambodia, after the Chengdu meeting the attitude of our Cambodian friends toward us changed. Publicly, they tried to avoid

being seen to be dependent on Vietnam. Based on their calculations of their own interests, our Cambodian friends decided on their own to change their policy toward us. They no longer exchanged ideas with us at first, and sometimes they made decisions on a number of different things that were contrary to our suggestions to them.

Looking back on it, during the Chengdu meeting we were deceived by the Chinese on at least three points:

+China said that at the Chengdu meeting the two sides would discuss both the Cambodian problem and the issue of normalizing relations, but in reality, only the Cambodian issue was discussed. On the issue of normalization of relations between the two countries, China continued to reiterate its same old position, which was that only after there was a resolution of the Cambodian problem could there be discussion of the question of normalizing relations between our two countries.

+China had vaguely indicated that Deng Xiaoping might meet with Advisor Pham Van Dong, but that was just "bait" to induce Dong to participate in this summit meeting.

+China said that both sides should keep this summit meeting between the two countries secret, but immediately after the meeting ended China, either directly or indirectly, informed virtually every country of the content and details of the Chengdu memorandum of agreements in a way that was designed to make our side look bad.

On 7 September 1990, the Politburo met to discuss the results of the summit meeting between Vietnam and China and the high-level meeting between Vietnam and Cambodia that was held right after the Chengdu meeting. The Politburo decided that the very next day Do Muoi would meet with the Chinese Ambassador to inform him about Cambodia's position. At

the same time, the Soviet Union and Laos would be given the same briefing on the Chengdu meeting that was given to the Cambodians. If anyone asked about the “6+2+2+2+1” formula, we would answer that we knew nothing about it.

However, an article in the *Bangkok Post* written by Chuchart Kangwaan and published on 19 September 1990 made the Chengdu Agreement public. [Translator’s Note: The revised, edited 2003 version of the manuscript deleted the following section from the original manuscript posted on the internet.] The article said that Vietnam had agreed with China that Cambodia’s SNC should consist of six members from the State of Cambodia, two from the Khmer Rouge, two from the Son Sann faction, two from the Sihanouk faction, and Prince Sihanouk, who as the 13th member would serve as the chairman of the SNC. The magazine *Far East Economic Review* dated 10 October 1990 (Issue No. 4/10) contained an article titled “*The Carrot and the Stick*”. The article described the summit meeting in Chengdu of the Party General Secretaries and the Prime Ministers of Vietnam and China and said that the two sides had agreed on the “6+6+1” formula for the makeup of the SNC. The article said that Vietnam had made the largest concessions in this meeting. Privately, China said that they viewed [Nguyen Co] Thach as a person who advocated a hardline, rigid position on the Cambodia problem as well as on relations with China. On 12 October 1990, Journalist Nayan Chanda told Thach,

“China is now spreading propaganda far and wide that says the Vietnamese leaders have tried to trick everybody. China said that the Vietnamese had signed an agreement with the Chinese leadership on the composition of the SNC but that they had not carried out this agreement reached between the top leaders of China and of Vietnam. They said that Vietnam is

continuing to urge the Phnom Penh government to oppose the election of Sihanouk as the chairman of the SNC and to put forward one condition after another.”

On 5 October 1990 Nguyen Co Thach met with U.S. Secretary of State Baker. Baker told him that after the failure of the recent meeting of the Cambodian sides held in Bangkok, China was very unhappy with Vietnam's leaders. China said that Vietnam's top leaders had completely agreed with China's proposal that the SNC should have 13 members but that the Vietnamese had then told Phnom Penh that this formula was just China's idea and that Vietnam had not done anything to encourage Phnom Penh to implement the agreement that had been reached between the top leaders of the two countries. The Chinese said that even the top leaders of Vietnam could not be trusted, and that neither could the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry. Baker also said that China had rejected the proposal made by Vietnam's top leaders that Vietnam and China join together to defend socialism against the American imperialist plot to wipe out socialism and that China also had rejected Vietnam's proposal for a settlement based on an alliance between Phnom Penh and Pol Pot. [End deleted section.]

As for Li Peng, in response to a question asked during an interview he gave on 24 October 1990 to Paisai Sricharatchang, the *Bangkok Post* correspondent in Beijing, Li Peng confirmed that a secret meeting had been held between the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders in early September and said that the results of this meeting were reflected in the meeting between the Cambodian sides held on 10 September 1990. While he said that he did not know for certain how hard Vietnam had tried to persuade Phnom Penh to accept, Li said that he was sure that Hanoi had not tried hard enough. He said that this could be seen through the fact that Phnom Penh had displayed “an uncooperative attitude.”

The reason that we had fallen into the trap at Chengdu was that we had deceived ourselves. We had created for ourselves the illusion that China would raise the banner of socialism and try to take the Soviet Union's place in providing a solid base of support for the Vietnamese revolution and for world socialism and to combat the dangerous "peaceful evolution" plots of the imperialists, headed by the United States. That illusion had led to the Chengdu mistake as well as to the "Red Solution" mistake.

After Chengdu, there was a great deal of disagreement and debate within the Politburo about this trip. However, it was not until shortly before the 7th National Party Congress, when the Politburo met from 15 to 17 May 1990 to discuss a draft report to be presented to the Party Congress titled "Report on the World Situation, on the Implementation of the 6th Party Congress's Foreign Policy Guidelines, and Directions for the Future," that the summit meeting between the Chinese and Vietnamese leaders at Chengdu was finally brought up for discussion. The reference to it was contained in a sentence in the Foreign Ministry's draft report that said that "A number of things were done that were not in accordance with the resolutions of the Politburo on the Cambodia problem." This meeting was attended by the full Politburo: Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh, Politburo Advisors Pham Van Dong and Vo Chi Cong, and Politburo members Do Muoi, Vo Van Kiet, Nguyen Co Thach, Le Duc Anh, Mai Chi Tho, Nguyen Duc Tam, Dao Duy Tung, Dong Si Nguyen, Doan Khue, and Nguyen Thanh Binh.

At the meeting Brother To [Pham Van Dong] said,

"It is good that we now have the time and the opportunity to review recent events to make a deeper assessment of them. Ever since the visit to Chengdu I have regretted the attitude that we displayed there. If you want to call this self-criticism, then it is self-criticism. I regret two

things. While we were in Chengdu, when the Cambodian problem was discussed the person who spoke for us was Linh. Linh talked about a plan for Cambodian national reconciliation. After that Li Peng put forward the "6+2+2+2+1" plan that Xu Dunxin had tried to pressure us into accepting during his talks with [Tran Quang] Co in Hanoi and that we had rejected. Linh agreed with it (he said that he did not have a problem with it). At that time, perhaps because he had noticed my attitude, Jiang Zemin invited me to speak. I said, 'I do not think that this 13-member plan is a good idea.' What I was trying to say was that it was not fair...I am sorry because after that our delegation should have held a meeting to discuss this after the reception that evening. However, I did not think of calling a meeting; I just felt hesitant and uncertain about it. Early the next morning our people from the External Relations Department and Hong Ha whispered to me that the key thing was to reach agreement on the principle of "consensus [in English]" (meaning unanimity) and that the number [of SNC members] was not important. I listened to them, and this made me feel a little better, but I still thought that it would have been better to hold a meeting to discuss this. Later, the Chinese presented us with the agreement to sign, and the agreement contained the number '13.' ...I was hesitant about this and wanted to know the full content of the agreement before we signed. If our delegation had gotten together to discuss this after the first session, after Li Peng put forward the 6+2+2+2+1 formula, then we might have had an excuse to discuss this further with them [the Chinese]. The second thing I regret is that before we signed the agreement that the experts of our two sides had agreed upon, our leaders should have reviewed it and discussed it to see if there were things that should be added or taken out before we signed it. As I think back on it, when they invited our Party General Secretary and our Chairman of the Council of Ministers [Prime Minister] to come to China to

meet with their Party General Secretary and their Premier, for some reason they also invited me. I was rather surprised, and I did not make adequate preparations for this trip. [Do] Muoi told me that their invitation had been very formal and serious, that this was a great opportunity for us, and he said that I should go. However, when we went, we signed a document without considering the consequences, without considering the fact that our Cambodian friends would have a very violent reaction to this document. I understand that our Cambodian friends are rather unhappy and that they even are angry at us. They say that we went behind their back and that we had done something that really hurt them."

Linh responded,

"Brother To [Pham Van Dong]! Go back and review your memory again. It was not that I said that I agreed, I just said that we would study and consider it and that in the end we would raise the issue with the Cambodians ... I still think that what we did was correct. I do not regret our acceptance of the "13" formula...The Cambodian problem is directly connected to China and the Soviet Union. We must think about our strategy and our stratagem. We must continue to work with Cambodia on the strategy and we must try a number of different measures to make our Cambodian friends see the American imperialist plots to oppose and destroy socialism in Asia, and even in Cuba. They have already sabotaged and disrupted China via the Tiananmen incident, and now they are turning their attention to sabotaging us...China wants to gain control of Cambodia through the Khmer Rouge. However, no matter how expansionist it is, China is still a socialist country."

Thach said,

“Regarding Chengdu, China even gave Phnom Penh a tape recording of their conversation with our leaders in Chengdu. Hun Sen said that the memorandum of agreement said, ‘the two sides agree to brief Cambodia on the 6+2+2+2+1 formula’, but the tape recording clearly reveals that Linh said only, ‘We have no problem with that.’ I would like to inform you all of just where the number 13 came from. In June 1990 in Tokyo, Sihanouk and Hun Sen agreed that the SNC would be made up of equal numbers from the two sides, meaning 6+6. When Xu Dunxin came to Hanoi, he was unable to pressure us into accepting the 6+2+2+2+1 formula. Then, during the Chengdu meeting, China brought up this formula again. When we traveled to Phnom Penh to try to persuade our Cambodian friends to accept the number 13 together with the working principle that consensus would be required in the SNC, Hun Sen said this to me in private: ‘We won, but if we still have to accept fewer members than the other side (six for our side and seven for the other side), the accusation will be made that Cambodia has given in to Vietnamese and Chinese pressure. Therefore, even the principle of consensus will not be able to persuade the Cambodian people. We can only accept 12 or 14 members on the Supreme National Council.’ I have to say that Phnom Penh has a lot of questions about us now. The Soviet Union, Britain, France, Japan, and the U.S. have all told us that China gave them a full briefing on the Chengdu agreement and told all of them that they do not believe Vietnam’s leaders can be trusted. China is using Chengdu to sabotage our relations with other countries and to create division and splits in our leadership ranks here in Vietnam...”

The next day, as the Politburo continued the meeting, [Do] Muoi said,

“We approve of Sihanouk serving as the Chairman of the Supreme National Council with Hun Sen as the Deputy Chairman and of the idea that unanimity [consensus] will be the

Supreme National Council's working principle. This is not a concession...It would have been better if Thach had gone to Chengdu with us..."

Brother To [Pham Van Dong] said,

"The primary issue is not the attitude we displayed in Chengdu, as [Do] Muoi said, but it is the results of the meeting and the effect it had on the opinion that our Cambodian friends have of us. The things we did in Chengdu can be justified, but Cambodia believes that we made decisions behind their backs. That is why I regret what happened there. I regret that what happened will have consequences in the future."

[Do] Muoi: *"With the spirit of a communist, I say that we did not make a mistake. The Cambodians can think whatever they want about us – that is their right. With the spirit of a communist, we would never violate our friends' sovereignty."*

[Nguyen Co] Thach: *"The Politburo is meeting for the purpose of criticism and review, so I would like permission to speak frankly. Is it not true that when he returned from Chengdu, Do Muoi told me that the two older brothers accepted a bit too quickly? Linh accepted the '13' formula and To [Pham Van Dong] accepted 'consensus' (the principle of unanimity)."*

Vo Van Kiet: *"In my heart, I did not think that Brother To [Pham Van Dong] should accompany our delegation to Chengdu. If there had been a meeting with Deng Xiaoping, then it would have been correct for Brother To to go. I must say frankly that I was really bothered when I learned that Brother To had accompanied Linh and Muoi there just to meet with Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, and that Deng Xiaoping was not there. They have tricked us too many times. I think China specializes in setting traps for us."*

Although he was usually calm and unruffled, this time Brother To [Pham Van Dong] just had to speak up: *“You slip up, you do something stupid, and yet you still say that the cause of the revolution is the most important thing, and whether it succeeds or fails is not important. If you are at the end of your rope, then I guess you can say that, but I don’t think that is the best policy. I do not think a leader should act like that.”*

Just as Brother To feared, the Sino-Vietnamese agreement at Chengdu left an impression on Phnom Penh that was not easy for them to forget. During a meeting of the Cambodian National Assembly on 28 February 1991, Hun Sen said,

“As many of you elected representatives know, the SNC is a complicated issue. We have to fight to overcome and defeat the plots of our enemies, but their supporters will not accept defeat. Even though the SNC has been established on the basis of equality between the two sides, people still want to change it into an organization with four sides under the 6+2+2+2+1 formula, and the problem of the Chairman has made it impossible for the SNC to function.”

I recall that when he received me in Phnom Penh on 28 September 1990, Hun Sen had some rather strong things to say about the Chengdu agreement. He said, *“When they met with Sok An in Bangkok on 17 September, the Chinese threatened us and demanded that the SOC must accept the formula on which Vietnam and China had agreed. However, Phnom Penh is independent. Sok An spoke very correctly when he replied to the Chinese by saying that the formula was Vietnam’s idea, not Phnom Penh’s idea.”*

The Chengdu conference of September 1990 was in no way a success for our foreign policy; instead, it was an extremely regrettable foreign policy mistake. Because they were too eager to normalize relations with China, our delegation acted in an unprincipled manner, acting

under the illusion that making this agreement would make Beijing happy. The reverse was true, because the Chengdu agreement delayed the settlement of the Cambodian problem, and because of that normalization of relations with China was delayed and our international reputation was sullied.

Our proposals to cooperate with China in defending socialism against American imperialism and to implement a “Red Solution” in Cambodia were not consistent with Politburo Resolution 13 and caused difficulties for us in striving to expand our circle of relationships [“striving to multi-lateralize our relations”] to include other targets such as the United States, the West, and ASEAN. These proposals also had a negative effect on relations between us and our allies, especial on our relations with the Soviet Union and with Cambodia. On the one hand, China rejected our proposals, but on the other China immediately used these proposals to smear our reputation with other countries in order to continue to isolate us and to put pressure on both Vietnam and Cambodia.

Along with our effort to push Phnom Penh into entering into a “Red Solution,” our agreement with China at Chengdu on a formula for the SNC was not consistent with the constant and unchanging principle of our Party that we would not interfere in Cambodia’s internal affairs and that we would not make the final decisions about Cambodian internal matters. The Chengdu agreement increased Cambodia’s traditional suspicions of us and was contrary to our policy of strengthening and consolidating our relations with Cambodia and with Laos.

Chapter Fifteen:

Who Is The One Who Should Have Had a Long Memory?

After the summit meeting in Chengdu, China's main demands to us on the Cambodian problem focused primarily on demanding that we implement the Chengdu agreement, that we exert influence on Phnom Penh to "agree to the election of Sihanouk as Chairman of an SNC made up of 13 members from the four Cambodian sides," and that we agree to the document on Cambodia drafted by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

At 6:00 in the morning of 9 September 1990, the Chinese Ambassador went to the External Relations Department (instead of to the Foreign Ministry) where he met with Hong Ha to deliver a message informing us that the Cambodian sides would meet in Jakarta on 10 September to discuss the formation of the SNC and to emphatically repeat China's request that Vietnam influence this meeting along the lines that had been agreed to in Chengdu. Immediately after the Chinese message was received, the Politburo met to discuss this message. The Politburo decided to send me to Jakarta. During this meeting the Politburo decided that from now on all foreign relations contacts regarding State [Government] matters must go through the Foreign Ministry and must be reported to [Nguyen Co] Thach and to Minister of Defense Le Duc Anh (?) [question mark in brackets in the original Vietnamese text] because of the manner in which the Chinese Ambassador had blatantly ignored the Foreign Ministry.

Around mid-day on 9 September 1990 Huynh Anh Dung and I boarded a flight to Bangkok for an onward flight to the Indonesian capital to monitor the meeting of the Cambodian sides there for the discussion of the formation of the SNC. I had no "secret magic

bag” containing any instructions for me. I had only Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh’s curt instruction to make sure that the SNC would be isolated [cut off from the reins of real power].

On the afternoon of 10 September 1990, as soon as I arrived at our embassy in Jakarta from the airport, I received a telephone call from the Chinese Embassy. Zhang Qing [Truong Thanh]⁵ was on the other end of the line. He said he was calling to pay his respects to me before his departure from Jakarta and to thank me for exerting a positive influence that had enabled the meeting of the Cambodian sides to achieve a number of successes (!) [exclamation point in parentheses in the original text]. I replied that I could not accept those kind words of commendation and said that if the meeting had achieved some good results, then that success was the result of the good faith efforts of the State of Cambodia.

