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SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-fourth year

Letter dated 18 April 1979 from the Permanent Representative of
China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request that the document published under the symbol NV/79/18 be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 11 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) CHEN Chu
Permanent Representative of the
People's Republic of China
to the United Nations

* A/34/50.

ANNEX

Renmin Ribao Editor's note

1. In recent years, the Vietnamese authorities deliberately worked to undermine the traditional friendship between the Chinese and Vietnamese peoples and kept poisoning Sino-Vietnamese relations. The Chinese side was greatly pained by this. The problem was repeatedly raised with the Vietnamese leaders by Chinese leaders with admonitions and in the earnest hope that the two countries would remain friendly to each other. On 24 September 1975 Comrade Deng Xiaoping talked to Le Duan, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Party, in Beijing, about the problems existing in the relations between the two Parties and States and expressed the hope that they would be solved through joint efforts. On 10 June 1977 Comrade Li Xiannian, on behalf of the Chinese Party Central Committee, further held candid discussions with Premier Pham Van Dong on these problems and gave him a memorandum on the statements made. The Chinese side hoped that Sino-Vietnamese friendship might be protected from further damage and preserved through joint efforts.
2. But most regrettably the Vietnamese authorities completely disregarded the sincere desire of the Chinese side and have never replied to the Chinese leaders' views aimed at preserving the relations between the two Parties and States. Aided and abetted by the Soviet Union, they picked China as their No. 1 enemy, and have been pursuing with ever greater vigour a policy of opposition and hostility to China. That Sino-Vietnamese relations should have worsened to such an extent today is wholly the making of the Vietnamese authorities.
3. We now publish the full text of the memorandum handed by Vice-Premier Li Xiannian to Premier Pham Van Dong on 10 June 1977, with a few foot-notes, to set forth the historical facts. This will help people to know more about the true course of development of Sino-Vietnamese relations.

APPENDIX

Memorandum outlining Vice-Premier Li Xiannian's Talk
with Premier Pham Van Dong on 10 June 1977

1. In mid-April 1977, as he stopped at Beijing on his way to Europe, Premier Pham Van Dong expressed to Comrade Chen Xilian his desire to stay for a few days in Beijing on his way back and have a talk with us. This was most welcome. The day before yesterday Chairman Hua Guofeng met Premier Pham Van Dong and had a cordial conversation with you, during which he informed you of developments in China. You talked about problems in the relations between our two Parties and States, and Chairman Hua repeated our consistent stand and said that we shared the desire to further develop our friendship with the Vietnamese Party and people. I am instructed by Chairman Hua and entrusted by my Party's Central Committee to discuss candidly and in a comradely way a number of problems in the relations between our two Parties and States.
2. The relations between our two Parties, States and peoples have been close and friendly for years. Our deep friendship was forged and promoted personally by Chairman Mao Zedong and President Ho Chi Minh, whose revolutionary friendship was a concentrated expression of Sino-Vietnamese friendship. Our friendship stood the severe test in the long period of revolutionary struggles. Both in the years of arduous struggle in our respective countries and in the two decades or so of wars of resistance against imperialism, we shared weal and woe and helped each other, "uniting together, fighting together and winning victories together", as Premier Zhou Enlai said. Our revolutionary friendship is sealed in blood. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese Government have always valued the friendship and unity between our two Parties, States and peoples. In our dealings with the Vietnamese Party and Government, both under the late Chairman Mao and President Ho and afterwards, we have always strictly implemented Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, done our best to fulfil our internationalist duty and made unremitting efforts to preserve and strengthen this friendship.
3. In recent years, however, our relations have undergone certain changes which cause us anxiety. Seeking an early solution to this problem, Premier Zhou had talked with Vietnamese comrades more than once, and so did Comrade Deng Xiaoping on behalf of our Party's Central Committee in 1975. On all those occasions the Vietnamese comrades said they would preserve Viet Nam-China friendship and would not do anything to harm it. So we thought our relations would gradually improve. But contrary to our expectations, our relations, instead of improving, have come up against more serious problems. We are disturbed to see this trend of development in our relations. That is why we wish to take this opportunity to talk with you again while you are in Beijing.

