



CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. Herbene
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Mr Fergusson

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| WRJ 02014 | | |
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| 09 FEB 1979 | | |
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MALTA

1. The Italian Ambassador yesterday expressed his regret at the way we were, as he saw it, dragging our feet over the completion of the political co-operation paper on the political importance of Malta. He went on, in characteristic waspish vein, to say that he found British attitudes to certain of our former possessions hard to understand. As regards Malta or former British Somaliland, our main concern seemed to have been not just to wash our hands as rapidly as possible of the territories in question but also to wish to see other countries doing the same. Why were we not willing to be a little more positive over this?

2. I told Signor Ducci that I did not believe that there was any great problem that could not easily be resolved over the completion of the political co-operation paper. We were concerned however to see that it was right and not wrong in its statement about the facts in Malta. But I simply could not accept his more general criticism of our attitude to former colonies. I observed that even the Libyans were beginning to get a trifle weary of Mr Mintoff. And so far as Somalia was concerned, our interest had been as simple as was possible given the facts and given the way that the Somalis had played their hand against Ethiopia. We also had to be careful about our relations with Kenya which were essentially more important to us than those with Somalia. But in any case he knew us well enough now to know that what he was saying was nonsense: so I saw little point in arguing the toss with him further. We ended the conversation in our usual friendly fashion.

3. Could I please have a note on the points of difficulty over the drafting of the paper?

Michael Palliser

2 February 1979

Michael Palliser

cc: Mr Daunt, SED
Mr Vereker, WED

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