It turned out that at the time my plane landed at the Jakarta airport the meeting of the Cambodian sides had just ended after agreement had been reached to form an SNC made up of twelve members. The post of Chairman of the SNC had been left vacant and the first meeting of the SNC would be held in Bangkok the following week to finally resolve the question of the Chairmanship of the SNC. The meeting had issued a joint statement which said, “*The Cambodian sides accept the entire P5 framework document as the foundation for a resolution of the Cambodian conflict.*” I think that the Politburo may have sent me to Jakarta as a stratagem, as a move to make China think that we were actively working to implement the Chengdu agreement. As for Zhang Qing’s telephone call to me, that was just a Chinese pat on the back designed to encourage me to continue efforts to implement the Chengdu agreement! However,

⁵ Chinese Foreign Ministry Southeast Asia expert.

that encouragement had the opposite effect, because it awakened the stubborn side of my personality. From the very beginning, I and a number of the Foreign Ministry's other people who specialized in studying the Cambodian problem and in relations with China had, for many different reasons, been very dissatisfied with the Chengdu agreement, and now I felt even more strongly that I could not do something that I felt was not right and just.

On 13 September 1990 I received a message from Vietnam directing me to fly straight from Jakarta to Bangkok to monitor the initial session of the SNC that was being held in that city. On the morning of 14 September 1990 Permanent Secretary of the Thai Foreign Ministry Kasem invited me to come to the Thai Foreign Ministry for a discussion. The subject of the conversation was the Cambodian problem. Kasem asked me questions about the agreement Vietnam and China had made on the SNC structure. I replied that those reports were all baseless rumors and that he should not believe them. At noon that day Sok An, Cambodia's Deputy Foreign Minister, came to see me. He asked for my thoughts on the upcoming SNC meeting in Bangkok and what attitude our side should take if the other side demanded that Sihanouk be made the Chairman of the SNC and that he become the 13th member of the SNC. I suggested to him that we should firmly stand our ground on the principle of equal representation for both sides. To demonstrate our goodwill once again, we might be able to allow the other side to have one more person, but then our side would also have to be given another person (so that both sides had seven members each). If it was not 12 then we could accept 14, but we should not accept 13. Then Sok An told me that Kraisak, the son of Thai Prime Minister Chatichai and a member of the Thai Prime Minister's team of advisors, had told him that the Thai Foreign Minister had told him [Kraisak] that Vietnam supported the formation of

an SNC that had 13 members and was headed by Sihanouk. I told Sok An that this was a fabrication, and I would meet with Kraisak to give him the facts. That afternoon when I met with Kraisak I told him bluntly that,

“We cannot view Sihanouk as the boss in Cambodia, as the king who rules over everyone. The issue of the makeup of the SNC as well as of the chairmanship of the SNC must be decided by the Cambodians. Vietnam and China do not have a vote on those issues.”

Kraisak then related everything I had said to Kasem. As a result, the first session of the SNC held in Bangkok on 17 September 1990 simply collapsed because Hun Sen refused to agree to the “6+2+2+2+1” formula and absolutely refused to accept the election of Sihanouk as Chairman if he was to be the 13th member of the SNC. Clearly China placed the blame, or at least part of the blame, for this defeat on my shoulders.

During the latter part of September 1990, China received Deputy Prime Minister Vo Nguyen Giap for a visit to China to attend the opening ceremony of the Asian Games (ASIAD) as a “special guest of the Chinese Government.” However, the Chinese press reported that China had invited Vo Nguyen Giap to visit as the result of a request made by us [Vietnam], in spite of that fact that on 4 September 1990, during his meeting with our senior leaders in Chengdu, Jiang Zemin himself had said that he would invite Giap to attend the opening ceremony of ASIAD as a good-will gesture on their part. On 24 September 1990, when he met with General Vo Nguyen Giap, Prime Minister Li Peng said to Giap,

“After the summit meeting in Chengdu, the Jakarta meeting achieved good results and it was announced that the SNC would have 13 members. However, when the SNC met in Bangkok, the meeting did not turn out well. I would like to tell you bluntly that we believe Deputy Minister

Tran Quang Co had a negative influence on that meeting. When Kasem asked whether it was true that Vietnam and China had agreed on the formation of an SNC that had 13 members, Tran Quang Co said that was absolutely not the case and that this was all a pack of lies. We do not understand why Deputy Minister Tran Quang Co would have said such a thing and would have provided information that was totally incorrect."

Giap replied, *"When I get back home, I will inquire about Comrade Co said. If that is true, then this is not the opinion of our national leadership. I do not know anything about this since I am not responsible for diplomatic affairs."*

At this point I think that I should mention a story that may help us understand the character of the Chinese better: after his arrival in Beijing, General Vo Nguyen Giap asked that he be allowed to meet with several Chinese Army generals, one of them being Yang Deshi [Duong Dac Chi].⁶ However, General Yang responded angrily, *"I will never meet with him! The grass is not even green yet on the graves of our officers and men!"* On 1 October 1990 General Yang and a number of other Chinese generals made telephone calls to pass on their best wishes to Chinese officers and men stationed in Yunnan and Kwangsi provinces [along the Sino-Vietnamese border]. Chinese Army writer Ly Ton Bao, the author of a book titled *"The Wreath at the Foot of the Tall Mountains,"* which was an account of China's February 1979 attack across the Vietnamese border, said, *"When I saw the news that Li Peng had met with Vo Nguyen Giap it turned my stomach. Are we now going to have to review what started the war? Not only are most of the officers and men in our units unhappy about this meeting; even a number of our senior generals are unhappy with it too."*

⁶ Translator's Note: General Yang Deshi was the commander of the Chinese attack on Vietnam in February 1979.

I got the information presented above from an article titled "*Vo Nguyen Giap's Visit to Beijing Causes an Uproar.*" The article was written by Quan Nghiep Thanh and printed in the newspaper *Tranh Minh*, which is published in Hong Kong. Ever since then, I have wondered, "*Who should have the longest memory about the February 1979 event: The Vietnamese or the Chinese?*"

Chapter Sixteen:

The Chengdu Debt

After September 1990, China always felt that we owed them a debt from the Chengdu agreement and demanded that we implement that agreement. In concrete terms, this meant that they demanded that we use our influence to get Phnom Penh to agree to an SNC that had 13 members with Sihanouk as its Chairman. In this way the Chinese were able to exacerbate the disagreements within our own ranks. China felt that the main obstacle to the implementation of the Chengdu agreement was our Foreign Ministry, so they made increasingly blatant efforts to create internal divisions within our ranks. On 3 October 1990 the new Malaysian Ambassador, who was paying a courtesy call on me following his arrival in Hanoi, told me that in Beijing people were saying that there was a difference of opinion between the Foreign Ministry and our Party's leaders over foreign policy and that this was why Nguyen Co Thach had not accompanied the Vietnamese leadership delegation to Chengdu to meet with China's leaders. After Chengdu, while we expanded our contacts with the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam, the Chinese displayed a chilly attitude toward our Foreign Ministry. They attacked the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry's senior leaders, restricted the activities of our ambassador in Beijing, would not arrange for our ambassador to participate in the meeting that Li Peng had with Vo Nguyen Giap and Vu Oanh, and sent low-level officials to meet and work with our ambassador. China insisted that, as long as the Cambodia problem was not resolved, only "baby steps" could be made toward improving Sino-Vietnamese relations. At the same time, they actively tried to influence the personnel decisions and the plans being prepared for the Vietnamese Communist Party's 7th National Party Congress, which would be held in mid-1991.

In March 1991, during a meeting of the Chinese National Assembly, Li Peng announced that “The ice has been broken in Sino-Vietnamese relations” and softened a number of points in China’s policy on Cambodia. China stopped insisting on the number “13,” temporarily shelved the issue of the chairman and vice-chairman of the SNC, and after the SNC meeting held in Pattaya, Thailand, China made a policy shift by establishing direct relations with the State of Cambodia and inviting Hun Sen to make a three-day visit to Beijing (22 to 24 July 1991).

On Sunday afternoon, 18 November 1990, the Politburo met to discuss the Cambodia problem. Ever since the P5 approved the framework document (28 August 1990), the battle over the Cambodia issue had entered its final phase, and the battle was heated and ferocious. Speaking on behalf of the Foreign Ministry, I presented to the Politburo a paper on proposed struggle principles on the question of the P5’s framework document and on the SNC problem to ask the Politburo for its ideas on these matters. After I finished my presentation, Thach recommended that the Politburo affirm our stance on two points:

- 1.-With regards to the SNC problem, this is an internal Cambodian problem. We cannot pressure our Cambodian friends on this problem, and we must respect their sovereignty on this issue.

- 2.-With regards to the framework document, we must reject those points that violate the United Nations Charter. If we fail to reject those points, in the future our decision will affect the issue of how to handle the problem of the Spratly Islands, etc. We can clearly see that China and the United States both are united in trying to eliminate the State of Cambodia through the use of various different methods.

At the end of the meeting, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh concluded as follows:

“With regards to the SNC, we cannot give any advice to our Cambodian friends...However, if you are saying that China and the U.S. are the same, then I do not agree. After the Central Committee meeting the Politburo will reassess a number of issues involving our diplomatic policies, such as our assessment of China and what we should announce or say about China.”

Nguyen Co Thach added, *“I agree, and we should also reassess the Chengdu conference.”*

The draft Comprehensive Agreement on Cambodia dated 26 November 1990 that the P5 had drafted was accepted, at least basically, by the members of the Cambodian SNC during their meeting in Paris on 23 December 1990. Our position was that decisions on a political solution on Cambodia, especially with regard to Cambodian internal matters, had to be made by our Cambodian friends on their own, and they were the ones who had to bear the responsibility for these decisions in the eyes of the Cambodia people. We would do everything we could to help them and would make suggestions to them to help them avoid any unnecessary failures or defeats, but we could not make the decisions for them. This meant that we both did everything we could to help our friends while at the same time we would not allow Vietnam to once again become mired in Cambodia’s internal struggles. We would not allow the issue of a political settlement on Cambodia to become another historical problem in Vietnamese-Cambodian relations.

At the request of our Cambodian friends, on 14 January 1991 I, together with Huynh Anh Dung, Le Cong Phung, and Vu Tien Phuc (all specialists on the Cambodian settlement) traveled to Phnom Penh to work with our friends. Our objectives were as follows:

1.-To explore our friends' thoughts and plans regarding a Cambodian settlement after our friends' acceptance of the P5 framework document at the Jakarta meeting on 10 September 1990 and after they had basically accepted the P5's 26 November draft settlement agreement at the 23 December 1990 meeting in Paris.

2.-To persuade our friends to resolutely and firmly separate out the internal issues that were a matter of Cambodian sovereignty so that those issues would only be discussed and resolved internally, by the SNC.

3.-To agree on a plan for the preparations for a reconvening of the Paris International Conference.

When he received me, Hun Sen said to me,

"Within our own ranks here in Cambodia, the strongest tendency is the desire to achieve a political settlement that will secure the successes of our revolution and that prevents Pol Pot's return...The current situation here is very delicate. A difficult and complicated situation will arise if we accept an unprincipled settlement. All it would take to throw Cambodia's internal political situation into chaos is for us to simply say we accept such a settlement, to say nothing of what would happen if we signed such an agreement. It would be best if we maintain the hardline position that we have recently been following. We would ask that Vietnam not allow the settlement process to move ahead too quickly."

Based on our meetings with Minister Hor Nam Hong, Deputy Minister Dith Munty, and Deputy Minister Sok An, and especially through what Chairman Hun Sen said to us on the afternoon of 16 November, we could see that our Cambodian friends' position was to try to prolong the current "talk-fight" [fight and talk at the same time] situation for a number of different reasons, both subjective and objective, but the primary reason was that there was still a very strong feeling within the Cambodian leadership that they did not yet want to reach a settlement. Hun Sen told us that the Cambodian Politburo had decided that when the Party Central Committee met on 17 January 1991, he would inform the Central Committee that "There will not be a settlement in 1991." However, I felt that there were a great many contradictions and considerable confusion in both the thoughts and the actions of the Cambodian leadership. The leadership had not yet been able to lay out a clear policy position and was just dealing with issues, including both internal issues as well as problems with their opponents, one at a time as those issues surfaced.

During a meeting with Heng Samrin in Hanoi on 24 February 1991, Nguyen Van Linh again tried to pressure our Cambodian friends by saying, "*you need to properly implement a policy of national reconciliation, you should not continue to stress the genocide issue, and the SNC should be made up of 13 members with Sihanouk as the Chairman.*" When Heng Samrin returned home and reported this conversation to the Cambodian Party Politburo, all of the Cambodian Politburo members were confused and thought that perhaps because Heng Samrin was not fluent in Vietnamese he might have misinterpreted what Nguyen Van Linh said. And in fact, as Hun Sen told Ngo Dien, when they heard Heng Samrin's report on what Linh had said,

the Cambodian Politburo was very concerned because they saw that there was an enormous gap between Vietnam's views and Cambodia's views. On 13 March 1991 Hun Sen told Thach,

"We might use a stratagem to try to cause a split in the Khmer Rouge, but we absolutely cannot and will not drop the genocide issue. If we drop it we will face three dangers: we will have lost our bargaining chip right from the start of negotiations; we will lose our advantage in the general elections; and such a move will benefit our enemies' slanderous accusations against Vietnam, their accusations that everything that has happened over the past 12 years has been the result of Vietnam's actions. We can accept 12 or 14 members on the SNC, but we cannot accept 13 members. We are prepared to allow Sihanouk to become the SNC Chairman, with Hun Sen as Vice-Chairman, and we will no longer demand a rotating chairmanship or that there be two co-chairmen."

The way we had handled this issue revealed that we were only concerned about those points that we believed were in our own interest and that we had failed to consider whether those points were consistent with the interests of our Cambodian friends. Naturally, that way of doing things had a negative influence on the long-standing close relationship we had established between us and Phnom Penh.

In early 1991 the Politburo held a meeting at T78 in Ho Chi Minh City (24 and 25 January 1991) to discuss the Cambodia problem. I presented our position on separating the international aspects of a Cambodian settlement from the internal [domestic] aspects and also informed the Politburo of Hun Sen's statement that the Cambodian Politburo had decided that it would not enter into a settlement in 1991. The Politburo decided that we needed to explore the possibility of convening a meeting of the Politburos of the three countries [of Indochina] to

try to steer Cambodia toward entering into a settlement. Such a meeting would be in the nature of an exchange of ideas and we would make suggestions but would not decide the issue for them. We would not pressure our Cambodian friends, but at the same time we had to demonstrate our good faith and avoid anything that would serve to isolate us.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I told [Nguyen Co] Thach that I wanted to withdraw my name from the list of candidates for election to the next Central Committee. Thach indicated that he did not approve of my desire. In February 1991, when the election for provincial-level delegates to attend the upcoming 7th Party Congress was to be held, I sent a letter to Nguyen Duc Tam, the Chief of the Central Committee's Organization Department, asking that my name be withdrawn from the list of delegates who would attend the 7th Party Congress. At that time, I was, at least in part, psychologically exhausted from the work that I had been doing. However, my request was not approved. I received a letter asking me to attend the Congress of the Son La Party Chapter and I was elected to the Son La Province Party delegation that would attend the 7th National Party Congress. In June 1991 I received an invitation to attend the National Party Congress as a representative of Son La Province and was re-elected as a member of the Party Central Committee.

The closer the day that the National Party Congress would begin approached, the more heated the disagreements within the Politburo became. On 13 April 1991, during a Politburo meeting held to discuss the world situation and our foreign policy guidelines in order to prepare for the drafting of the political report that would be presented at the Party Congress, after Thach presented his report titled, "The World Situation and Our Party and Our State's Foreign Policy Strategy," Le Duc Anh introduced Senior Colonel Lan, an officer from the Ministry of

Defense's Department II [the Military Intelligence Department], who then presented a report on the "World Situation and the Plots of the Imperialists." After listening to this report, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh commented,

"In my purely subjective opinion, there are many differences between the report that was presented to us this morning (the Foreign Ministry's report) and the Ministry of Defense's report on the military situation that we heard this afternoon. If we want to discuss policy, then we first have to discuss the situation, but there are clearly still differences in our assessment of the situation."

Advisor Pham Van Dong said,

"This is truly not the time for jokes. We need to strive to work seriously, in accordance with our consciences, and in accordance with our responsibilities. The Politburo has given three comrades who are responsible for three different branches the responsibility for carrying out this assignment, but it appears that the work has not yet been done."

Le Duc Anh said,

"The Politburo should hear about many different aspects of the situation. Even within our own country we have differences between ourselves in our assessment of the situation. Based on the overall assessment of the situation, each branch will present its own proposal. We cannot combine them all together."

Nguyen Co Thach agreed that the three branches would get together for discussions in order to reach agreement on an assessment of the situation but said that each separate branch would prepare a separate proposal on the tasks that should be carried out.

In that spirit, on 2 May 1991 there was a meeting between Foreign Affairs, Security, and Defense to reach a unified assessment of the world situation. The attendees at that meeting were Le Duc Anh, Tran Van Quang, and Senior Colonel Lan (who was usually called “Lan the Lamé”) from the Ministry of Defense; Mai Chi Tho from the Ministry of the Interior [Security]; and Nguyen Co Thach and four Deputy Foreign Ministers from the Foreign Ministry. Also in attendance were three Deputy Chiefs of the Party External Relations Department: Nguyen Thi Binh, Trinh Ngoc Thai, and Nguyen Quang Tao. The meeting produced only rather meager results. No agreement was reached on our assessment of the situation, and the meeting only agreed on a few general ideological points.