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I

4. Certain words and deeds of the Vietnamese side have badly hurt the Chinese people and impaired the friendship between our two countries. Senior cadres of Viet Nam made public remarks maligning China. For instance, Comrade Hoang Tung said something very unfriendly about China in his interview with the Swedish journalist Erik Pierre last year. He said,

"During the war, it was vital for Viet Nam that both China and the USSR helped North Viet Nam to the full. Today, it is no longer so vital for this country to follow that policy. True, Viet Nam borders on the southern part of the big country China, and this neighbourhood has both a positive and a negative aspect. Anyway, the political and cultural pressure from the north must be removed. Therefore, the rapprochement with the USSR plays a very important role for Viet Nam today. There is a tangibly strong Soviet interest coinciding with Vietnamese interests - to reduce Chinese influence in this part of the world."

Another example, Comrade Hoang Quoc Viet, in answering questions of a Japanese journalist in 1973, made an unwarranted attack on our foreign policy, saying that China's invitation to Nixon to visit the country was like "throwing a lifebelt to the drowning Nixon", and that "sometimes dealings between big nations may be made at the expense of a small nation and crush it". Their statements appeared in the newspapers of more than one country, and they attracted much international attention. At first, we thought that they might be rumours as they came from the reports of Western journalists, but we have seen no denials of any kind from your side. Comrade Hoang Tung was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, Editor-in-Chief of the Party paper and Deputy Chairman of the Propaganda Commission under the Party's Central Committee; and Comrade Hoang Quoc Viet was also a member of the Vietnamese Party's Central Committee and President of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front; what is more, he was President of the Viet Nam-China Friendship Association. Their statements cannot be considered as something accidental. To be frank, in the past, we were somewhat puzzled by the prevalence in Vietnamese society of many slanders against China, some of which were even directed against our great leader Chairman Mao, our esteemed and beloved Premier Zhou and our Party's domestic and foreign policies. In retrospect, it was not fortuitous that such slanders spread in Vietnamese society. How can these remarks be reconciled with President Ho Chi Minh's statement that "Profound is the friendship between Viet Nam and China, who are both comrades and brothers", or with the avowed desire of Vietnamese comrades to "uphold Viet Nam-China friendship"?

II

5. Vietnamese comrades have hurt the friendship between our two countries not only in their words, but also in their deeds.

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6. The Vietnamese side has continually provoked disputes on the land boundary question, causing increased tension on the border. The boundary line between China and Viet Nam was delimited by treaties concluded between the then Government of Qing Dynasty and the French Government. After people's political power was established in our country, both sides expressed their willingness to respect this boundary line. Although local comrades of the two sides did not agree on the location of certain sections of the boundary line, the problem was not big and should not be difficult to settle. In 1957-1958 the Central Committees of the Chinese and Vietnamese Parties exchanged letters which affirmed the principle that the status quo of the border should be maintained and that the boundary question should be settled by the two Governments and the local authorities had no power to do so. This approach was followed by both sides before 1974, and no big dispute ever arose at the border. The border inhabitants and border guards of the two countries had always lived in amity and helped each other. The Sino-Vietnamese boundary had for years been one of friendship. However, as a result of the change in the attitude of the Vietnamese side in the last few years, border disputes kept increasing and the boundary question has become a rather conspicuous one in Sino-Vietnamese relations. We proposed in 1975 that our two Governments should hold boundary negotiations as soon as possible so as thoroughly to resolve through friendly consultations the existing issues concerning the Sino-Vietnamese land boundary on the basis of the Sino-French treaties. We have repeated our proposal last year and this year. But you, while stalling negotiations with us, continued to let your men enter Chinese territory illegally, claim this or that place as belonging to Viet Nam, unreasonably interfere with and obstruct routine activities of our border guards and disturb and disrupt normal production activities of our border inhabitants. They even engaged in fist-fighting and other acts of violence. These attempts at unilateral and forcible changes in the status quo of the boundary resulted in a drastic increase in the number of border incidents and increased tension and even shooting incidents by Vietnamese border guards in Chinese border areas in Yunnan and Guangxi. According to incomplete statistics kept by our border defence authorities, the number of border incidents was 100 in 1974, increased to over 400 in 1975 and exceeded 900 in 1976. Of course, some of these incidents were caused by violations of our policies by our local personnel. We have taken, and will continue to take, measures to enjoin those involved and the border inhabitants to earnestly safeguard Sino-Vietnamese friendship and strictly adhere to our border policies, and to prevent them from crossing the border to invite trouble. However, we hold that your actions concerning the boundary question contravene the agreement reached between the Central Committees of the two Parties and can help solve no problem but will only harm the traditional friendship between our two peoples to the grief of friends and the delight of enemies. With a view to safeguarding the friendship between our two countries and settling boundary disputes once and for all, we now propose once again that our two Governments hold negotiations on the land boundary as soon as possible. Pending a negotiated settlement, each side should strictly maintain the status quo on the border and should not in any way unilaterally change the extent of its

