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LAST PAPER

Your reference

Our reference

Date 25 October 1979

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Rhodesia Dept  
FCO

WRP 0211

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DEPT OFFICE		MINISTRY
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Dear Powell,

RHODESIA: ITALIAN ATTITUDE

- In my letter of 15 October I mentioned the concern expressed to me by Ferrero of the MFA that the Italians might find themselves out of line with us if we were forced in the end to go for a settlement which did not involve the Patriotic Front.
- The same point was reinforced by Ferrero's colleague Bascone when I went to see him on 23 October (in Ferrero's absence) to carry out the instructions in FCO telno 858 to Lusaka. Bascone expressed admiration for our handling of the Conference and assured me that the Italians would stand firmly by us so long as we remained on our present course. He made clear however that the Italians regarded themselves as being on the side of the majority, both in Africa and in the UN, who wanted the Patriotic Front to be involved in any eventual solution. This was both for internal political reasons in Italy (the delicate parliamentary balance here and the sympathy of the Italian left for the Patriotic Front - see para 4 of my earlier letter) and also for external reasons (the pattern of Italy's relations with the developing world and with Black Africa: Bascone mentioned by way of example Angola and Mozambique, with whom the Italians have been busily cultivating economic links in the years since independence). For all these reasons Bascone thought that it would be very difficult for the Italians to support us if, in the end, we had to go to the UN and recommend, against the opposition of the majority of the UN, a solution which involved Muzorewa alone. Nor in these circumstances, assuming there was no clear UN determination to end sanctions, did he think there was any chance of the Italian Parliament taking the necessary action to lift sanctions here.

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3. On the immediate issue of our proposals for pre-independence arrangements, Bascone accepted without demur the idea of a Governor appointed by HMG. (We had however told the MFA on instructions only last week [FCO telno 247 to Mirimba Salisbury] that "to talk of a British Governor is premature". It would have helped to bridge the gap if we had been asked to act on FCO telno 492 to Canberra: we read FCO telno 76 to Oslo as meaning that there was no point in our taking such action here until after last weekend). Bascone undertook to brief his Political Director, Gardini, on our proposals for the pre-independence period.

4. It seems likely from all they have told us that we shall have a hard time convincing the Italians if we eventually have to go for a solution without the Patriotic Front. For this reason I hope we can be particularly sensitive about keeping them informed of our thinking over the coming weeks. It might, for example, be helpful if we could give them a copy of the summary of our understanding of the legal position about sanctions in the UN which I see we have promised to give the French (para 5 of FCO telno 434 to Paris). It is also fortunate in this connection that Mr Luce will be in Rome on 14/15 November (primarily on FAO business). We are trying to arrange for him to see an Italian MFA junior minister as well as the Political Director or his deputy. No doubt Rhodesia will be the main topic of conversation.

Yours sincerely,  
Mark Pellew

M E Pellew

cc:  
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