There was only one month left until the 7th Party Congress convened, so the Politburo meet for almost three whole days (15, 16, and 17 May 1991) to discuss the draft “Report on the World Situation, the Implementation of the 6th Party Congress’s Foreign Policy Guidelines, and Directions for the Future.” All the members of the Politburo attended these meetings. I monitored the meeting by sitting in one of the seats in the “listeners’ gallery” (initially there were ten people who attended as “auditors,” but from the afternoon of 16 May on, when the Politburo began to review the implementation of the 6th Party Congress’s resolutions on foreign affairs, the number of auditors was restricted, so the only auditors who remained were Hong Ha, Hoang Bich Son, Dinh Nho Liem, and me).

From the beginning of the meetings right through to the end, I could clearly the clash between two different opinions on the international front, especially when the discussion involved reviewing the results of the implementation of our foreign policy guidelines and when the Cambodian problem and relations with China were discussed. The Foreign Ministry’s draft

report stated that “a number of things were done that were not in accordance with the Politburo’s resolutions;” that “our attitude toward China changed in a manner that ran counter to Politburo Resolution 13 (20 May 1988), dividing this period into two separate phases (before 1989 and after 1989);” that “a number of rather clear differences have been exposed between us and our Cambodian friends;”; that in our foreign policy we had been “confused and impatient” when faced with the political crises in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; and that we had missed an opportunity to improve relations with ASEAN (Thailand invited Prime Minister Do Muoi to come to Thailand for a visit, but Muoi had replied that he had to travel to the Soviet Union and to India first before he would be able to visit Thailand). These statements gave rise to some rather heated arguments, especially during the discussion about whether or not mistakes had been made during the summit meeting with China in Chengdu in September 1990 and during the discussions about the genocide issue and the “Red Solution.”

Vo Chi Cong said,

“The issue regarding China is very complicated...The Politburo assessed China as having both a socialist face and a hegemonistic face. With regards to its socialist face, we need to see that in spite of their “winks” to us...the problem is that they have not yet normalized relations with us...They has laid out five obstacles [to normalization], and some of these obstacles could not be resolved in a hundred years. For instance, the issue of the ‘Indochina Federation.’ They know that we do not have any such plans but they continue to make that accusation in order to create divisions between the three countries, win Laos and Cambodia over to their side, an push us aside...The ‘Red Solution’ is also impossible, because it would mean that China would be joining us in opposing the United States at a time China’s policy is to gain science and

technology from the West in order to modernize their country, so if they did something like that, what would be left of China?

At the end of the meeting, Nguyen Duc Tam said,

“We cannot write a draft resolution right away because this discussion has revealed that there are still different opinions in the Politburo about how to correctly assess our accomplishments, how to correctly assess who are our friends and who are our enemies, and about what policies we should carry out. The Party Congress is almost here, and after the Party Congress this Politburo will no longer exist, although some of the members will stay on as members of the new Politburo...”

In spite of that, Nguyen Thanh Binh, who was chairing the meeting, decided that a draft resolution on foreign affairs would be written.

Chapter Seventeen:

Issues Still Under Debate Regarding the International Situation and Our Foreign Policy⁷

1.-On the International Situation: Because of the effect of the revolution in science and technology, the gap between the rich nations and the poor nations is steadily growing larger. The greatest challenge our country faces is the danger of falling behind economically because the decisive factor in determining a country's overall national strength today is primarily that country's economy.

a.-Still under debate: Whether the threat of peaceful evolution is greater than the challenge of being falling behind economically. Some said that the primary factor in our nation's strength is our security and defense power and that economic and social strength is not the primary factor that determines every nation's strength.

b.-Regarding this era's contradictions: Many individuals expressed the opinion that the tremendous changes in the world had changed the order of importance of the major contradictions and said that the primary contradiction that was the controlling factor in international relations today was no longer the contradiction between East and West, but was instead the contradiction between West and West. However, some said that the West-West contradiction was still important.

c.-Regarding combining forces [assembling forces]: There was general agreement on the policy of expanding our relations [multi-lateralizing our relations]. However, there was still debate about whether to combine forces based on ideology or on national interests, and some

⁷ Translator's Note: Chapter 17 was contained in the original 2001 draft but was dropped by the author from the 2003 final manuscript.

said that we should expand relations but still emphasize ideology and the need to find strategic allies.

2.-On the Plans and Intentions of the Great Powers and of ASEAN:

The United States: On the question of “Does the new world situation create opportunities or challenges for the United States?” (Is the U.S. growing stronger or getting weaker)

Some said that the U.S. is now working to gain the upper hand in order to establish a single-axis world order under American control, while other expressed the opinion that a multi-axis or “multi-centric” world order was taking shape, or that the world order was still in the process of taking shape and that there was currently a state of equilibrium between the major powers.

Is the goal of America’s worldwide strategy the total elimination of the remaining socialist countries or is it to dominate and suppress the other capitalist economic centers. How can we explain the phenomenon that the other nations in the region want a continued U.S. presence, saying that it will help to stabilize the region, while Vietnam still considers the U.S. to be the most dangerous threat?

China:

Why are all the nations of the region afraid of China while Vietnam is placing its hopes on China (as a strategic ally)?

Is China’s hegemonism its most important face or is socialism its most important face? What is the true nature of “Chinese-style socialism”?

On Sino-American Relations (as related to Vietnam):

Common Opinion: The U.S. is trying to restrict China's influence in the Asia-Pacific region and hopes Vietnam will contribute to that effort. However, some individuals thought that the U.S. and China had reached an agreement that was harmful to Vietnam's interests. They thought that the U.S. placed a higher priority on its relations with China and so the U.S. would be ready when Vietnam gave that [its relationship with China?] top priority.⁸

Assessment of ASEAN

Some individuals said that ASEAN is an organization that has a voice, that is full of life, that knows how to exploit the contradictions between the major powers and their national interests for the benefit of the nations of their region, and they said that Vietnam should strive to gain quick admittance to this organization.

3.-Regarding our Foreign Policy Strategy

Is there anything different about Vietnam's posture now in comparison with its previous posture?

What is the greatest threat to our security and development? Is the danger of falling behind economically our main threat or is our main threat the threat of peaceful evolution?

What measures should we take to deal with the threat and to achieve our goals?
("Strategic alliance"? "Special relationship?")

Is concentrating on economic development our only way out? Is it the only way to consolidate and stabilize our economy and society in order to escape from the current economic and social crisis in our country and to elevate our nation's posture and role in the

⁸ Translator's Comment: The wording of this sentence is very vague, making its meaning unclear.

international community and to deal with the threat of “peaceful evolution” effectively? Have we already given the highest priority to economic development, or have we not done that yet?

In reality our foreign affairs often experienced confusion and hesitation about assigning priority in the following relationships:

- +Between economic development and ensuring political security (between the threat of falling behind economically and the threat of deviating from the socialist path, the threat of peaceful evolution).

- +Between national interest and international duty - Whether to assemble forces and differentiate between friend and foe based on ideological concepts or national interests.

- +Between independent national sovereignty and international cooperation - Whether to integrate into the world community (February 1995)

Chapter Eighteen:

The 7th Party Congress and the Price We Had to Pay for Normalizing Relations With China

The Vietnamese Communist Party held its 7th National Congress from 17 to 27 June 1991. This Congress resulted in many important changes in personnel. Do Muoi replaced Nguyen Van Linh as General Secretary of the Party. Le Duc Anh moved up to the Party's Number 2 position, serving simultaneously as the Politburo and the Party Secretariat permanent affairs section member in charge of three different fields – defense, security, and foreign relations – as well as moving up to the position of Chief of the Council of State [President]. Vo Van Kiet was brought into the State Apparatus and selected to serve as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers [Prime Minister]. Dao Duy Tung became the head of the Party Secretariat. Do Muoi, Le Duc Anh, and Dao Duy Tung controlled the permanent affairs components of the Politburo and the Party Secretariat. General Vo Nguyen Giap was ousted from his position as a member of the Party Central Committee. Nguyen Co Thach was kicked out of the Politburo and was preparing to step down from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs (In fact, the decisions on the personnel changes within the Politburo had been made before the Congress, in May 1990, and ***China already knew about these changes***). The changes excited international public opinion, which speculated that Nguyen Co Thach had been the “sacrificial lamb” offered up by Vietnam to obtain normalization of relations with China. I think that is a simplistic way of putting it, because the issue was not simply normalizing relations with China but subservient-izing relations with China [Translator's Comment: Meaning not simply entering into a normal relationship with China but entering into a subservient relationship with China].

The immediate issue that was raised was who would be selected to replace Thach as Minister of Foreign Affairs? Beginning in early July, I was repeatedly called in to meet with Party General Secretary Do Muoi and Chief of the Party Central Committee's Organization Department Le Phuoc Tho (who replaced Nguyen Duc Tam) to be given information and explanations about the plan to make me the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. During our meeting on the morning of 10 July 1991, seeing that I continued to refuse to accept the position, Do Muoi mistakenly assumed that I was refusing to accept it because I had not yet been made a member of the Politburo, as had been done with Bui Thien Ngo, the person who replaced Mai Chi Tho as Minister of the Interior, Based on that assumption Do Muoi promised that this problem would be resolved [that I would become a member of the Politburo] after I took over the post of Foreign Minister. I replied only that for reason of "health" I respectfully declined to accept the position. I said,

"For the past 45 years I have worked continuously, striving to carry out the tasks I have been given properly and never refusing a difficult assignment. However, this time I cannot accept this assignment. My one and only desire is to complete my duties as Deputy Foreign Minister. I suggest that you all should follow the suggestion I made to you yesterday by choosing either Vu Oanh or Vu Khoan. I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you that it is the general feeling of the personnel of the Foreign Ministry that our diplomatic service has been treated unfairly."

Why had I been chosen to replace Nguyen Co Thach even though everyone knew that I shared Thach's political and foreign policy views? I think there were two reasons: first, to conceal the political significance of the fact that Nguyen Co Thach was being replaced, and

second, because the new foreign relations [external relations] structure that was set up after the 7th Party Congress had the potential of completely neutralizing any policies and actions that deviated in any way from the ideas and concepts of the members of the new permanent affairs section of the new Politburo.

After they let me off the hook, a rather lively campaign was conducted to decide who should get the post. The names of Vu Oanh, Hong Ha, Hoang Bich Son, Vu Khoan, and Nguyen Dy Nien were all mentioned. In the end, Nguyen Manh Cam, who was then our ambassador to the Soviet Union, was chosen, even though he himself was still very hesitant about whether or not to accept the position.

After the 7th Party Congress, all of the decisions about every single important State [Government] foreign policy issue were made by Hong Ha, the Party Secretariat member in charge of external relations, acting under the direct supervision of Le Duc Anh, and naturally with the concurrence of Party General Secretary Do Muoi. Work that had always previously been the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was now under the control of Hong Ha and the Party External Relations Section. The following is a prime example of their willingness to forgo national honor and pride for the sake of their own personal designs: On 5 August 1991, during a meeting of the Council of Ministers [a Cabinet meeting], Hong Ha made the following announcement: *"From now on, all contacts that any sector and branch have with China will go through Zhang Dewei (the Chinese ambassador). You no longer need to go through the Vietnamese Embassy in Beijing."* Le Duc Anh said that when he was in China, the Deputy Chief of China's Party External Relations Department, Chu Luong, had suggested that for technical reasons, contacts and relations between the two Communist Parties should go through

Ambassador Zhang Dewei. The next day, Hong Ha, who as the Chief of the Party's External Relations Department was meeting with Cambodian Ambassador Ouch Borith, informed the ambassador that, *"Pursuant to instructions issued by Vietnam's Politburo, from now on Comrades Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha will be in charge of discussions on a Cambodian settlement and related matters. If Cambodia's leaders wish to discuss these subjects, we request that they contact those two comrades to arrange to discuss these matters directly with them."*

On 9 July 1991, right after he was elected as General Secretary of our Party, Do Muoi met with Chinese Ambassador Zhang Dewei and indicated that he wanted to send an emissary to Beijing to brief China on the results of the 7th Party Congress and to discuss relations between the two countries. A short time before this – on 11 June 1991 – our Foreign Ministry had met with the Chinese Ambassador to suggest that we reopen the deputy minister-level talks between our two countries. On 17 July, China replied that it agreed to hold the deputy minister-level talks in Beijing from 5 to 10 August. Two days later, China replied that it agreed to our request to send an emissary to meet with the Chinese leaders. However, they arranged for the visit of our Party's emissary to take place before the meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the two countries. This demonstrated that while China wanted to hold meetings with us on two different levels, they wanted to use the agreement reached at the special emissary level to put pressure on us in the meetings at the deputy foreign minister level. In order to play this up even more, the Chinese suggested that the term "special emissary" be changed to "Special Representative Group of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee," even though the Group had only two members – Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha. At that time Hong Ha was the Party Secretariat member in charge of external relations. The group's

assistant was Trinh Ngoc Thai, Deputy Chief of the Party External Affairs Department. I recall that the Foreign Ministry recommended that a Deputy Foreign Minister who was also a member of the Party Central Committee should accompany the group in order to be able to have the information needed for use in the deputy foreign minister-level talks that would take place immediately after the “special representative group” visit, but this recommendation was not accepted. In addition, the Vietnamese ambassador to China, Dang Nghiem Bai, was not allowed to participate in the group’s activities even though the Chinese ambassador to Vietnam, Zhang Dewei, was present during all of the official activities and talks that the group had in China.

On 28 July 1991, the group arrived in Beijing. Over the next few days, the group met with Qiao Shi [Kieu Thach], Li Peng, and Jiang Zemin and gave these Chinese leaders rather detailed briefings on the 7th Party Congress. They even told the Chinese about the differing opinions that had been expressed during the course of discussion and debate, about the votes that had been taken on important issues during the Party Congress, and about the personnel and structure of the new Politburo. Jiang Zemin and Li Peng expressed interest in whether Vietnam would have a new foreign minister (replacing Nguyen Co Thach) when the National Assembly met in August 1991. Jiang expressed his satisfaction, saying,

“From the bottom of my heart, I warmly applaud the results achieved by the 7th Party Congress of our Vietnamese comrades.”

Of particular note was the fact that, in spite of the fact that the purpose of their trip was to meet with China’s leaders to brief them on the 7th Party Congress and to discuss relations between the two nations, Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha on their own initiative requested to meet

with Xu Dunxin twice during the trip (on the afternoon of 29 July and during the evening of 31 July) to apologize to him (?). At the beginning of their first meeting on the afternoon of 29 July, Le Duc Anh said,

“Last year when you visited Vietnam a number of very unfortunate problems occurred that were our fault (!). When Comrade Nguyen Van Linh and I heard about these problems we were not pleased. Today I would like to express to you the warm feelings that Comrade Nguyen Van Linh, Comrade Do Muoi, and I have for you...Problems in relations are a painful subject, especially when they occur between fellow communists. That old song has now ended, and I hope that you comrades will now be able to set your minds at ease.”

Xu Dunxin took advantage of this opportunity to complain about our ambassador, Dang Nghiem Bai, saying, *“For the past year he has not met with me, except at official receptions. This is the first time I have seen Comrade Hoanh since June of last year.”* (in fact, the Chinese side had been prejudiced against Hoanh ever since the June 1990 talks in Hanoi). Xu also did not forget to reiterate the absolutely essential condition for normalizing relations with Vietnam:

“I warmly applaud the fact that Comrades Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha have said that from now on the genocide issue will not be raised again. When you return to Hanoi, if you see the Cambodians, you should suggest that they also do the same thing...If Vietnam’s leaders come to visit China while still dragging their Cambodian tale behind them, it will be difficult for us to explain the visit to our people. I hope that the Cambodian problem will be settled, because then, when we normalize relations with you, we will be able to explain our action to the Chinese people and to the people of the world.”

To prepare the way for the deputy foreign minister-level talks to be held in Beijing during August 1991, on the night of 31 July Hong Ha assured Xu Dunxin that,

“Comrade Le Duc Anh and I will personally talk to Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Nien (who had been assigned to handle the talks with China only because he had no ‘past history’ with the Chinese) before he travels here to China. We must report back to the Politburo to get their guidance not only on the content but also on the spirit and the attitude that we should display in these talks. Our intention is that we will strive to make the meeting a success.”

After promising that from now on we would not raise the genocide issue again, Hong Ha asked Xu a question:

“I would like to ask you this question: Aside from the genocide issue, there are two other difficult issues remaining – the question of the armies of the different Cambodian sides and the role of the United Nations. What direction should be taken to settle these issues? I am asking so that we can help to make sure that the upcoming meeting between the Vietnamese and Chinese deputy foreign ministers in Beijing achieves good results.”

Asking your opponent’s ideas about the direction that should be taken on an issue that is to be negotiated before the negotiations take place is truly a unique and unprecedented event in the history of diplomacy!