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actual jurisdiction. a/ By "maintaining the status quo on the border", we do not mean that in the future boundary negotiations ownership of territory in the disputed areas will be decided according to the line dividing the actual jurisdiction of the two sides. It is entirely for the purpose of avoiding conflicts and safeguarding the all important cause of unity and friendship, pending a negotiated settlement.

III

7. Regarding the medium repairs of the Sino-Vietnamese railway on the Chinese side of the junction, there have also arisen questions which should not have arisen. According to the Sino-Vietnamese Border Railway Agreement, the Vietnamese side has no right to interfere in the management and maintenance of this section of the railway which is the responsibility of the Chinese side, just as the Chinese side has no right to interfere in the way the Vietnamese side maintains the railway section under its management. And in point of fact, the above-mentioned railway section was already in a serious condition and incapable of ensuring the necessary traffic safety. Without repairs, traffic had to stop or else ran the risk of train overturns. However, when our railway authorities organized the manpower and materials for repairs to ensure traffic safety and the smooth operation of the railway, they came up against repeated Vietnamese obstructions and sabotages. The Vietnamese comrades went so far as to provoke an unprecedented clash, in which 51 Chinese comrades were wounded, six of them badly. Some of your people may have got wounded too.

8. Completed after the Vietnamese people's victory in their war against French rule, b/ this railway has since then served as a tie of friendship between our two

a/ Maintaining the status quo on the border is one of the principles affirmed in the letters exchanged between the Chinese and Vietnamese Party Central Committees in 1957 and 1958. For a long period of time, this principle was followed by the two sides, so the Sino-Vietnamese border was peaceful. In recent years, the Vietnamese authorities, while wantonly instigating hostile anti-China feelings in their country, have been trying in every way to expand the extent of their jurisdiction, nibbling at, intruding into and occupying Chinese territory. In order to ensure peace and tranquillity in the areas along the Sino-Vietnamese border and maintain friendly and good-neighbourly relations, the Chinese side has repeatedly proposed that, pending a negotiated settlement of the boundary question, the two sides strictly maintain the status quo on the border and refrain from unilaterally changing the extent of their actual jurisdiction in any form and under any pretext. But the Vietnamese side turned a deaf ear to our proposal and with intensified efforts made even more armed provocations and incursions and created more bloody conflicts. Its brutality and arrogance has become simply intolerable.

b/ Prior to 1954, this section of the railway was not open to traffic. In December 1954 the railway from Hanoi to Dong Dang began to be restored with Chinese help. Subsequently, the section of the railway from China's Munan Pass to Viet Nam's Dong Dang was completed and through traffic formally opened on 1 March 1955. On 25 May 1955 the first border railway agreement between China and Viet Nam was signed.

