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Mr Verckel
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① *a. Rome*
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VISIT OF PREMIER HUA GUOFENG TO ITALY

1. Mr Melani of the Italian Embassy came to see me yesterday afternoon to ask about our plans for Premier Hua's visit and (I think incidentally) for some impressions of Vice President Mondale's recent visit to Peking.
2. I gave him in confidence a general outline of our provisional plans for Premier Hua, stressing that though a draft programme had been put to the Chinese we had not yet received substantive comments on it. I mentioned that he would be received by The Queen, would have formal talks with the Prime Minister, would meet representatives of Parliament, the business and cultural worlds, etc at various receptions and would travel outside London. I also gave Mr Melani a run down on the overall political/commercial objectives we were pursuing in having him in the UK. I told him that we did not necessarily envisage signing agreements while he was here, though if we had made enough progress on eg the ASA, cultural or other agreements, we might be able to do something while he was in London. I said I doubted that any Harrier agreement would be signed. The negotiations were continuing and we had never envisaged using Premier Hua's visit as an occasion for signing an agreement of this kind.
3. When I asked Mr Melani (following early confidential indications that this might be the case) whether Italy would also be included in Premier Hua's itinerary, Mr Melani professed to have no information. Since Peking telno 761 came to hand immediately after he had left, I telephoned him at the Embassy and said we had heard that a visit to Rome from 3-6 November now seemed to be envisaged. I said I hoped the Italians would keep in close touch with us about their arrangements for such a visit. When he asked if the sacrifice of the last three days of the UK visit would be difficult for us, I said that in practical terms it would only mean the loss of the last substantive day of the programme (Saturday 3 November). There had been no time so far to consult any of the other Departments concerned with the planning of the visit, but my personal reaction was that it would "not be impossible".
4. Mr Melani telephoned me again this morning to say that the Italians now understand the Chinese request for a visit from 3 to 6 November was firm. They proposed to arrange calls on the President of the Republic and talks with the Italian Prime Minister, together with appropriate hospitality. It looked as if there would not be time for any visits outside Rome.

Robert Samuel

R C Samuel
Far Eastern Dept

4 September 1979