After they returned from their visit to China, on 4 August 1991 Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha met with Nguyen Dy Nien and me at the Office of the Party Central Committee to prepare Nien for his talks with the Chinese. After Nien read the plan for the talks that Ministry of Foreign Affairs had written, I said,

“Hoanh (our ambassador to China) has just sent us a cable saying that the Chinese have informed us that they are prepared to hold three working sessions but that the Chinese said that it is possible that everything can be completed in just one session. I am sure that Xu Dunxin will present us with a document and try to force us to accept it. If we accept it, they will leak it to the P5 countries, to the ASEAN countries, and to our Cambodian friends. We will be put in the position of betraying our allies and betraying our friends. If we demand changes in the Chinese document, then the talks will not be able to produce a document of agreement and the talks will fail. We have reviewed the minutes of your discussions and we see that China has very tightly linked the Cambodian problem with normalization of relations with us and still views Cambodia as a condition for normalization. The Chinese are very smart – in high-level meetings they focus on the issue of relations between our two countries and leave this bone to one side. When we get down to chewing on this bone, we must resolve the problem in a principled manner. We are determined to normalize relations with China, but we cannot sabotage our relations with Cambodia, and we cannot let the world view Vietnam as being duplicitous.”

Knowing that I would be a big obstacle and would not accept any idea of reaching an unprincipled agreement with China, Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha spoke about their recent visit to China in only very general terms. Hong Ha said, *“It is my understanding that both Zhang Dewei and Xu Dunxin are worried that the deputy foreign minister-level talks will fail. Xu asked me if the deputy foreign minister who will meet me will be informed of the spirit of our discussions.”* I immediately commented, *“That means it is even clearer that their demands will be so high that they are afraid that we will not be able to accept them.”* Hong Ha said, *“It is my understanding that they view normalization of relations as the main thing and that is why they are worried.”* I

responded, *"On that point, we have to admit that Vietnam is more worried because Vietnam is more eager to normalize relations than is China."*

At the end of the meeting, Hong Ha said, *"It is good that we are sending Nien after Le Duc Anh's visit. Nien is also a new face for them, someone who does not have a 'past history' with them. They get very upset whenever June 1990 is mentioned."* Le Duc Anh added, *"After June 1990 there were statements made to the press by both sides that exacerbated the situation"* (by which he meant that after the June 1990 talks Xu Dunxin and I had criticized one another in the press).

That afternoon, when the Politburo's permanent section met to discuss the talks with China, they only invited Nien to attend; they did not invite me. I was informed that during the Politburo meeting Party General Secretary Do Muoi insisted that we must not let the Cambodia problem block the normalization of our relations with China. On the Cambodian problem, they directed Nien to agree with the Chinese on the following points:

1.-We would not raise the genocide issue. Le Duc Anh said, *"we must absolutely cease all references to genocide."* Party General Secretary Do Muoi added, *"If we talk about genocide, that means we are allying ourselves with the United States against China"* (!)

2.-Elevate the role of the Cambodian SNC and reduce the role of the U.N.

3.-Reduce the size of the armies of the Cambodian sides by 50%.

In order to ensure that the talks did not go off the tracks and that the talks would follow the prior arrangements that they had made with China, Hong Ha had left Trinh Ngoc Thai, the Deputy Chief of the Party's External Relations Department, behind in Beijing, ostensibly to serve as a member of our negotiating team but really to keep an eye on Nguyen Dy Nien to see

whether or not he correctly followed the script that they had previously agreed upon with China.

On 10 August 1991, after the so-called “negotiations” had achieved the results that China desired (applauding Sihanouk’s role as the Chairman of the SNC and supporting the U.N. framework document on a Cambodian settlement), on the very same day that the Vietnamese National Assembly approved the appointment of Nguyen Manh Cam to replace Nguyen Co Thach as Foreign Minister, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen received Nguyen Dy Nien and said that he would like to invite new Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam to visit China on 16 September 1991 to make preparations for a summit meeting between Chinese and Vietnamese leaders in Beijing.

We had planned that after the talks in Beijing ended, we would travel to Phnom Penh to brief our Cambodian friends on the talks. However, on the night of 18 August 1991 Hong Ha telephoned us to give us the following instructions:

“In accordance with Comrade Le Duc Anh’s thinking, Nien will not go to Cambodia to brief our friends, and no one is to be briefed about the recent talks in Beijing” (in spite of the fact that China had already briefed the ASEAN nations and the Western countries on the talks). Hong Ha added, *“From now on, there will be no further mention on any piece of paper that you write of anything regarding ‘China’s intentions,’ because the Politburo already knows all about this issue.”*

Generally speaking, after the 7th Party Congress the process of normalization of relations between Vietnam and China went smoothly, following the pre-arranged schedule like a well-greased piece of machinery. Between 5 and 10 November 1991, after the Agreement on

Cambodia was signed in Paris, Party General Secretary Do Muoi and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet made an official visit to the People's Republic of China to complete the normalization of relations between our countries, relations that had been extremely troubled ever since February 1979. However, while our leaders harbored dreams of joining with China "to defend socialism against imperialism," China defined its relations with us as "friendly but not close, distant but not remote, combative but without fighting). That is what China said, but at the same time it always used its big power status to seize our offshore waters, and, most dangerously, it constantly made efforts to influence our own internal affairs.

Chapter Nineteen:

Round Two of the International Conference on Cambodia

With the rapid progress being made in the SNC meetings held in Jakarta (June 1991), Beijing, Pattaya (Thailand), and New York (September 1991), the P5 decided to quickly settle the Cambodian issue in order to pave the way for resolving other regional conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. Both the Soviet Union and China shared common interests with the Western nations – and primarily with the U.S. – in sweeping aside the final obstacles blocking approval of the draft agreement documents that the P5 had approved on 28 November 1990.

In late September 1991 I led a Vietnamese delegation to New York to attend the 10th session of the U.N. General Assembly. Unlike the situation in 1988, when I represented Vietnam in attending the 43rd session of the U.N. General Assembly, this time the Cambodian problem was very close to achieving a settlement. During my time in New York, I decided to see Hun Sen, who was there to attend an SNC meeting, to find out the attitude of our Cambodian friends toward the draft agreement. I learned that on 21 September 1991 the State of Cambodia had quickly dropped all of its demands for changes in the draft of the agreement. This meant that Vietnam was now the only country that was still demanding changes to the draft agreement - changes to four points that involved Vietnam. I hastily sent a report on this situation back home so they could make the appropriate policy decisions for our delegation that would be attending the Paris International Conference on Cambodia. On 13 October 1991, the permanent element of the Politburo, and then the other members of the Politburo, approved a policy guideline under which Vietnam would participate in the signing of the Agreement with two different plans on how to handle the four changes that we wanted to make. On the morning of 14

October Vo Van Kiet met me in the Office of the Council of Ministers to give me his thoughts about two documents that the Foreign Ministry had prepared for the Paris meeting on Cambodia. After hearing my explanation, Kiet approved our report to the Politburo on our struggle plan for use at the Paris International Conference and suggested two changes in the draft Government Statement.

On 16 October, as I was on my way to Paris, I received a cable from the Ministry informing me that both Deputy Foreign Minister Levitte of France and Xu Dunxin, who was now a Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister, wanted to meet me right way, before the meeting of the Conference's Coordinating Committee. Based on my guess that both of them wanted to see me to negotiate with me and to push Vietnam into withdrawing its requests for changes in the draft agreement in order to ensure that the Coordinating Committee meeting did not run into any problems, I decided to meet with Levitte first and to see Xu Dunxin only after my meeting with Levitte. My line of thinking was as follows: France was the co-chairman and the host of the conference, so it very much wanted the conference to succeed. I thought my move would elevate France's role on the world stage, and at the same time my meeting the French first would demonstrate our good will and our independence. If I met with the Chinese before I met with the French, I would be pressured by China and would have to make concessions.

On 18 October, right after I arrived in Paris, I met with Levitte for a discussion. Just as I had guessed, France earnestly hoped that Vietnam would display a flexible attitude toward the draft agreement. In the end, to demonstrate our good will, I agreed with the French on the following procedure: The report that the U.N. Secretary General would submit to the Security Council would contain an explanation of the points that Vietnam had asked to be clarified.

Then, during the meeting of the Coordination Committee on 21 October 1991, in his report Deputy U.N. Secretary General Ahmed Rafeuddin would lay out our complete explanations, and at the same time Levitte, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, would publicly proclaim his appreciation for Vietnam's good will and spirit of cooperation in dropping its proposed changes to the draft treaty based on the appropriate explanations provided by the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. I also agreed with Levitte that we would hold a three-way meeting with Ahmed to reach a final agreement on this arrangement.

The next day I met with Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Xu Dunxin. Xu's objective in meeting me was also to persuade our side not to request any more changes. He said that if Vietnam requested changes, then other nations would also demand changes to restore balance to the document, and the U.S. would demand that the signing be postponed and would blame Vietnam for causing this problem.

On 20 October 1991, as I had agreed with the French, right after the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations arrived in Paris a three-way meeting was held involving Vietnam, France, and U.N. Deputy Secretary General Ahmed. Ahmed agreed to do exactly what we had discussed with France on 18 October and had his assistant write down the words that we wanted clarified when he explained the points we had wanted changed. This meant that in fact we had been able to exceed our goals, but in order to maintain the upper hand, I said that I provisionally agreed with this but that I had to request instructions from Hanoi on this matter. I said that I would confirm these arrangements on the morning of 21 October, before the start of the meeting of the Coordinating Committee.

On 21 October 1991, when the Vietnamese delegation arrived at the Kleber International Conference Center, a member of the Chinese delegation came over and invited me to come see Xu Dunxin, saying that Xu had something urgent he needed to discuss with me before the meeting. Xu asked to meet with me privately, just the two of us. Speaking in Chinese without using an interpreter, he told me that the United States planned to insert a section denouncing genocide into the agreement and asked me for my opinion on that idea. I replied, *“This issue is now primarily a Cambodian problem, so we should let the Cambodian parties express their opinions. As for us, Vietnam thinks that at this time we should not allow any problem whatsoever to impede the signing of the agreement.”* Xu appeared to be satisfied with the way we expressed our attitude. But in the end, apparently as the result of an arrangement made between the U.S. and China, the U.S. took the word “genocide” out of the section that was to be added to the agreement, so that it now only spoke in general terms about “human rights” and the basic rights to freedom of the Cambodian people that should be respected by all nations.

After that, the 8th session of the Paris International Conference Coordinating Committee (PICC) was held to give final approval to the documents that would be presented to the conference of foreign ministers. Everything went exactly as had been agreed by Vietnam, France, and the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. After the speeches given by the two co-chairmen, France and Indonesian, to open the meeting, Deputy U.N. Secretary General Ahmed read his report on the status of the preparations for the implementation of the agreement that would be signed and read in full the clarifications of the four points that we had requested be inserted into the agreement (the *reintroduction* or the dispatch of troops of any

nation into Cambodia would be a violation of the agreement; information that must be supplied to UNTAC is only information related to foreign troops still present in Cambodia after the signing of this agreement; the presence of UNTAC liaison officers in the capitals of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand does not imply that UNTAC's powers extend to Cambodia's neighboring countries...the sovereignty of these countries must be fully respected). Speaking in response, I said that I noted and applauded the words of explanation provided by the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. Levitte, the meeting co-chairman, expressed his gratitude to Vietnam for its good will and cooperation.

In the end, all four documents being presented for signing were unanimously approved by the Coordinating Committee without any argument or debate about substance, not even about the issues we had anticipated, such as the issue of prisoners of war, the issue of ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia, or the issue of the border between Cambodia and Vietnam. None of the delegations raised these issues. Now all that was left to do was for Nguyen Manh Cam to sign the agreement on the night of 23 October 1991.

On the morning of 22 October 1991, RFI Radio (French radio) requested an interview with me and asked me the following question:

"You came to Paris as a representative of Vietnam to participate in the Cambodian peace conference, and yesterday you participated in the approval of the final text of the peace agreement. First of all, could you tell us your feelings about the signing of this document, now that after more than a decade of savage warfare Cambodia finally has real peace?"

This is the answer I gave them:

“My feelings about the fact that the peace agreement on Cambodia will be signed in the next few days is the feeling of one who after spending many days cutting his way through the jungle and climbing tall mountains has finally reached a wide, open clearing, or the feeling of one who after spending many days trekking through the desert has almost reached an oasis, a rest stop. Even though it is not the final rest stop, it is a place to rest so that we can then set out on a new road facing new challenges, but one that certainly has much more promising prospects.”

Chapter Twenty:

The End of One Stage but Its History is Still Unclear

After twelve long years, for us the Cambodian problem was considered to be over, and it became just another file held in the archives of Vietnam's Foreign Ministry. However, the lessons of those twelve years still have a great deal of currency, and particularly the lessons on our policies and how we deal with large countries.

After the Cambodian problem was resolved, the next item of business was normalization of relations with China. As had been agreed by the two sides, on 5 November 1991 Party General Secretary Do Muoi and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet made an official visit to the People's Republic of China, formally marking the normalization of relations between our two countries. *"Relations between China and Vietnam are based on the principles of mutual respect for each nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-violation of borders, non-intervention in each other's internal affairs...The relationship between China and Vietnam is not an alliance and it is not a return to the relationship that existed during the 1950s and 1960s..."*

However, after relations were normalized, a string of negative events occurred in many different aspects of the relations between the two countries, with the most serious being focused on incidents involving our land border in Ha Giang Province that occurred in February, March, and April 1992; incidents in December 1991 and again on 4 May 1992 involving the re-establishment of the intercontinental railroad link at Dong Dang in Lang Son Province; and incidents involving disputes over offshore islands and maritime claims, the apex of which occurred when China publicized the signing of an oil and gas exploration contract with the U.S. energy company Crestone for exploration on Vietnam's continental shelf (at Vanguard Bank).

Why did China step up its efforts to grab territory and pressure us at that time? It was because China believed that the situation at that time was favorable for them to quickly implement their goals of strengthening their position and their power (quickly building up their navy, exploding a 1,000 kiloton bomb, implementing their “soft borders” policy) in order to create a more favorable position for themselves in relation to the U.S. and the other major powers, including their plan to quickly turn the South China Sea (which we call the Eastern Sea) into a maritime zone solely controlled and occupied by China, and then to use that maritime zone to dominate the entire Southeast Asian region.

1.-The old war order was gone, and a new world order had not yet taken shape. China’s primary opponents in the Asia-Pacific region were all experiencing problems. The Soviet Union had just disintegrated. The Russian Federation did not, initially at least, present a significant challenge. The U.S. was in the process of reducing its military presence in the Asia-Pacific area and was avoiding any intervention if the interests of the U.S. and its allies were not involved.

2.-Southeast Asia had just begun the process of reestablishing relations and commerce between two former opposing groups of nations. The prospect of the creation of an alliance between the Southeast Asian nations or the unification of all of Southeast Asia, which would be detrimental to China’s hegemonistic plans, still faced a number of obstacles (mutual suspicions based on ideological differences and a clash between Thailand’s interests and intentions and those of Laos and Cambodia) that would take time to overcome. China wanted to make use of this opportunity to disrupt the trend toward regional cooperation between Indochina, primarily meaning Vietnam, and ASEAN, and to create a pro-Chinese collection of forces (the Thai

militarists, the Myanmar militarists, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and, if possible, Laos) in order to defeat Vietnam.

3.-Vietnam itself was still confused and uncertain about strategic issues (the issue of alliances, the issue of assembling forces, the question of friends and foes) in the new situation it faced after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and before it was able to normalize its relations with the United States. China wanted to normalize relations with Vietnam at a time when it could do it from a position of strength.

For this reason, China was in no great hurry as it proceeded through the different steps of normalizing relations with Vietnam as it strove to present an outward picture of close and intimate Sino-Vietnamese relations while at the same time tightening the screws behind the scenes to gain an advantage for itself in every aspect of the relationship. Both the outward and behind-the-scenes efforts were designed to achieve the goal of confirming that Vietnam and the Indochina Peninsula were China's area of influence in order to split Vietnam off from Southeast Asia and the outside world.

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On 29 November 1993, during the 6th Plenum of the 7th Party Congress's Central Committee which was being held to assess the situation and discuss future influences on the situation, with the intention of requesting permission to resign my seat on the Central Committee during the next mid-term Central Committee plenary meeting, I tried to clearly express my thoughts to a meeting of the entire Central Committee in the form of a speech providing my thoughts on "Opportunities and Challenges."

I said that I thought that the new state of affairs at this moment had a favorable aspect for us in that it was giving rise to a number of trends that were suited to our need to open our doors and integrate ourselves into international economic and political life, thereby creating an opportunity us to achieve our nation's goals of peace and development. I said that these trends were:

1.-The trend toward democracy, self-reliance, and self-mastery among small and middle-sized countries that understand their own national interests and that resist political pressure from large nations trying to impose their will on them.

2.-The trend toward expansion [multi-lateralization] of external relations and the strengthening of multilateral diplomacy based on the need to increase economic commerce and strengthen collective security.

3.-The trend toward protecting world and regional peace and stability in order to guarantee an international environment that permits concentration on economic development.

4.-The trend toward regional economic alliances and regional security.

