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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 September, 1982

Prime Minister:

Dear John,

Agree to meet
Sir John Fretwell before
the Anglo-French Summit as
proposed? J 21/9. Yes

The Prime Minister will be aware of the extent to which President Mitterrand personally dictates French policy, both foreign and domestic. One of our difficulties in the past has been arranging access to him (and his predecessors). The Prime Minister does of course speak to him on the telephone from time to time, but this should in our view be reserved for special occasions. There would be obvious advantage to us if the Ambassador at Paris were able to arrange the occasional meeting with the President (in the same way as our Ambassador at Bonn used to have meetings with Chancellor Schmidt) either for a general tour d'horizon or to take up individual matters, eg the Budget. The dialogue at that level between Britain and France should be more regular.

Sir John Fretwell is well qualified to make the best use of such opportunities: he is not only an expert in Community Affairs but also a fluent French speaker. But he really needs a card of entry. The most effective way of providing this would be for the Secretary of State and Sir John Fretwell to have a discussion about Anglo-French relations with the Prime Minister, after which the Ambassador would be able to seek an interview with President Mitterrand on the grounds that he had come back fresh from top-level conversations in London.

The most convenient peg for such a meeting is the forthcoming Anglo-French Summit on 4/5 November. President Mitterrand might be prepared to receive the Ambassador in October if he came with a personal message from the Prime Minister about the Summit. The President would no doubt by then himself be beginning to think about how to tackle the meeting. Once Sir John has seen him it ought to be easier to arrange a second and subsequent meetings.

I have doubts about it: here will do it well. I do not see the French Ambassador for such talks not

If the Prime Minister is content with this general approach, the Secretary of State wonders whether it would be possible to arrange a meeting with himself and Sir John Fretwell immediately after lunch on Monday, 18 October. Mr Pym is already lunching with the Prime Minister and it could be convenient to enlarge the discussion at say 2.30 pm to include the Ambassador.

Yours ever,

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

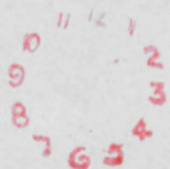
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(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

20 SEP 1982



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 September 1982

Anglo/French Summit

Thank you for your letter of 21 September.

The Prime Minister will be glad to have a talk with the Foreign Secretary and Sir John Fretwell before the next Summit. Caroline Stephens will be in touch with you about the timing.



14.30
Monday
18 Oct.

cf.
. 1/10.

Mrs. Thatcher has, however, commented, that she has some doubts about the idea of meetings between President Mitterrand and our Ambassador in Paris. She has pointed out that she does not see the French Ambassador for such talks. This matter could be discussed at the meeting which we are arranging.

JC

Francis Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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