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29 December 1983

Prime Minister.

May we stick to the plan to leave
on Thursday, after Quakers, and return
on Friday evening? A.S.C. 3/1

Dear John,

Anglo-Italian Summit: 26 - 27 January

Thank you for your letter of 16 December, giving the participation on the British side for the Anglo-Italian Summit.

You asked whether it might be possible to confine the Summit to one day. This also echoes the thinking in your letter of 19 December on the Prime Minister's international commitments with which the Foreign Secretary has a great deal of sympathy. We will be replying to that letter separately, but Sir Geoffrey's preliminary view is that we should work on the Germans first in our efforts to rationalise the general pattern.

We have consulted our Embassy in Rome on the specific question of the Anglo/Italian Summit, and I attach the response. Lord Bridges has not consulted the Italians at this stage, but his own views are that limiting the Summit to one day, at least on this occasion, would indeed make the Italians unhappy. As you know, we are already deliberately allowing the frequency of Summit meetings with the Italians to slip and Lord Bridges feels that the Italians would be upset if this Summit, the first of the new Government, proved to be something of a hasty occasion.

There are other reasons for not using the forthcoming Italian Summit as the first occasion on which to reduce the duration of such meetings. We know that the Germans are making a particular effort with the Italians on Community issues in the early part of next year. It is possible the French may do the same. It will be important to demonstrate to the Italians that we take them at least as seriously as our other Community colleagues. The January Summit will be an important occasion in which to put across our Community case on a broad front. The Foreign Secretary would like to see all participants at the Summit press home the British position to the Italians.

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In the circumstances, Sir Geoffrey considers it important to avoid suggesting to the Italians that we are in any way diminishing the importance of this particular Summit meeting and hopes that the Prime Minister will be prepared to agree to the arrangements as they stand.

I am copying this letter to John Kerr (HM Treasury), Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Ivor Llewelyn (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food).

Yours ever

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

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PM Times Abroad: Aglo-I Summit
12/83