At the same time, I said, there were also many large challenges to our security and development, both internal challenges and external challenges:

1.-Our internal challenge was the problem of corruption and bad conduct that was destroying the strength, both material and spiritual, of our nation's resistance and which greatly harmed our ability to combat external challenges.

2.-Peaceful evolution – one manifestation of the contradictions between East and West after the end of the Cold War.

3.-Expansionist hegemony – just as dangerous as peaceful evolution and sitting right next door to us, sometimes with a soft appearance and sometimes taking a hard line in order to blur our vision and make us let down our guard (during the [Central Committee] meeting there was virtually no one who made any comment about this point).

4.-The Cambodian situation, which was still filled with uncertainty because the Khmer Rouge were still around, adding to the problem of the extremist, radical nationalistic prejudices of the Cambodians.

On the bases of the above assessments of the opportunities and threats facing us, I presented the following proposals:

1.-We should look at the entire situation, including both the objective and the subjective situation, and compare the challenges we face with our own capabilities in order to select realistic ways to deal with these challenges.

2.-First of all, we must deal with those challenges that are in our own hands and focus on combating corruption in order to preserve and increase our power to resist and to guard against external challenges.

3.-Give priority to forming regional alliances (Southeast Asia), but not form alliances for the purpose of confronting or opposing any country.

4.-With regard to the big countries, maintain friendly relations, do not confront any country, but maintain a certain distance from all of them.

5.-In parallel with forming friendships, do not shy away from struggle [conflict] when it is necessary, but always keep conflict within limits so as not to endanger regional stability.

6.-Avoid doing anything that could push two or three opponents into joining together to oppose us.

The above ideas may serve as the conclusion of my reminiscences because they rather fully reflect my views, and right up to the present (2000), they do not yet appear to have become outdated.

[Translator's Note: The last sentence above is the last sentence of the earlier version of this manuscript. The revised, edited 2003 manuscript replaces that sentence with the following lines.]

-The ideas expressed above can be viewed as the conclusion of my reminiscences because they fully reflect my opinions and because, right up to the present (1999), they do not yet appear to have become outdated. Previously, on 14 June 1993, at the request of the Politburo's Current Affairs Committee, I authored a document titled "Challenges to Our Security and Developments: A Number of Policy Recommendations" (see the appendix of this memoir). This document represents a frank expression of my ideas about a number of major issues, including where the challenges and threats to our security and development might come from and what forms these challenges and threats might take. I sent this document to the Politburo's Current Affairs Committee on 20 June 1991. [Sic: this is obviously a typo and should read "20 June 1993"].

[Translator's Note: This appendix appears only in the revised, edited 2003 version of the manuscript; it was not included in the earlier version of the manuscript]

Appendix:

Challenges to our Security and Development - A Number of Recommendations

(Written at the request of the Politburo's Standing Committee and sent to the members of the Politburo's Standing Committee on 20 June 1993)

Major world developments during recent years as well as major economic changes and the incredible advances that are being made in science and technology have affected today's strategic environment and the trends are becoming increasingly clear.

The overall environment has driven all of the big countries that have already developed or that are now developing to revise their strategies and their order of priorities to ensuring that their strategic goals are appropriate to the new world situation and to the current overall trends.

One big issue confronting every country is to be able to foresee the opportunities and the obstacles they will face as they work towards achieving their strategic goals. For us, while we strive to achieve our strategic goal, which is to quickly bring our country "*out of crisis, to stabilize our economic and social situation, to strive to escape from our current status as a poor, under-developed country, to improve the lives of our people, to strengthen our national defense and security, and to create conditions that will allow our country to accelerate the pace of its development in order to keep up with the new pace of development during the first part of the 21st century*" in order to ensure our peace and security. We need to find the answers to the

following pressing questions: At present, what are our country's primary external challenges and threats? What is the most direct, most pressing threat that we must deal with? What directions should we take to accomplish this, including how to assemble the forces required to deal with those threats and challenges in light of our currently very limited capabilities?

Where May the Challenges to Our Security and Development Come From and What Form Will They Take?

During the more than two years since the 7th Party Congress, based on the achievements we have made in our nation's renovation efforts, by employing our foreign policy of opening up and multi-lateralizing our relations along the line that "Vietnam wants to be the friend of all members of the international community in pursuing the goals of peace, independence, and development", we have made significant improvements in our country's position in the world. Most importantly, we have made significant strides in breaking out of our political isolation on the world stage, which puts us in a better position to be able to preserve peace and to accelerate our economic development.

However, our foreign relations have been tremendously upset by the collapse of the network of friendly countries we once had in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, so our achievements thus far are just first steps, and those achievements are not yet truly solid. Politically, we have not been able to create the kind of international support we need to replace the traditional sources of support that we have recently lost. As for our economy, we are still backward and underdeveloped in both our economy and our science and technology in comparison with many of the other countries in our region, and we have not yet escaped from our country's economic and social crisis. Today our relations with other countries are based

primarily on mutual interests in individual fields and subject areas, which a situation that is completely different from our previous traditional assembly of forces, and there are two sides to our relations with each of our current partners, cooperation on one side and struggle [conflict] on the other, which makes for very complicated relationships. Meanwhile, both immediate and future threats and challenges are continuing to arise from all sides.

Based on our strategic assessments, the primary countries that may create significant threats and challenges to our security and development, either today or in the immediate future, are China, the U.S., Japan, and Thailand.

Following are the challenges and threats that each of these countries may present to us:

1.-China: More than one year after normalizing relations with China, there have been a number of improvements in Sino-Vietnamese relations, such as exchanges of delegations, opening up border crossing points, cross-border trade, etc. However, problems and negative factors are now arising. Many treaties that have been signed and many agreements that have been made at senior levels have still not been implemented. Particularly since the beginning of 1973 China has used many different methods to put pressure on us and it has created many problems for us. It has created instability for us, both inside Vietnam and abroad, with the goal of slowing our economic development and of preventing us from expanding our external relations, especially in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific area. The challenges and threats that China presents to us are now becoming increasingly clear in the following areas:

a)-China is violating our sovereignty and territorial integrity both on land and at sea: On land, there are no signs that China wants to resolve our remaining territorial disputes, and in fact China is taking actions that are worsening the situation (occupying portions of our territory,

building culverts that alter the course of streams and rivers that form sections of the border to benefit China by gaining control over more of our territory). At sea, China has committed a series of serious escalations of the dispute over control of the South China Sea. China has systematically intruded deeper and deeper into our continental shelf, even in areas where we have already signed agreements with foreign companies granting them permission to conduct oil and gas exploration and where these companies were in fact conducting oil and gas exploration (in early May 1993 China sent one of its ships, the Fondou 4, to conduct seismic studies in our Oil and Gas Exploration Plot 6, deep inside our continental shelf). There are also clear indications that China plans to turn a number of areas of our continental shelf into contested areas and that it is preparing public opinion to turn Bach Long Vi Island into a contested area.

b)-China is disrupting Vietnam's international peace and stability through the following actions: In Cambodia, China is using the Khmer Rouge to stir up the issue of ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia and to make it difficult to stabilize the situation in Cambodia. It is striving to turn three Southeast Asian countries - Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos - into an economic cooperation area along the headwaters of the Mekong River that is directly linked to China and that excludes Vietnam. The South China Sea crisis also has the effect of sabotaging Vietnam's economic development.

c)-China is working to cause political and economic instability in Vietnam: China has again raised the "ethnic Chinese" problem by sending the ethnic Chinese who left Vietnam to return to China during 1978-79 back to Vietnam; by using the Khmer Rouge to force ethnic Vietnamese residents of Cambodia to return to Vietnam; by pressuring Hong Kong into sending

all of the boat people still in Hong Kong back to Vietnam; by permitting black-market goods to flood Vietnam's markets by selling retail goods at very low prices in an effort to disrupt our markets and to negatively affect our economic production.

d)-China is working to suppress Vietnam's foreign market economy: China continues to stop and detain our ships (more this year than in 1992: 29 vessels), and it is opposing allowing the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) to return the Ho Chi Minh FIR to Vietnam's control.

2.-The U.S. may challenge or threaten Vietnam's security and development in the following ways:

a)-The U.S. is the only big country that has not yet normalized relations with Vietnam and it is continuing to embargo us, which causes problems for international organizations (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, etc.) and for other countries in their efforts to provide us with financial assistance and to cooperate with us in developing our economy.

b)-By conducting peaceful evolution: Using the so-called struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights to pressure us into instituting pluralism and a multi-party system; by inciting and exploiting religious and ethnic minority problems in order to create difficult situations that will create instability and opposition.

c)-By supporting reactionary or corrupted elements inside Vietnam and reactionary Vietnamese exile living abroad so that when conditions are right, they can incite violence aimed at overthrowing our regime, as they have done in other countries.

3.-Japan is currently our primary partner in the effort to quickly develop Vietnam's economy. However, we must be on guard against possible problems created by Japan.

-First of all, along with increasing its investments and aid, Japan will gradually gain control over Vietnam's economy and will bring Vietnam and all of Southeast Asia into Japan's orbit in order to fulfill Japan's ambitions for regional and world economic and political hegemony.

-Along with gradually and systematically achieving Japan's political and economic aspirations, the Japanese militarists might reappear, take power, and strive to become a superpower both in the region and in the entire world. This danger would have direct negative consequences for the entire East Asian region, including Vietnam.

4.-Thailand is currently a part of ASEAN that we are actively trying to persuade to cooperate with us both economically and politically. However, Thailand's "Greater Thai" ideology, which has traditionally constituted a threat to Vietnam's security and development, still survives and continues to be very ambitious.

Thailand has always viewed Vietnam as a potential economic and political opponent. For that reason, Thailand's challenge to us could come from two different directions:

-Economically, it is in Thailand's interest to slow the pace of Vietnam's development (using the Mekong Committee issue, the Ho Chi Minh FIR issue) while at the same time it uses Vietnam as a market for Thailand's products and a source of raw materials (forestry products, sea products, minerals) for Thailand.

-Politically, it would be in the best interests of Thailand's armed forces to turn Laos and Cambodia, which are both Vietnam's allies, into areas that are more under Thailand's influence. At the same time Thailand could continue to provide bases for Vietnamese reactionaries to use to infiltrate into Vietnam in order to mount attacks against us inside Vietnam.

What is the Source of the Greatest Threat to Our Security and Development?

Of the four countries that could present threats to Vietnam, three are large world or regional powers (the U.S., China, and Japan), while Thailand is a country that is the same size as Vietnam, so it is not capable of presenting the same level of threat to us as the three large countries. There are many new types of threats that we could project for the future or that we could be vigilant against, but there are others that are current threats, which are real and pressing issues that are currently facing us. For that reason, in light of our very limited capabilities, we must clearly define which is the greatest threat to the interests and the survival of the Vietnamese nation so that we can then focus our intellectual strength to determine the best possible foreign relations stratagem to employ to counter this threat. First of all, we can certainly conclude that the source of our greatest threat is not Japan or Thailand - it can only be either the U.S. or China.

1.-U.S. Strategy and the U.S.'s Intentions toward Vietnam

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has faced more challenges than threats. These challenges are the result of pressing U.S. domestic and social problems along with challenges from opponents that were formerly U.S. allies during the Cold War, such as Japan and the EC. For that reason, the U.S.'s strategic goal has had to become more practical and more modest - that goal is to strive to maintain its Number One position in the world and in the Asia-Pacific Region, which is become the world's primary arena. In light of the increasing challenges, it is facing from Western economic centers, the elimination of socialism in Asia is not currently the U.S.'s top priority. The difference in the balance of forces between the U.S. and the other major powers is not as great as it was before, so in order to

achieve its strategic goals, the U.S. is now focused primarily on creating a balance of forces with those of its competitors that are capable of threatening the U.S.'s position as the Number One world power, on playing one competitor off against another, on using cooperation agreements to control its other competitors, on strengthening its role in international organizations like the U.N. to deal with regional conflicts, and on creating an overall climate of stability that benefits the U.S.

The U.S. is now isolated, so it wants a new regional order based on a new strategic triangle - the U.S., Japan, and China - to replace the old strategic triangle of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. In this new strategic triangle, the U.S. strives to win over and cooperate with both China and Japan, but primarily with Japan, while at the same time it also is vigilant against and tries to suppress and control both of these countries, but primarily China.

With regard to China, the U.S. views the role of this nation that has more than one billion people as extremely important to create a new world order. The U.S. needs to encourage China and win its support on many issues, especially on issues involving regional conflicts.

The U.S. can neither encourage nor ignore China as that country pursues its effort to expand its influence throughout Southeast Asia. As part of the U.S.'s Asia-Pacific strategy, the Clinton Administration seems to view South-east Asia's role as more important than ever before. Perhaps this is because this is a rather lively area for economic development and because it has an active sub-regional structure that is closely connected with the U.S.'s economic interests. On the other hand, it is also an area into which China is trying to move in order to fill the power "gap" left by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the U.S.'s reduction of

its military presence in Southeast Asia. It is in the U.S.'s interest to create a stable Southeast Asia that is strong enough to block China's expansion using China's "soft borders" and "expanding its living space" strategy. The U.S.'s scheme is to gradually expand ASEAN into an organization that consists of all ten Southeast Asian nations and that is capable of becoming a significant counter to China and of ensuring regional stability. As part of its plan to create an Asia-Pacific regional security structure, the U.S., Japan, and the West in general all view ASEAN as the key to the formation of such a structure. The annual meeting between ASEAN and six partners is turning into a forum for discussions about security in the Asia-Pacific region. Russia has indicated that it supports this. Only China is unenthusiastic.

So, is there a possibility that China will sympathize with or ally itself with China in opposing Vietnam? In the past, the U.S. and China worked together to oppose Vietnam over the Cambodian problem because both shared the common goal of attacking the Soviet Union and of eliminating Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. Now the Soviet Union has collapsed and the strategic situation in the Asia-Pacific area has changed. If the U.S. should join China once again in opposing Vietnam, that would mean that it would be driving Vietnam into a position in which it would have to either decide to ally itself with China or to bend its knee and surrender in the face of China's power. That would enable China to gradually take over and dominate all of Southeast Asia and would quickly turn China into a threat to the U.S.'s position as the Number One power in the entire world. That would be totally contrary to the U.S.'s strategic goals.

On the other hand, a Vietnam that has renovated its policies, that is in-dependent of both Russia and China, and that is also not dependent on Japan, that has improved its relations with and has joined with the U.S.'s allies in Southeast Asia would fit in nicely with the U.S.'s

interest in peace and stability in the area so that the U.S. can preserve its influence and limit the rising challenges to the U.S.'s position in the region. Although Vietnam does not have an important position in the U.S.'s world strategy, Vietnam is still a factor that the U.S. cannot fail to take into account in the U.S. strategy for the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asian regions. In addition, it is in the U.S.'s economic interest to gain access to the Vietnamese market and to Vietnam's raw materials, and the U.S. does not want to be left out while the U.S.'s competitors are flooding into the Vietnamese market.

Alongside those interests described above that are at least partially in line with our own interests, there are also a not significant negative aspects of the U.S.'s strategy for Vietnam. The U.S. cannot abandon its peaceful evolution efforts against us. However, whether or not the U.S. is successful or not in those efforts will depend on our ability to maintain our own internal political stability, meaning that it will depend on the political skills of our Party, the vigilance of our cadres and our people, and our ability to maintain the Party's close links with our people.

Here our own internal strength will be the decisive factor. The success of our renovation policies, the maintenance of our own economic and social stability, and the constant maintenance of high revolutionary vigilance during our pluralization process and during the expansion of our relations with the rest of the world will provide the best guarantees for us to be able to limit the effects of every peaceful evolution scheme that may be employed against us. In addition, we must clearly recognize that the U.S. is not focusing its efforts on attacking and destroying Vietnam at any cost because the U.S. has greater strategic priorities, and because the U.S. currently has interests in this region that coincide with our own interests. We

can strive to exploit those interests to provide effective support to the achievement of our own strategic goals.

2.-China's Strategy and China's Intentions Toward Vietnam

Unlike the U.S., China sees a "once in a thousand years" opportunity in the tremendous changes in today's world situation. China believes that its prospects are rising, and its challenges are decreasing. While the U.S. feels that it needs to pull back in order to regroup, consolidate, and concentrate on strengthening its own defenses, China has big ambitions. It wants to become one of the poles in the multi-polar new world order. While implementing the "Four Modernizations" is still the main method it hopes will allow it to achieve that goal, China constantly seeks to seize every opportunity it sees to carry out its hegemonist, expansionist plans either by inciting instability in one country or by exploiting existing instability in another country (such as Cambodia or Myanmar) for its own interests and benefit. Because neither its posture or its strength are strong enough to achieve its goal, China strives to achieve its goal in a careful, calculated manner, depending on the course of developments in the region, on the reactions of its opponents, and on China's own strength and power.

