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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 July 1980

*NR  
23/7/80*

*Dean Clark,*

You wrote to Robin Birch\* *~~~~~*  
*~~~~~* \* about the possibility of  
the Pope visiting this country.

Lord Carrington intends to speak to the Archbishop of Canterbury to find out the views of the Church of England on this question and the related problem of the status of HM Legation to the Holy See and of the Apostolic Delegate in this country. If anything new emerges from this conversation I will write again. Lord Carrington is not yet in a position to make recommendations to the Prime Minister on these questions. However, Lord Carrington does not at present consider that there is a case for an early visit by the Pope. He has discussed this with the Northern Ireland Secretary who takes the view that 1982 would be preferable to 1981 for a Papal visit.

HM Minister to the Holy See does not consider it likely that the Pope would announce his intention to make such a visit without first consulting HM Government privately. Nor is it likely in any case that such a visit could take place this year since the Pope already has a busy schedule of foreign visits.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Robin Birch (Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster).

*Yours etc*

*Paul*

(P Lever)  
Private Secretary

C A Whitmore Esq  
10 Downing Street

\*~\* Passage deleted and closed, 40 years  
under FOI Exemptions.

*Claydon, 20 October 1981* CONFIDENTIAL