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socialist countries. During the days of the Vietnamese people's war against United States aggression and for national salvation, our two peoples defended it with blood to ensure its smooth operation round the clock. We did not expect that today, after the Vietnamese people's victory in that war, there should have occurred incidents of Vietnamese comrades sabotaging our efforts for the maintenance of the railway, culminating in a large-scale clash, right on this railway symbolic of Sino-Vietnamese friendship. How are we to explain this to our people?

9. This railway is still serving the socialist construction and external economic and cultural exchanges of our two countries. It not only links our two countries, but connects Viet Nam with many other countries in Asia and Europe. More freight are shipped over this railway to Viet Nam than to China. Suspension of traffic would hurt China, but even more so Viet Nam. It is beyond us why the Vietnamese side keeps refusing to let us maintain this railway section and does not seem to worry at all that trains might overturn and traffic be halted. We suspect that there may be people who deliberately want to blow up the matter into a major issue and bring it under international spotlight, so as to accuse China of "big-nation chauvinism" and "bullying a small country". It is not our wish to see the problem thus magnified, but if this should happen contrary to our wishes there is nothing we can do about it.

10. We took a prudent approach on the question of maintenance of the section of the Sino-Vietnamese Railway on the Chinese side of the junction. We did not take for granted the reports we received, but sent a Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with competent experts from the railway administration, for a special on-the-spot investigation, during which films were taken of the conditions. Facts show that the repeated proposals of the Chinese side to the Vietnamese side were fully justified. We earnestly hope that the Vietnamese comrades will change their previous attitude and no longer obstruct and sabotage the efforts of the Chinese side to repair the railway. As for the Vietnamese side's differing understanding of the location of the sector of boundary line there, it should be left for resolution through consultation by the two Governments in the boundary negotiations. If, through the boundary negotiations, it should be decided that this sector was Vietnamese territory, we would unconditionally turn over to the Vietnamese side territory that belongs to Viet Nam together with the section of railway situated thereon.

11. If Premier Pham Van Dong agrees, we would like to show you the film we took indicating the bad condition the railway section was in. Since this is a rather urgent matter, we hope Premier Pham Van Dong will look into it as soon as possible, so that it may be settled appropriately.

IV

12. Regarding the Nansha Islands and the Xisha Islands, many things the Vietnamese comrades have done in the past two years are also detrimental to the friendly

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relations between our two countries. These islands have always been Chinese territory, and this is supported by numerous indisputable historical records. The Chinese Government has made statements to this effect on many occasions. In the past the Vietnamese comrades, too, recognized that these islands were Chinese territory. On 15 June 1956 one Vietnamese Vice-Foreign Minister formally said to us that "From the historical point of view, these islands are Chinese territory". On 4 September 1958 the Chinese Government issued a declaration on China's territorial sea, in which it clearly stated that the territory of the People's Republic of China "includes the Chinese mainland and its coastal islands, as well as Taiwan and its surrounding islands, the Penghu Islands, the Dongsha Islands, the Xisha Islands, the Zhongsha Islands, the Nansha Islands and all other islands belonging to China which are separated from the mainland and its coastal islands by the high seas ...". On September 14 of the same year Premier Pham Van Dong stated in his note to Premier Zhou Enlai that "The Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam recognizes and supports the declaration of the People's Republic of China on China's territorial sea made on 4 September 1958" and that "the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam respects this decision". On 9 May 1965 the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in its statement again recognized that the Xisha Islands belonged to China. c/ But in 1974, the Vietnamese comrades began to change their stand. Notably in 1975 the Vietnamese side, using the opportunity of the liberation of southern Viet Nam, invaded and occupied six of China's Nansha Islands and proceeded to make a formal territorial claim to our Nansha and Xisha Islands. Meanwhile, it whipped up public opinion both internally and externally, asserting that the Nansha and Xisha Islands are Vietnamese territory. Owing to your action, the Nansha and Xisha Islands, over which there never was any issue, have now become a major subject of dispute in Sino-Vietnamese

c/ On 9 May 1965 the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam issued a statement with reference to the designation by United States President Lyndon B. Johnson of the "combat zone" of the United States armed forces in Viet Nam, recognizing the Xisha Islands as belonging to China. The Vietnamese statement said:

"United States President Lyndon Johnson designated the whole of Vietnam, and the adjacent waters which extend roughly 100 miles from the coast of Vietnam and part of the territorial waters of the People's Republic of China in its Xisha Islands as 'combat zone' of the United States armed forces ... in direct threat to the security of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and its neighbours ..."

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relations. d/ Before 1975 the Soviet Union had always recognized that the Nansha and Xisha Islands were Chinese territory. They too changed their attitude as soon as you created this dispute, being bent on using it to undermine Sino-Vietnamese relations. We hope that the Vietnamese comrades will return to their original stand on this question.

V

13. The Vietnamese comrades' attitude on the division of the Beibu Gulf sea area cannot be considered as friendly, either. The sea area here has never been divided, yet you assert that it has. You insist on drawing a dividing line close to our Hainan Island, so as to occupy two thirds of the Beibu Gulf sea area. Being neither fair nor reasonable, this is unacceptable to us. We have suggested more than once that the two sides should settle the division of the gulf sea area on a fair and reasonable basis. We hope that the Vietnamese comrades will consider our suggestion.

VI

14. We would also like to outline our views on the question of Chinese residing in Viet Nam. Owing to historical reasons, there are more than 1 million Chinese residing in Viet Nam. Acting on proletarian internationalist principles, we agreed with the Vietnamese Party in 1955 on gradually encouraging the Chinese residents to adopt Vietnamese nationality. This could only be done on a voluntary basis, not by coercion. Over a long time in the past, the problem was handled fairly well through mutual consultation and co-operation. But since the liberation of southern Viet Nam, your side has resorted to coercion and treated Chinese in southern Viet Nam, regardless of their own wish, as being all Vietnamese nationals. You have imposed high taxes on Chinese residents who want to retain their Chinese nationality, prepared to deny them continued residence in Viet Nam and take other measures. All these depart from the long-established practice of co-operation and

d/ When Vice-Premier Li Xiannian referred to this question, Premier Pham Van Dong produced the untenable argument that: "in the war of resistance we of course had to place resistance to United States imperialism above everything else". "How should one understand our statements including the one in my note to Premier Zhou Enlai? One should understand it in the context of the historical circumstances of the time." Vice-Premier Li Xiannian promptly pointed out that this explanation was not convincing. He said, the territorial question between our two States should be dealt with seriously, war could not justify a different interpretation, and a serious attitude was called for. Moreover, there was no war going on in Viet Nam when on 14 September 1958 Pham Van Dong, as the Premier of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, acknowledged in his note to Premier Zhou Enlai that the Xisha and Nansha Islands are Chinese territory.

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consultation between our two countries and contravene the agreement between the two Parties on gradually encouraging Chinese to change their nationality. As you know, after the Ngo Dinh Diem puppet régime tried in 1956 to compel Chinese to adopt Vietnamese nationality, our Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission issued a statement in 1957 seriously protesting against it. Every country has the duty to protect the legitimate rights and interests of its nationals residing in other countries. But you have now unilaterally taken measures to compel Chinese to adopt Vietnamese nationality without consulting us, thus placing us in an awkward position politically. Here I would like to refer also to the question of establishment of Chinese consulates in Viet Nam. The Vietnamese residing in China numbering 5,000 to 6,000 have all along been taken good care of by the Chinese Government, and we long ago gave our consent to your establishing three Vietnamese consulates-general in China and have accorded them facilities and favourable treatment. Yet when we requested to set up three consulates-general in Viet Nam, you delayed your reply for half a year, and then gave your consent to the setting-up of two consulates-general instead of three. We have taken a friendly attitude and made special allowances for you in the treatment of nationals and the establishment of consulates, but you have failed to reciprocate.