At present, China is working to achieve its goal of quickly becoming a major power in the Asia-Pacific region that is on a par with the U.S. and Japan. China has made gaining control of the entire South China Sea its top priority. China views the strategic position of the South China Sea as being of great importance because being able to control the South China Sea means that it will be able to gain control of all of Southeast Asia and the vital transportation artery from the Pacific on through the Indian Ocean, and also because the South China Sea is an area rich in natural resources, especially oil and gas, which is a resource that China needs in order to

increase the speed of China's development (the South China Sea has oil reserves that are equal to the oil re-serves of the Persian Gulf)

It should be noted that at a time when China has launched a wide-ranging diplomatic offensive aimed at strengthening its cooperative development relationships with all of the Western industrialized countries, at winning the sympathy of the developing countries and non-aligned countries in order to regain its leadership of the Third World, at improving its relations with countries with which it shares a border, and, of particular importance, China's recent effort to gain support from the countries of Southeast Asia in order to escape from its current situation of being "like a tiger surrounded by a pack of ravenous wolves", China is now focusing the sharp spearpoint of its attack on pressuring Vietnam and intruding into our space in spite of the fact in spite of our every effort to demonstrate our desire for peaceful and friendly relations with China. Could it be that the reason is that China believes that Vietnam is its weakest and easiest target at this time (military problems, economically poor, and politically isolated), and especially since Vietnam occupies a strategically important position in Southeast Asia and is the greatest obstacle that China faces in carrying out China's plan for the South China Sea?

China's efforts to hurt Vietnam will not stop at their present level but will continue because China believes that the current situation is very favorable for China to be able to pressure Vietnam and to intrude into our space while meeting only the weakest reaction from the rest of the world. This is because the U.S. has not yet ended its embargo of Vietnam; because Vietnam has not yet developed cooperative investment relations with other countries; because the Cambodian problem still attracts a great deal of international attention; and because an Asia-Pacific security structure has not yet taken shape. China views 1997 as a

landmark year for China's efforts to build up its strength and power because 1997 is the year that China will recover Hong Kong, perhaps making China able to achieve the first step in its plan to build a "Greater China Economic Belt" surrounding Southeast Asia; and because 1997 is the year when the Chinese armed forces will be equipped with an aircraft carrier and other advanced, modern equipment, and in particular when it will have a navy and air force that can extend China's reach to cover the entire South China Sea. There are reports that China plans to reduce the target year for achieving its goal of quadrupling its gross national product from 2000 to 1997. China's pressure on Vietnam will increase in direct proportion to the pace of China's development.

3.-The above analysis of the situation can lead us to reach the following conclusion:

Currently and for the foreseeable future, China presents the primary challenge and threat to Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as to Vietnam's security and development. The multifaceted Chinese challenges and threats to us are all current problems that are taking place right now and that we are now being forced to deal with, unlike the challenges and threats from the other countries, including the U.S., which are at least partially theoretical or potential problems we must be on guard against. However, both the contradictions [conflicts] and the interests [benefits] of all types in our relationship with China are greater than they are for our relations with the other countries.

III.-Policy Recommendations

1.-With regard to the balance of forces between Vietnam and China, Vietnam is smaller than China, which is a big country that has political weight and influence that is greater than ours and China has much greater prospects for economic development than we have. For that

reason, we must improve our political posture for the struggle we will have to wage to resolve our disputes with China in order to be able to protect our own just interests.

Alongside its greater strength on the foreign policy front, China also has a number of basic weaknesses that we can and must exploit in order to restrict China's efforts to pressure us and to intrude into our space. Those weaknesses are:

a)-To achieve its top priority goal of rapid modernization, China needs the U.S. more than the U.S. needs China. For that reason, even though there are both conflicts and agreements in the relationship that China has with the U.S., it is clear that China is afraid of the U.S.'s reactions and so it does not dare to challenge the U.S. at a time when China's posture and strength is still limited. That is also the reason that China does not want the U.S. to improve its relations with us and to normalize relations with Vietnam.

b)-At this time when China has not yet been able to build up sufficient economic and military strength, it is very fearful that the countries of South-east Asia - will join together in an alliance, and China is especially afraid that Vietnam will join ASEAN, which would enable Southeast Asia to create a situation like a pack of wolves fighting a single target to protect their common interests. That is the reason that China is now doing everything possible to create divisions between the countries of Southeast Asia, even to the extent that the countries might fight each other.

c)-In the face of the powerful trend in the world and in the region pushing for stability in order to be able to focus on competing to develop each country's economy, China is very afraid of being viewed as by the international community, and especially by the people of our region, as a "source of instability" in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world. The U.S., Japanese, and

especially the ASEAN efforts aimed at gradually forming a forum, and eventually an Asia-Pacific collective security structure, is currently aimed primarily at reining in China.

2.-In order to be able to exploit China's weaknesses to the maximum in our efforts to improve our political posture in this lop-sided struggle, we absolutely must select and develop a foreign policy that is extremely flexible so that we can adapt our policies to the general political and economic trends in the world and to the major features of the world situation. Our struggle against the challenges and threats presented by this special opponent [China] is an extremely urgent mission for us, and it will require a number of general measures, but it will be conducted primarily on the diplomatic front.

Following the end of the international situation in which the world was divided into two opposing poles, because of the increasing interdependences between all countries in our region and in the world, constantly expanding our international relations in the direction of multi-lateralization has become extremely important, both politically and economically. At the same time, in the current international environment our country's security depends greatly and first of all on our international and regional relationships. Recent events have shown that the proper handling of our relations with the big countries is incredibly important for our country's security and development. Our nation's bloody experiences during the past decades reveal that we need to have a policy that balances our relations with the different big powers, and under absolutely no circumstances can we allow the outside world to think that Vietnam is allying itself with one big country to oppose another big country. Instead, we need to link our interests with the security and development interests of our neighboring countries in the region in order to create a more favorable international posture for ourselves.

3.-The focal points of our foreign strategy must be the big countries in the Asia-Pacific strategic countries as well as the ASEAN countries, because they are all factors that can have considerable impact on China.

a.-Regarding the United States

Relations with the United States are an important part of the policy of multi-lateralizing [expanding] our external relationships. Currently the United States is the only factor capable of balancing and restricting China, and that is why we should patiently and determinedly induce the U.S. to normalize relations with us. Persuading the U.S. to normalize relations with us will directly benefit Vietnam, especially in the area of Vietnam's off-shore oil and gas resources. This will make it impossible for the U.S. to stand back and ignore "instability" caused by Chinese provocations and aggression. One American Asian specialist said that "One (American) Mobil Oil Company Drilling platform in the South China Sea would be as valuable as the entire U.S. 7th Fleet."

An effort to push for normalization of relations with the United States, and first of all ending the embargo, is extremely important to our need for security, stability, and economic development. It will help us to improve relations with other countries and it will create more favorable conditions to help us to deal with the challenges that currently confront us. Strongly developing our relationship with the United States as well as other countries is not aimed at assembling a collection of forces to oppose China, because that would run counter to our external relations formula of "making friends with everyone," and it would also not fit into the strategic calculations of the United States and of other countries.

Our maintaining a climate of peace with China will at the same time normalizing relations with the United States and expanding our relationships with Japan, the West, ASEAN, and other countries will give us a strong posture in our effort to balance relations with the various different sides.

In the present situation, cooperation to properly resolve the POW/MIA issue is the key to eliminating the obstacles to Vietnam's relations with the United States. At the same time we should step up our lobbying effort in the United States using slogans designed to persuade the American public to push for a quick end to the embargo, to attract U.S. companies to come to Vietnam to do business there, both creating pressure on the U.S. government and making it easier for the U.S. government to normalize relations with us as soon as possible. On the other hand, we also need to pay attention to and develop appropriate policies and measures to neutralize the plots of the United States and other Western countries to use the "democracy and human rights" issues to put pressure on us.

In parallel with steps to improve Vietnamese-American relations, we need to also expand our policy of "national reconciliation" by coming up with specific, concrete policies toward the overseas Vietnamese residents of the United States and other countries in order to turn them into powerful forces that support our State's effort to modernize our economy, and our scientific and technological capabilities. Naturally, this effort will have a reinforcing effect on the effort to strengthen cooperative relationships with Vietnam and the other countries that have overseas Vietnamese communities.

b)-ASEAN

ASEAN is currently viewed as the strongest regional organization, one that the big nations, including China, must take into account when they formulate their Asia-Pacific policies. We share with ASEAN the common desire for peace and development, and we also share concerns about how to deal with external challenges, from China and Japan. Strengthening intraregional cooperation is both consistent with the current trend, and it will also strengthen us in our relations with big countries outside our region, and especially with China. To stimulate this relationship, in addition to strengthening our bilateral relations by carrying out confidence-building measures, we also need to quickly eliminate remaining issues in our bilateral relations with a number of ASEAN countries by working together to resolve other conflicts within the region involving Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, et. We need to take steps to begin to vigorously participate in cooperative regional security and development structures and to quickly become a member of ASEAN. In general, we need to strengthen areas of agreement actively and aggressively between Vietnam and the ASEAN countries and to deal with remaining differences skillfully.

c)-Other countries and other targets, especially Japan, Russia, the European Union, etc.

We need to continue to strengthen our cooperative relationships in many different areas in order to make maximum use of possibilities for economic, scientific, and technological cooperation and for utilizing the administrative experience of these countries to support our effort to develop our country, and then use these relationships to achieve a better balance for us in the region in order to gain widespread popular support for our struggle to protect Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to create an economic-political umbrella that will help to protect us from China's aggressive schemes against us.

d)-China

-Normalizing relations with China is a strategic requirement for Vietnam. Because China is carrying out a two-faced policy toward us, so our policy in dealing with China should also have two faces, one being cooperation and the other being struggle. We need to actively work to improve relations with China on the basis of carrying out those agreements with China that we have been able to reach and at the same time we must resolutely protect our territorial integrity while continuing to follow our formula of not allowing Vietnam to return to a state of confrontation with China and to not force other countries to have to make a choice between Vietnam and China. Our best option would be to work to create a situation in which the other big countries and ASEAN have increasingly greater economic and security interests in their relationships with Vietnam. That situation, combined with steadily working to increase Vietnam's own strength, will be the most effective deterrent to every Chinese effort to intrude into and occupy our space.

-We need to struggle resolutely to restrict China's efforts to intrude into and gain control of more of the South China Sea, especially in the area of our continental shelf. We should employ wise but effective measures to block China's actions without creating a military confrontation with China.

-We need to proceed with the task of determining the exact limits of [our claims to] the Spratly Islands Archipelago in order to be able to consider the idea of "joint exploitation" of the area and to defeat China's efforts to use this issue to create divisions between Vietnam and ASEAN.

-We need to make preparations for the possibility of submitting Chinese violations of our continental shelf to the World Court or to an international arbitrator.

-At some point, we should consider opening up Cam Ranh Bay for use as a commercial port for ships from every country, including even American ships, so that the presence of many different countries in the South China Sea in order to be able to prevent one country from seizing total control of the entire South China Sea. Naturally, we also must have solid policies and laws that will protect our sovereignty and our national security.

14 June 1993

Tran Quang Co

**Chronology of Major Events 1975 – 1991
(For “Reminiscences and Thoughts”)**

1975

01 February: Senator Mansfield testifies to U.S. Congress following visit to China: China in favor of continued existence of two Vietnams. China believes a unified and neutral Cambodia is a vital for the stability of Indochina.

17 April: Liberation of Phnom Penh

30 April: Victory of Ho Chi Minh Campaign and liberation of Saigon.

04 May: Khmer Rouge troops attack Phu Quoc Island and then launch series of attacks along our land border and offshore islands.

05 May: Henry Kissinger: Following the loss of South Vietnam, there will be an important realignment of forces in SE Asia. Cambodia and Laos will be satellites of Hanoi and Thailand and Indonesia will automatically ally themselves with Vietnam. China will not permit Vietnam to take any significant military action.

May: Vietnam asks the Soviet Union to transmit verbal message to the U.S. indicating desire for good relations between the U.S. and Vietnam.

12 June: U.S. send message to our embassy in Paris: “In principle, the U.S. is not hostile to Vietnam and suggest this form the basis for any relationship between our two countries. The U.S. is prepared to listen to any suggestion from Vietnam.”

11 July: Vietnam’s response: Remind U.S. of its obligation to contribute to healing the wounds of war.

10 July & 05 September: Meetings between 1st Secretary of Vietnamese Embassy Do Thanh and 1st Secretary of U.S. Embassy Pratt in Paris

27-29 July: Vietnamese Labor Party Delegation led by 1st Secretary Le Duan visits Cambodia.

11 August: At U.N. Security Council U.S. vetoes Vietnam’s admission to U.N.

07 December: G. Ford announces “new Asia doctrine” consisting of six main points: U.S. strength to balance forces in the Pacific, alliance with Japan, normalize relations with China, strong relationship with ASEAN, resolution of regional conflicts, economic cooperation in the region.

21 December: U.S. Congressional delegation led by G.V. Montgomery visits Hanoi to receive three sets of U.S. remains. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong receives delegation.

December: H. Kissinger statement in Paris following China visit: U.S. considering using Vietnam to limit China's influence in the region.

1976

10 January: U.S. sends feeler to us through Soviet Union on holding meetings but insists it will not implement Article 21 [of Paris Agreement] (war reparations)

26 March: H. Kissinger sends diplomatic note to our Foreign Minister saying U.S. prepared to hold discussions with Vietnam on developing new relationship between our two countries.

10 April: Our Foreign Minister's reply: Again, raises the remaining issues between the two countries (Article 21 and MIA issue). On basis of achieving resolution of these issues, Vietnam will normalize relation with the US.

07 May: President Ford rejects U.S. Congress proposal for temporary six-month suspension of trade embargo with Vietnam

08 May: Diplomatic note from Secretary of State Kissinger to Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh: Prepared to open discussions on establishing a new relationship between the two countries but only after the MIA issue is truly resolved can there be progress toward normalizing relations.

19 June: Message from our Foreign Ministry criticizing U.S. for "unilaterally scrapping the Paris Agreement" by avoiding its responsibility to conduct Article 21 while at same time demanding that Vietnam carry out provisions of Article 8b of the Agreement. Reiterates our position linking these two issues. As first step, prepared to meet U.S. representative in Paris for exchange of ideas.

19 July: U.S. sends reply agreeing to open discussions in Paris between the No. 2 officials of the respective embassies.

01 August: We release last of 27 Americans trapped in South Vietnam after 30 April 1975

27 August: Vietnamese message to U.S. confirming name of person who will meet U.S. representative (Counselor Tran Hoan) and meeting site (rotating meeting in the two embassies in Paris).

November 76: U.S. elections – Democrat Jimmy Carter elected President.

December 76: 6th Party Congress and argument "three revolutionary tides on the offensive"

1977

06 January: US sends message through Soviet Union outlining three-step plan for normalizing relations with Vietnam: Vietnam will provide info on MIAs in Vietnam; US approves Vietnam's admission to UN and is ready to establish diplomatic relations and begin trade with Vietnam; U.S. may contribute to Vietnam's reconstruction through expanding trade, supplying equipment, and other forms of economic cooperation.

11 January: Sec of State Vance: Moving toward normalizing of US-Vietnamese relations is in the interests of both nations.

03 March: Carter Administration decides to loosen embargo on Vietnam.

09 March: U.S. permits US citizens to travel to Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, and Cuba effective 18 March 77

17 March: U.S. Presidential commission led by Leonard Woodcock visits Vietnam.

30 April: Pol Pot starts border war against us.

03-04 May: Round 1 of US-Vietnamese talks in Paris on normalizing relations between the two nations. U.S. suggests immediate establishment of relations at ambassadorial level, establishment of embassies and consular relations; U.S. will not block Vietnam's entry into UN; For legal reasons U.S. cannot implement Article 21 but promises to do so when relations are established by dropping trade embargo and considering humanitarian aid.

02-03 June: Round 2 of US-Vietnamese talks in Paris. U.S. presents same proposal as in Round 1.

19-20 December: Round 3 of US-Vietnamese talks in Paris. U.S. suggest that as two sides are not yet ready to establish full diplomatic relations, instead they could establish interest sections. However, that means the trade embargo could not be lifted. We maintain our position demanding "package" deal on three issues: diplomatic relations, war reparations, and MIA.

31 December: Pol Pot government unilaterally cuts off diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

December: Soviet Union send troops into Afghanistan – height of Soviet expansionism, entire outside world.

