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MRS THATCHER'S VISIT TO THE USA

1. Sir P Ramsbotham told me that he had had a <sup>(49)</sup> good meeting with Mrs Thatcher this morning. Mr Airey Neave MP was there for part of the time and Mr R Ryder throughout.

2. Mrs Thatcher began the meeting by saying that her instinct was that it would be best to go to Washington alone and she sought Sir P Ramsbotham's advice on this. He endorsed her own view on the following 3 grounds:

- a. Mrs Thatcher, as Head of HMG's loyal Opposition, was in a special position both from the point of view of her US interlocutors and that of the Embassy. It could cause her host embarrassment if she were accompanied by someone of standing and distinction. It would not be the same as a Prime Minister and Secretary of State visiting Washington together. The Americans could see the danger of awkward precedents being created;
- b. If Mrs Thatcher were alone, it would be easier to take maximum advantage of her presence in building up her image;
- c. It would have practical advantages from the point of view of putting Britain across, if distinguished members of the Opposition staggered their visits.

During this discussion no names were mentioned, but it was clear that Mrs Thatcher was seeking Sir P Ramsbotham's advice about whether or not Mr Maudling should accompany her. Mr Ryder mentioned Mr Maudling's name afterwards and Sir P Ramsbotham said that he would be very glad to welcome Mr Maudling in Washington in the spring.

3. Sir P Ramsbotham told me that Mrs Thatcher had shown firm determination to put right the inheritance on the Conservative side of a bad relationship with Dr Kissinger. This was one of the main purposes of her visit to Washington.

4. I am recording separately, a few points which were agreed between them on Mrs Thatcher's programme.

D.T.

Derek Thomas  
North America Department

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cc:  
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