VII

15. The Vietnamese comrades have been impairing Sino-Vietnamese friendship not only through present issues but also by making use of historical problems. For many years, the Vietnamese side, using the past to disparage the present, extensively propagandized the so-called opposition to "invasion from the north" in its newspapers, magazines, films, plays, etc., and incited hostility against China among the people, thus causing very bad consequences. All people who sincerely care for Sino-Vietnamese friendship are disturbed by this. But some people in other parts of the world, out of ulterior motives, clapped and cheered and took advantage of this situation to sow dissension. The Soviet news agency Tass for one made use of your propaganda to foment discord and incite anti-China sentiments. We freely admit that China's feudal dynasties did invade Viet Nam, and we always condemn such aggression. Premier Zhou Enlai personally visited the Temple of Heroines Trung Trac and Trung Nhi in Hanoi to pay tribute to these fighters against aggression by the Han Dynasty. But, as you know, invasion of Viet Nam by Chinese feudal dynasties took place when the Chinese people had no power and when they themselves were under the feudal rulers' brutal oppression and persecution. Therefore, the Chinese Communist Party and the Government and people of the People's Republic of China cannot be held responsible. Soon after the victory of the Russian October Revolution, Comrade Lenin said that the imperialist powers, Britain, France and the United States of America "tried to arouse Poland's ancient hatred towards her Great-Russian oppressors, tried to transfer the Polish workers' hatred of the land-owners and tsars, a hundred times deserved, to the Russian workers and peasants, and tried to make the Polish workers think that the

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Bolsheviks, like the Russian chauvinists, dream of conquering Poland". e/ This, as we see it, is Lenin's approach to historical problems. Viet Nam is a socialist country. Do the Vietnamese comrades act in the spirit of Lenin's teaching in doing the above? We hope that you will stop this.

16. Today, I have been frank with Premier Pham Van Dong about some problems existing in the relations between our two Parties and States, hoping that a solution will be found to these problems through a comradely and in-depth conversation so that the revolutionary friendship and unity between our Parties and countries can be upheld and enhanced. China and Viet Nam are linked by common mountains and rivers and closely related as lips and teeth. We believe that unity and friendship are in the interests of our two peoples while disunity and antagonism are harmful to the interests of both. We should follow the behests of Chairman Mao Zedong and President Ho Chi Minh and make great efforts, as always, to uphold and promote our traditional friendship and unity and not let them be weakened and damaged by interference from any quarters. We believe that so long as we have the sincere desire of safeguarding our friendship and translate this desire into action our friendly relations can grow and the Chinese and Vietnamese peoples can live together in friendship from generation to generation.

17. We request Premier Pham Van Dong to convey to the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party and Comrade Le Duan the wishes Chairman Hua expressed in his meeting with you on 8 June and the points I have discussed today. We sincerely hope that you will seriously consider our opinions so that a satisfactory solution may be found to the problems existing between our two Parties and States.

18. As for the question of aid, Premier Pham Van Dong sent a list in his letter of 15 October last year. We have not been able to satisfy your requests. On behalf of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Government I talked about this matter with Vice-Minister Nguyen Trinh on 24 February this year, explaining that interference and sabotage by the anti-Party "gang of four" and the natural calamities last year have caused many difficulties to our national economy, and that over 2,000 million yuan earmarked for our aid to Viet Nam remains unused, and more than 100 projects for complete sets of equipment are yet to be constructed, whose completion will take us great efforts in the coming period of time. Therefore, we are in no position to provide new aid to the Vietnamese comrades. And I asked him to report this to Premier Pham Van Dong. On 17 March 1977 Vice-Minister Nguyen Trinh conveyed Premier Pham Van Dong's reply and his understanding of the matter. So I am not dealing with this question at length today.

e/ V. I. Lenin, "Speech to Students of the Sverdlov University Leaving for the Front", 24 October 1919.