1978

- 08 January: Z. Brzezinski: The interesting thing is that Vietnam-Cambodia conflict is first example of proxy war between Soviet Union and China. Vietnam supported by Soviet Union and Cambodia supported by China.
- 05 May: US Vice President Mondale's statement during visit to 5 ASEAN nations: "U.S. will push forward with normalization of relations with China because it provides regional stability. In a number of ways, Chinese policy in SE Asia parallels that of the U.S. The U.S. has made logical proposal to Vietnam and still wants establishment of relations without preconditions. Vietnam still maintains that U.S. must first promise aid. The American people, Congress, and Government will not permit that."
- 11 May: R. Oakley, Assistant US Sec of State: "Vietnam, with 50 million citizens, is the third largest communist nation in the world and the strongest military power in SE Asia. Vietnam's attitude toward other countries will be important in the coming decades. Diplomatic relations and an American presence in Hanoi could serve the interests of America's Asian friends as well as the interests of the U.S. and Vietnam."
- 19 May: Deng Xiaoping statement: "China is Eastern NATO" (because tying down 40 Soviet divisions along Sino-Soviet border) and "Vietnam is Eastern Cuba."
- 29 June: Vietnam joins COMECON bloc.
- 05 July: Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien in Tokyo says Vietnam prepared to normalize relations with U.S. without any preconditions.
- 20 July: Brzezinski, Security Advisor to US President, visits China
- 27 July: Party Central Committee Resolution 9: China is our direct and most dangerous enemy. The US is our main and long-term enemy. We are determined to overthrow the genocidal Pol Pot regime.
- 21 August: Seven US Congressmen led by G.V. Montgomery visit Vietnam on MIA issue.
- 22-27 September: Round 1 of US-Vietnam talks in New York (Nguyen Co Thach + R. Holbrooke). We agree to US's May 77 proposal, meaning normalization of relations without preconditions. Our change in position is too late and produces no results.
- 01 October: Vietnam rejects Pol Pot's 29 September proposals, demands Cambodia cease firing and withdraw back across border before negotiations can begin.
- 03 November: Vietnam & Soviet Union sign treaty of friendship and cooperation

30 November: R. Oakley, meeting Tran Quang Co in New York, says the U.S. has not changed its position on normalization with Vietnam but must delay normalization because need clarification on three issues: Cambodia, Soviet-Vietnam treat, and Vietnamese refugees.

15 December: China and US issue joint statement officially recognizing each other and establishing diplomatic relations effective 1 January 79

16 December: M. Mansfield, US Ambassador in Japan: "Only after the problems between China and Vietnam are resolved will there be any reason to hope for resolving question of diplomatic relations between US and Vietnam."

1979

07 January: We help Cambodian friends drive out Pol Pot and liberate Phnom Penh

11 January: Formation of People's Republic of Cambodia

29 Jan-04 February: Deng Xiaoping makes official visit to US; Carter-Deng talks.

16 February: Carter sets out six principles for how to handle Chinese invasion of Vietnam: no direct intervention; advise both sides to exercise restraint; Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and Chinese withdrawal from Vietnam; conflict does not present immediate threat to US interests; Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia had nothing to do with US normalization of relations with China; interests of US allies are not threatened

17 February: China attacks Vietnam all along Vietnam's northern border. Deng Xiaoping says, "To teach Vietnam a lesson."

17 February: US State Department protests both invasions (Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and China's invasion of Vietnam) and appeals to both sides to withdraw their troops immediately.

18 February: Soviet Government issues protest against China's invasion of Vietnam.

19 February: Vietnam and Cambodia sign treaty of peace, friendship, and cooperation

Late February: Deng tells press in Beijing: "We can accept the Soviet Union having 70% influence in Vietnam as long as China has the remaining 30% of influence."

05 March: China announces it will withdraw its troops from Vietnamese territory.

March: China announces it is abrogating Sino-Soviet Friendship and Mutual Assistance Alliance treaty signed 15 February 1950 by Zhou Enlai and Khrushchev during Mao Zedong's visit to Soviet Union

April: Round 1 of talks between Vietnam and China in Hanoi.

April: Brezhnev elected Party General Secretary, 26th Congress of Soviet Communist Party

07 October: Sihanouk sends two letters (7 & 23 Oct) and one telegram (11 Nov) to Vietnam. We do not reply.

October: Foreign Ministry issues pamphlet titled "The Truth About Vietnamese-Chinese Relations During the Past 30 Years"

10 December: UN decides to allow Khmer Rouge to continue to occupy Cambodia's seat in the UN.

1980

05 January: 1st Conference of Foreign Ministers of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in Phnom Penh. 2nd Round of Sino-Vietnamese talks in Beijing. No results in talks and China cuts off the talks link. Between this time and late 1988, we sent China many diplomatic notes and letters proposing renewal of the talks, but China rejected all our proposals.

29 July: US Ambassador to Thailand Abramowitz says the U.S. will never recognize the Pol Pot regime; however, ousting Pol Pot from the UN would only strengthen Vietnam's position. U.S. views this issue from the strategic standpoint and is particularly worried about the Thai-Cambodian border.

1981

19 January: New President R. Reagan says U.S.-China relations during the Carter Administration were not beneficial to the US. The US had to pay a price.

19 February: US Ambassador to Thailand Abramowitz give us a note saying: We regret that Vietnam and the Soviet Union have shattered stability and we are surprised that Vietnam has allowed the Soviet Union to use Cam Ranh Bay. We are not satisfied with the efforts to resolve the MIA issue over the past two-and-a-half years.

18 May: Politburo Resolution 39: Combat Maoism in all its forms; combat great power hegemony and expansionism; alliance and complete cooperation with the Soviet Union.

13 July: International Conference on Cambodia in New York. US. Sec of State A. Haig says U.S. has no plan to normalize relations with Vietnam as long as Vietnam still occupies Cambodia and creates instability in SE Asia.

12 December: Deng Xiaoping tells Italian Senator Colombo: "Both the US and the Soviet Union are hegemonists." From this point on China shifts from using the term "opposing Soviet hegemony" to "opposing hegemony" of the "two superpowers."

1982

14 January: U.S. Embassy in Bangkok sends message to us through Le Van Hoa: US wants a political settlement in Cambodia. US does not stress demand for Vietnam to withdraw troops immediately and completely, only suggests talks on partial withdrawal and setting schedule for total withdrawal. "A Vietnam that is independent of both the Soviet Union and China is in America's interests." Asks Vietnam's ideas about a UN peace-keeping force.

16-17 February: 5th Conference of Vietnamese-Lao-Cambodian foreign ministers in Vientiane

24 March: Brezhnev's Tashkent statement: The Soviet Union does not deny that China still has a socialist regime. Wants to improve relations with China.

07 July: 6th Conference of Vietnamese-Lao-Cambodian foreign ministers in Ho Chi Minh City announces that Vietnam and Cambodia have agreed on the initial step, have decided to withdraw some Vietnamese troops from Cambodia in July 82 and will consider further withdrawals based on the situation along the Thai-Cambodian border and on Thailand's response.

02 October: 1st Round of Sino-Soviet talks. China sets out five points on Cambodia and Sino-Vietnamese relations: Vietnam must announce unconditional troop withdrawal from Cambodia. If Vietnam decides to withdraw all troops from Cambodia, then after the initial wave of withdrawals China is prepared to hold talks with Vietnam on normalizing relations.

October: R. Childress, Political-Military Advisor on US National Security Council, tells Nguyen Co Thach: Propose dispatch of the highest-level expert delegation to Vietnam to discuss the MIA issue. The US does not want Vietnam to withdraw troops from Cambodia so that Pol Pot can return to power.

10 November: Brezhnev dies. China sends Foreign Minister Huang Hua to visit Soviet Union. Before his departure Deng tells him: You must skillfully say that relations between our two nations began deteriorating during the 50s, to indicate that it was Khrushchev's fault, and that after 1965 the deterioration in relations reached an extremely serious level, to indicate that it was Brezhnev's fault, but avoid the use of their names.

1983

23 February: Summit meeting between Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in Vientiane. Vietnam and Cambodia announce that in future a number of Vietnamese troops will be withdrawn from Cambodia each year. All Vietnamese volunteer troops will be withdrawn back to Vietnam when the People's Republic of Kampuchea is no longer threatened.

01 March: 2nd Round of Sino-Soviet talks. China raises Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia as one of three obstacles to normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.

01 March: Chinese Foreign Ministry says that after Vietnam withdraws its first units from Cambodia, China will resume the talks with Vietnam.

12 April: Unscheduled meeting of Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodia foreign ministers in Phnom Penh announces 2nd round of Vietnamese troop withdrawal in May 83. One corps to be withdrawn.

02 May: Departure ceremony for second round of Vietnamese volunteer army troop withdrawals

19-20 July: 7th Conference of Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian foreign ministers held in Phnom Penh affirms that all Vietnamese volunteer army troops will withdraw from Cambodia once China ends its threat to Cambodia.

1984

28-29 April: 8th Conference of Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian foreign ministers in Vientiane

April: Dry season offensive against Khmer Rouge along Thai-Cambodian border

21-23 June: 3rd round of Vietnamese volunteer army troop withdrawals from Cambodia

1985

Soviet Union: Gorbachev takes power, begins to change domestic and foreign policy. Frequently states he wants to improve Sino-Soviet relations but does not mention the "three obstacles," and especially says nothing about Vietnamese troop withdrawal from Cambodia.

08 January: Nguyen Co Thach sends letter to Wu Xueqian proposing resumption of talks.

28-29 January: 10th Conference of Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian foreign ministers in Ho Chi Minh City announces that Vietnam will continue its annual troop withdrawals and that all troops will be withdrawn from Cambodia in 1990

21 January: Wu Xueqian sends reply: Only after Vietnam publicly promises and implements troop withdrawal from Cambodia will talks have any real meaning.

23 January: Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian visits SE Asian nations. On arrival in Singapore, he says that China will "teach Vietnam a second lesson."

02 April: 4th round of Vietnamese troop withdrawals from Cambodia.

15 May: US Assistant Sec of State Armacost: The US will let ASEAN and China take the lead on Cambodia. The US wants to use the Cambodian problem to block improvement in Sino-Soviet relations.

1986

23-24 January: 12th Conference of Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian foreign ministers in Phnom Penh.

07-10 April: 8th Round of Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow. China continues to raise the "three obstacles." Soviet Union proposes summit meeting (Gorbachev-Deng). China refuses.

28 May: 5th Round of Vietnamese troop withdrawals from Cambodia.

08 July: Politburo Resolution 32: Shift to new period of struggle taking the form of peaceful coexistence with China, ASEAN, and the US; peaceful settlement of the Cambodian problem.

28 July: Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok lays out broad outlines of the Soviet Union's new foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific area: slowly growing closer to China, resolving the "three obstacles" in order to normalize relations with China (withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, ending the Sino-Soviet border conflict, resolving the Cambodian problem). With regards to the U.S., the Soviet Union could make a "responsive gesture" on Cam Ranh Bay if the US withdraws its military bases from the Philippines.

05-15 October: 9th Round of Sino-Soviet talks in Beijing. 70% of time spent discussing Cambodia.

19 October: Soviet Union begins withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

December: 6th National Party Congress. Nguyen Van Linh was elected as Party General Secretary. Do Muoi becomes Prime Minister. Introduction to Party Regulations changed to eliminate reference to China as "our direct and most dangerous enemy."

1987

- 07 February: 10th Round of Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow. China again raises the “three obstacles” to normalization of Sino-Soviet relations and says the biggest obstacle is “Vietnam’s aggression against Cambodia.”
- Early March: Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze arrives in Phnom Penh to push for a resolution of the Cambodian problem.
- 26 March: Foreign Minister forms CP87 to study Cambodian settlement and normalization of relations with China.
- 19-20 April: Le Duc Tho meets with Hun Sen, Heng Samrin, and Chea Sim in Phnom Penh, advises Cambodia to reach agreement with the genocidal Pol Pot clique and implement a “Red Solution.”
- 08 May: Politburo meeting on the Cambodian problem (after Le Duc Tho’s visit to Phnom Penh and before Party General Secretary Linh’s visit to the Soviet Union)
- 20 May: Foreign Ministry recommends to Politburo that the section of the introduction to the Constitution mentioning China be changed (this is not done until 27 August 88)
- 10 June: Deputy UN Secretary General Ahmed transmits to us Deng Xiaoping’s four points.
- 17 June: During visit to Laos Hun Sen tells Lao Foreign Minister Phoun that he would rather form coalition with the Khmer Rouge without Pol Pot as leader than with Sihanouk because the Khmer Rouge have forces but no political stature, while Sihanouk has no forces but does have political stature.
- 26 June: Nguyen Co Thach meets the Chinese Ambassador to pass along verbal message from Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to the Chinese leaders proposing secret talks between the two countries.
- 29 July: Joint statement by Vietnam and Indonesia following meeting between Nguyen Co Thach and Mochtar in Ho Chi Minh City. Agreement reached on “cocktail party” format for the sides involved to meet each other to discuss Cambodian settlement.
- 22 August: Wu Xueqian sends letter to Nguyen Co Thach saying China cannot reply to our message because China does not want to accept a fait accompli in Cambodia.
- 27 August: Government of People’s Republic of Kampuchea announces five-point policy for national reconciliation.
- 02 October: We ask Soviet Union to transmit verbal message to China during 11th Round of Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow on 6 October.

06 October: 11th Round of Sino-Soviet talks in Beijing. Press statement publicly announces that Cambodian problem was discussed.

29 November: 6th round of withdrawals of Vietnamese volunteer army troops from Cambodia.

12 December: 1st Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks held in Fere-en-Taidenois, France. Joint statement announces agreement on resolving Cambodia conflict through political means, that the Cambodia problem must be resolved by the Cambodian themselves, and that an International Conference will be convened to ensure agreement between the Cambodian sides. Agree that 2nd Round of talks will be held in Paris and 3rd Round will be held in Pyongyang.

22 December: Vietnam and Cambodia agree to Soviet suggestion for the Soviets to send message to Chinese Foreign Minister proposing that the Soviet Union and China jointly arrange a meeting between People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge. China does not respond.

30 December: Politburo decides to "renovate" our relations with Laos and Cambodia, withdraw our specialists and advisors from Laos and Cambodia, and disband Vietnam's specialist group in Cambodia.

1988

20-22 January: 2nd Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks held in Paris. No joint statement issued. The two sides agreed that decision on the political regime in Cambodia would be determined by the Cambodian people through international supervised elections and that an international conference on Cambodia similar to the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina would be convened.

20-29 January: Cuba, Angola, and Assistant US Sec of State meet in Luanda and agree to total withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

01 February: Sihanouk sends letter to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong saying that he is always interested in restoring friendly relations between our two neighboring countries. If that is done, then a settlement can be reached quickly.

08 February: Gorbachev announces that all Soviet troops will withdraw from Cambodia ten months from 15 May 1988

14-16 March: Clash between Vietnamese and Chinese naval forces in the Spratly Islands

20 May: Politburo Resolution 13: Cambodia problem to be resolved by 1990, must strive to normalize relations with China.

26 May: Vietnam's Foreign Ministry announces the 7th round of troop withdrawals, totaling 50,000 troops and including the Vietnamese Volunteer Army Command Headquarters. The remaining troops would be pulled back deeper inside Cambodia, at least 30 kilometers from the Thai-Cambodian border.

Late May: Summit meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan in Moscow. The Cambodia issue is discussed.

13-20 June: Sino-Soviet talks in Moscow. The two sides hold detailed discussions on Cambodia. The Soviet Union identified five points of agreement with China on the Cambodia problem.

28 June: National Assembly issues resolution amending the introduction to our Constitution (deleting the phrase "China is our direct and most dangerous enemy"). This resolution is formally approved on 27 August 88

15 July: Nguyen Co Thach meets with Chinese Ambassador, proposes a range of measures to reduce tensions between the two countries, and proposes that talks (no matter at what level) between the two sides be resumed.

25-26 July: JIM 1 (Jakarta Informal Meeting) held in Bogor, Indonesia. The meeting was conducted in two stages. The first stage consisted of just the four Cambodian factions, while in the second stage Vietnam, Laos, and the six ASEAN countries joined the four Cambodian factions. The goal was to create a framework for informal discussions between the sides directly involved and countries concerned in finding a comprehensive, just, and long-term solution to the Cambodian problem. The meeting agreed on two key issues: the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops within the framework of a political settlement and preventing the return of the genocidal Pol Pot regime.

07 November: 3rd Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks in Paris. Primary subject was the agenda for the three-way summit meeting (8 November 88 meeting between Hun Sen, Sihanouk, and Son Sann).

01 December: Completion of the 7th round of Vietnamese troop withdrawals from Cambodia, involving a total of 50,000 troops and the Command Headquarters of Vietnamese Volunteer Army forces in Cambodia.

