



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 September 1982

Rue Münster

Prime Minister

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You agreed earlier that we should try to avoid another Anglo-Italian summit this year.

2. Agree that we should try to have them once, not twice, a year in future?

MS

A.S.C. 27/9

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 26 July about the timing of the next Anglo-Italian Summit. We spoke to the Embassy in London on 29 July to warn them that the Prime Minister's diary is heavily booked. You may now like to get in touch with them, as you suggested, to express regret that we have been unable to identify any convenient dates before the end of the year. You should know that the Italian Ambassador recently took the PUS to one side and told him that his Government were getting nervous about the lack of reply to their suggestion that the next Anglo-Italian Summit should be held next month. Mr Cagiati was, of course, being somewhat disingenuous.

You also proposed on 26 July that, when you spoke to the Embassy, you would suggest that we think in terms of holding the next Summit (in London) in the first half of 1983. We have recently been reviewing international meetings attended by the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in an effort to identify areas where reductions could be made in the frequency of their regular overseas commitments. One recommendation to emerge from this review is that in future Anglo-Italian Summit meetings should take place only once a year instead of twice. In practice such a change would make little difference. A number of factors have combined in recent years to thwart plans for Summits every six months. Since regular Summits were first agreed upon there have been only three, roughly at intervals of 10 months.

I should be grateful for your views on this recommendation, which has the support of Mr Pym. We would not intend to convey the decision formally to the Italians. Their sensitivities on this score are well known. A formal request to make the Summit meetings annual in future would inevitably be interpreted as a downgrading of the importance which we attach to Anglo-Italian relations. But we think it should be possible to handle matters in such a way as not to arouse Italian suspicions.

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The instability of successive coalition governments makes it likely that Summits will continue to be cancelled or delayed owing to Italian domestic political considerations. There may well be elections in Italy next spring. We should ourselves be prepared to introduce administrative delays, if necessary, but we should in practice need to do so only rarely. I do not think it will be too difficult to ensure through natural slippage that the next Summit is not held until May or June next year.

*Yours ever*  
*J E Holmes*

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Private Secretary

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