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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister (2)

29 January 1980

Dear Michael,

Handwritten initials and date: "Hand - 29/1"

Handwritten note: "F.C.O. Hand 29/1"

Quadripartite Meetings

As a result of a leak in the German press on 26 January and again this morning, the Italians have become aware of a Quadripartite meeting of Political Directors held in London on 24/25 January to discuss Afghanistan. (As you know, these meetings are held from time to time, either in secret or under the camouflage of a meeting to discuss Berlin and Germany.) The Italians are strongly opposed to any top table from which they themselves are excluded. They have questioned the Germans about the reported meeting, and have been given evasive answers which will not have satisfied them.

Signor Ruffini has not so far raised this subject with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, nor I understand, did Signor Cossiga with the Prime Minister. But if asked about we will seek to avoid giving a direct answer to the question whether a meeting did or did not take place in London last week as reported. If pressed, we will say that, as the Italians are aware, the 4 powers with special responsibility for Berlin and Germany as a whole have for many years met periodically both at ministerial and at lower levels. If further pressed, we will concede that other subjects also come up; but will add that no amount of discussion in other groupings can take the place of coordination among the Nine, a process to which the Italians at the moment hold the key in their Presidential capacity.

Yours etc

Handwritten signature: "Paul"

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

cc
PS/Sir R Armstrong

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