1989

05 January: Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh leads a delegation of Vietnamese Party and Government representatives to Phnom Penh to attend ceremony marking 10th anniversary of the founding of People's Republic of Kampuchea

- 06 January: Nguyen Van Linh and Heng Samrin announce total withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia in September 1989 within framework of a political settlement.
- 09 January: Cuban begins withdrawing troops from Angola in accordance with the 12 August 88 agreement made between Cuba, Angola, and South Africa
- 09 January: Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila arrives in Hanoi.
- 16-19 January: Sino-Vietnamese talks at deputy minister level in Beijing to discuss Cambodia and normalization of relations between the two countries.
- 01 February: Foreign Minister Shevardnadze arrives in Beijing for talks with Qian Qichen on Cambodia
- 15 February: Soviet Union completes its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- 11 February: Politburo meeting to discuss separating the international aspects of the Cambodian problem from the internal aspects to resolve them step by step and the establishment of different forums – Vietnam-China (Round 2), JIM 2, Vietnam-Thailand, Vietnam-US, etc.
- 16-18 February: JIM 2 meeting. Reaffirms that the two key issues of a solution for Cambodia are withdrawal of Vietnamese troops within the framework of a political settlement and preventing any return of the genocidal policies and actions of the Pol Pot regime; Ending of all intervention by foreign countries and of military aid to the opposing Khmer factions.
- 14 March: Politburo meeting: Decides that all troops will be withdrawn from Cambodia by end of September 89 and that we will encourage the Hun Sen-Sihanouk forum.
- 22 Feb-03 March: Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach visits Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.
- 23 February: China and Indonesia normalize relations with each other.
- 25 February: US-China: Bush arrives in China to meet with Deng Xiaoping.
- 13 March: Soviet Union's Supreme Soviet approves resolution establishing position of President of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev is given that post.
- 15 March: Meet and work with US Deputy Secretary General Ahmed in Hanoi on Cambodia issue.
- 15 April: The Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao governments issue statement saying all Vietnamese troops will be withdrawn from Cambodia in September

- 30 Apr – 01 May: Cambodian National Assembly holds extraordinary session: amends the constitution, changes the name of the People's Republic of Kampuchea to the State of Cambodia, and changes the national flag.
- 02-03 May: 4th Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks in Jakarta. Sihanouk applauds the change of the name of Cambodia's government, the change of the national flag, and the important changes made in Cambodia's constitution; Sihanouk says he may agree to return to Cambodia but when he arrives in Bangkok Sihanouk changes his mind. From this point on, Hun Sen's relationship with Sihanouk becomes very bad.
- 08-10 May: Deputy minister-level talks between China and Vietnam in Beijing. China continues to demand that we agree to the principle of forming a coalition government made up of the four Cambodian sides and headed by Sihanouk and to the assembling and reduction or disbanding of the military forces of all the Cambodian sides. Regarding relations between our two countries, China's position is still that only after the Cambodian problem is resolved can relations with Vietnam be normalized; temporarily postpone consideration of further talks with us.
- 15-16 May: Sino-Soviet summit meeting (Gorbachev-Deng) in Beijing
- 03-04 June: Tiananmen incident
- 04 June: Poland: Solidarity Labor Union wins absolute majority in general election.
- 24 July: 5th Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks in Paris. No agreement reached. Sihanouk rejects the agreements made in JIM 1 and JIM2, demands the elimination of the State of Cambodia (SOC) and the formation of a Cambodian government made up of the four Cambodian sides.
- 30 Jul-30 August: Paris International Conference on Cambodia: Withdrawal of Vietnamese troops no longer a major issue in the conference. Instead, the major issue becomes genocide. Conference unable to reach a political settlement, stalemates on the issue of division of power among the different Cambodian sides during the transition period. However, the conference approves a joint statement noting that the conference was a significant step forward and that the conference will reconvene later.
- 7 August: Meeting with Deputy Minister Liu Shuqing (Deputy Chief of Chinese Delegation to PICC) in Paris
- 07 August: Hungary: Socialist Workers Party changes its name, Hungary joins EC.

- 05 September: Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh meets Heng Samrin in Hanoi and passes on Soviet advice that Phnom Penh should accept a government made up of the four Cambodian sides, including the Khmer Rouge, with Sihanouk as Chairman.
- 21-26 September: Final withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia.
- 30 September: Politburo meeting to assess results of Paris Conference on Cambodia.
- 07 October: Kaysone Phomvihane makes official visit to China marking the normalization of relations between Laos and China. Deng tells Kaysone that if Vietnam totally withdraws from Cambodia China will normalize relations with Vietnam.
- 06 November: Verbal message from Nguyen Van Linh to Deng Xiaoping: Hope for early normalization of relations with China and for early opportunity to meet with Deng.
- 09 November: East German: Collapse of the Berlin Wall, end of the Cold War.
- 20 November: Czechoslovakia: Large demonstrations in Prague. Husak resigns. A new government formed in which Communist Party is only a minority.
- 21 November: Five permanent members of UN Security Council (P5) approve Australian plan to resolve Cambodia problem, including a major role for the UN in Cambodia during the transition period.
- 28 November: Nguyen Co Thach sends letter to Qian Qichen referencing Nguyen Van Linh's verbal message to Deng and reconfirming that "the Vietnamese side is prepared to meet the Chinese side at the Foreign Minister or Deputy Foreign Minister level in December 1989, either in Beijing or in Hanoi, in order to discuss steps for the normalization of relations between the two countries".
- 02 December: General Secretary of Malaysian Communist Party Chin Peng signs agreement with Malaysian and Thai governments dissolving Communist Party and then retires to live in Hat Yai, Thailand.
- 10 December: Bulgaria: Big demonstrations in Sofia.
- 12 December: Chinese Ambassador provides China's answer to Nguyen Van Linh's 6 November message; sets conditions for reopening of deputy foreign minister-level talks with us (Vietnam must accept UN inspection of troop withdrawal from Cambodia, must accept formation of four-sided Cambodian government headed by Sihanouk).

1990

- 09 February: U.S. Ambassador to Thailand O'Donohue transmits US message: Too soon to accept Vietnam's suggestion for meeting between Minister Nguyen Co Thach or Deputy Minister Tran Quang Co and Assistant Sec of State Solomon. The two sides need to clarify the issues for discussion and the choices to be made, after which Solomon will be prepared to meet with the Vietnamese side. The US is currently still prepared to continue exchanges of ideas between the ambassadors of the two countries in Bangkok.
- 21 February: 5th Round of Hun Sen-Sihanouk talks in Bangkok. Agreement on principles: An appropriate level of UN presence in Cambodia is necessary; need to establish a supreme national apparatus to implement Cambodia's national sovereignty and national unity.
- 25 February: Nicaragua: Sandino Front defeated in general elections.
- 26 Feb-01 March: Informal Meeting on Cambodia (IMC) in Jakarta. In addition to the same participants as in the JIM (Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and the 6 ASEAN countries), also attending are representatives of UN Secretary General, France, and Australia. The IMC is unable to issue a joint statement because the Khmer Rouge exercises veto power.
- 08 March: Le Duc Tho meets with Dinh Nho Liem and Tran Quang Co (and then with Nguyen Co Thach on 10 Mar) and offers following ideas: We need to change our strategy in our struggle on the Cambodia issue; we must resolve the Cambodia problem with China and cannot exclude the Khmer Rouge; we cannot agree to the UN organizing general elections in Cambodia; form a two-sided government consisting of the four Cambodian factions to organize the general elections.
- 10 April: Politburo meeting on diplomatic struggle plan on the Cambodian problem in a changing world. Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh, Le Duc Tho, Dao Duy Tung, and Dong Sy Nguyen emphasize that we need to ally ourselves with China to defend socialism for the sake of the interest of both nations.
- 16 April: Nguyen Co Thach travels to Phnom Penh to persuade the SOC to take softer position on genocide and to accept Khmer Rouge participation in coalition government during the transition period.
- 30 April: Speaking in Ho Chi Minh City on the 15th anniversary of the liberation of Saigon, Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh says:
- We should forget the war, even though it was a major event in our past;
 - Vietnam feels friendship for the American people;
 - I want to see normalization of relations with US, even though it will be a long process.
- 03-08 May: 3rd Round of Deputy Minister-level Sino-Vietnamese talks in Beijing. China clearly expresses its ideas on Cambodian internal issues involved in a Cambodian settlement and demands that we agree with them: SNC must be an apparatus that functions as a provisional government, with legislative and executive powers; If the armies of the

Cambodian sides are not totally disarmed then they must be assembled at designated points and partially demobilized.

20-21 May: Meeting of the Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian Party General Secretaries in Hanoi on the occasion of Ho Chi Minh's 100th birthday. They decide they must carry out a "Red Solution" to resolve the Cambodian problem.

04-05 June: Hun Sen & Sihanouk, representing the 2 Cambodian governments, meet in Tokyo. They sign joint statement agreeing to form SNC composed of equal number of members from both sides (6+6) to symbolize national sovereignty and Cambodian national unity.

05 June: Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh's first meeting with Chinese Ambassador Zhong Dewei.

06 June: Defense Minister Le Duc Anh meets and has intimate meal with Chinese Ambassador.

11-13 June: 4th Round of Sino-Vietnamese talks (Tran Quang Co – Xu Dunxin). We refuse to agree to interfere in Cambodian internal affairs as China requests. Talks achieve nothing.

13 June: Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach received Xu Dunxin. Nguyen Co Thach strongly criticizes Xu's arrogant tone of voice.

19 June: Politburo meets to assess 4th Round of Sino-Vietnamese talks (General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh absent from meeting).

25 June: Ambassador Zhong Dewei meets Deputy Minister Tran Quang Co to pass on (edited) message to Vietnam's leaders.

16-17 July: P5 meeting in Paris on Cambodia problem.

18 July: US Sec of State Baker announces new US policy on Cambodia problem: U.S. acknowledges that Vietnam has withdrawn its troops from Cambodia; Phnom Penh government is currently the primary force capable of preventing the Khmer Rouge from regaining power. Therefore, the US has decided to withdraw its recognition of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (the 3 factions) at the UN; US is prepared to hold discussions with Vietnam and SOC to encourage resolution of the Cambodia problem.

06 August: 1st Round of US-Vietnam dialogue in New York on Cambodia and normalization of US-Vietnamese relations (Trinh Xuan Lang – Kenneth Quinn). US asks us: promise to support and encourage Cambodia to support the P5 framework document; announce that we applaud UN inspection of the withdrawal of all remaining military personnel from Cambodia; give them our ideas on the SNC and the UN's role in Cambodia.

- 12 August: Politburo meets to discuss Cambodia problem. Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh concludes meeting as follows: The currently remaining issues involving Cambodian internal affairs and sovereignty must be decided by our Cambodian comrades on their own. Vietnam will respect the decisions our Cambodian comrades make on these issues.
- 12 August: Prime Minister Li Peng announces the following during visit to Singapore: China hopes to normalize relations with Vietnam and the two sides will discuss other issues, such as the dispute over the Spratly Islands.
- 13 August: Deputy Minister Tran Quang Co meets Chinese Ambassador to applaud statement made by Li Peng in Singapore and reiterate desire for early summit meeting between the two sides.
- 27-28 August: 6th P5 meeting on Cambodia reaches agreement on arrangements for military forces during the transition period in Cambodia; elections held under UN auspices; protection of human rights; and international guarantees. Five framework documents on a Cambodian settlement are completed.
- 29 August: Chinese Ambassador meets with Nguyen Van Linh and Do Muoi to transmit message from Jiang Zemin and Li Peng inviting Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh, Prime Minister Do Muoi, and Advisor Pham Van Dong to come to China for a secret meeting in Chengdu with the Chinese leadership; meeting to be held 3 September 90.
- 30 August: Politburo meeting to discuss summit meeting with China at Chengdu.
- 31 August: 2nd Round of US-Vietnamese dialogue in New York. US suggests Vietnam and Phnom Penh accept P5's framework solution for Cambodia, suggest that SOC meet in Jakarta to form the SNC on basis of the P5's agreement. U.S. views this as precondition for normalization of relations with Vietnam and for US meeting with Hun Sen.
- 01 September: Soviet and Chinese foreign ministers meet in Haerbin (Harbin), China to discuss Cambodia.
- 03-04 September: Sino-Vietnamese summit meeting in Chengdu (capital of Sichuan Province). Nguyen Van Linh accepts China's formula for formation of SNC (6+2+2+2+1, with Sihanouk as chairman).
- 05 September: Nguyen Van Linh travels to Phnom Penh to brief Cambodian leaders on the meeting in Chengdu and to persuade Phnom Penh to accept the Chinese formula for formation of the SNC. Cambodia protests, rejects formula.
- 07 September: US Sec of State announces that US has decided to open direct dialogue with Phnom Penh.

- 10 September: Politburo sends Tran Quang Co to Jakarta to monitor the meeting of the Cambodian sides who are discussing the formation of the SNC. Meeting presided over by France and Indonesia, the two co-chairmen of the PICC. The Cambodian sides issue joint statement "accepting the entire P5 framework document as the basis for a resolution of the Cambodian conflict" and they form the SNC.
- 10 September: US Asst Sec of State K. Quinn announces that the US will talk to the chief of our delegation at the UN General Assembly about normalizing relations between the two countries.
- 14-18 September: Tran Quang Co goes to Bangkok to monitor the next meeting of the Cambodian sides to finally resolve the problem of the SNC Chairman.
- 17 September: The Cambodian sides meet in Bangkok to complete the formation of the SNC. Meeting fails because it cannot agree on sending an SNC delegation to attend the US General Assembly meeting and especially after the SOC (Hun Sen) refuses to accept the selection of Sihanouk as Chairman and the 13th member of the SNC.
- 20 September: UN Security Council passes Resolution 608 recognizing the SNC as Cambodia's representative in the area of foreign affairs and as the occupant of Cambodia's seat in the UN.
- 24 September: Deputy Prime Minister Vo Nguyen Giap travels to China to attend opening ceremony of ASIAD. He meets with Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, who talks about relations between the two countries and says that Tran Quang Co is a "negative influence" in the effort to reach a Cambodian settlement.
- 29 September: Nguyen Co Thach meets US Sec of State Baker. US says it wants to normalize relations with Vietnam within the framework of a political settlement in Cambodia but that the speed and the extent of normalization of relations will depend on progress made on the MIA issue and on other humanitarian issues.
- 18 November: Politburo meeting to discuss struggle principles regarding the P5 joint document and the chairmanship of the SNC.
- 26 November: P5 and Indonesia meet in Paris and agree on draft Paris Agreement on Cambodia.
- 21 December: SNC meeting in Paris attended by the two co-chairmen of the SNCC and representative of the UN Secretary General.

1991

- 15-16 January: Tran Quang Co meets with the B1 section of the Cambodian Foreign Ministry to prepare for the Coordinating Committee (PICC) meeting. Make assessment about China.
- 16 January: Hun Sen tells Tran Quang Co: It is likely there will not be a political settlement during 1991. The recent meeting in Paris was just a public opinion forum, not a negotiating forum. Therefore, he did not raise issue of separating Cambodian internal issues from international issues.
- 24-25 January: Politburo meets in Ho Chi Minh City to discuss Foreign Ministry draft "Foreign Relations Policies to Support Achievement of our Nation's Strategic Goals By 2000" and to discuss Cambodia problem.
- 02 February: Tran Quang Co requests his name be withdrawn as candidate for election to Central Committee in 7th Party Congress. Request rejected.
- 24 February: Nguyen Van Linh meets Heng Samrin in Hanoi, again tries to persuade Phnom Penh to accept the 6+2+2+2+1 formula in order to push the national reconciliation policy China said it wanted during the 3 September 90 Chengdu summit meeting.
- 09 April: 5th Round of US-Vietnamese dialogue in New York. Asst Sec of State R. Solomon presents 4-step roadmap for speeding resolution of Cambodia problem and steps to improve US-Vietnamese relations.
- 08 May: Meeting of Diplomatic, Defense, and Security sectors to assess the world situation.
- 15-17 May: Politburo discusses draft "Report on the World Situation, on the Implementation of the 6th Party Congress's Foreign Policy Guidelines, and Directions for the Future" and continues to assess the September 90 Chengdu summit meeting with China.
- 15-19 May: Jiang Zemin visit to Soviet Union – First visit to Soviet Union by highest Chinese leader in 34 years. Two sides issue joint statement containing considerable discussion of Cambodia problem.
- 02-04 June: SNC meeting in Jakarta. In addition to the Cambodian sides, meeting also includes the two co-chairmen of the PICC (France and Indonesia) and representative of US Secretary General. Sihanouk also attends as guest of Suharto. Meeting does not achieve any significant results.
- 05 June: Hun Sen and Sihanouk hold private meeting to discuss the positions of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the SNC, extending the ceasefire until general elections, Sihanouk's return to Phnom Penh, and appeal for end of foreign military aid to the Cambodian sides.

17-27 June: 7th National Congress of Vietnamese Communist Party. Do Muoi replaces Nguyen Van Linh as Party General Secretary, Le Duc Anh becomes Chairman of Council of State [President]. Nguyen Co Thach ousted from Politburo and Central Committee

09 July: Tran Quang Co meets General Secretary Do Muoi and turns down post of Foreign Minister.

27 July-02 August: Le Duc Anh and Hong Ha visit China as "Special Representatives of the Vietnamese Communist Party Central Committee" to brief the Chinese leaders on Vietnamese Communist Party's 7th Party Congress. Both meet with Xu Dunxin to apologize (for the argument Xu had with Minister Nguyen Co Thach)

August: 9th Session of the 8th National Assembly meets and approves the list of leaders of the new Government [Cabinet]. Nguyen Manh Cam takes over as Foreign Minister, replacing Nguyen Co Thach

08-10 August: 5th Round of Sino-Vietnamese deputy minister-level talks in Beijing on normalization of relations

09-14 August: Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam visits China.

23 October: Paris International Conference on Cambodia, signing of Cambodia peace agreement.

05-10 November: Party General Secretary Do Muoi and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet pay official visit to China. Joint statement issued on normalization of relations between the two countries.

14 November: Sihanouk returns to Phnom Penh after 13 years in exile.

25 December: Gorbachev resigns. Hammer & sickle flag flying over the Kremlin lowered and replaced by the three-colored Russian flag, marking the demise of the Soviet Union

1993

24 November-01 December: Mid-term plenary session of the Party Central Committee (7th Party Congress). Tran Quang Co voluntarily resigns from Central Committee.