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Mr Melhuish - pl. 10.6.77
Mr Melhuish
NAD

letter to Washington

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AMU 026/24

OPPOSITION VISITS TO WASHINGTON

1. In your minute of 27 May, you drew my attention to Mr Russell's letter of 25 May about the proposed visits to Washington of Sir Geoffrey Howe, and Mrs Thatcher. (You subsequently showed me Mr Russell's second letter of 3 June.) You asked me to discover what discussions the PUS might have had on the subject during his visit to Washington, and how he thought the Office and the Embassy should handle the proposed visits.
2. The PUS confirms that he was shown in Washington the minute by Mr Russell which he enclosed with his letter of 3 June. But the PUS says that he had no substantive discussion of it with anyone in the Embassy.
3. The PUS's firm view is that these visits should be handled in accordance with the normal rules for assistance to the Opposition. In other words, the Embassy (and your Department) should assist the Conservative Party in drawing up appropriate programmes for Sir G Howe and for Mrs Thatcher, and providing necessary administrative support, hospitality etc.
4. You will have seen that it has been decided that Mr Jay will arrive in Washington on 23 July. This means that he will arrive during the course of Sir G Howe's visit. Mr Jay is aware of this, and would like Sir G Howe to be informed that he is sorry that he will not be fully in the saddle and able to assist with the visit, but that he hopes that it will be a success and he looks forward to meeting Sir G Howe during it. The PUS suggests that Sir J Moreton or Mr Ryrie should take on the task of looking after Sir G Howe, and perhaps putting him up.
5. The PUS would not object to your being in touch with Mrs Thatcher's office in order to discover how her plans are taking shape.

J O Kerr

J O Kerr
PS/PUS

9 June 1977