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USA June '79
(Helm's visit)

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Rhodesia PS
file

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 July 1979

Dear Senator,

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY SENATOR JESSE HELMS AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON 4 JULY 1979

Senator Jesse Helms (Republican, North Carolina), following a written request by him for a private and confidential discussion with the Prime Minister about Rhodesia, called at No.10 at 10.30 this morning by prior arrangement. He was accompanied by Mr. Carbaugh and another personal assistant. The following is a summary of the main points which arose during half an hour's discussion.

The Prime Minister began the conversation by telling Senator Helms that she thought it desirable that their meeting should be given no publicity. In particular, she hoped that he would not consider it necessary to inform the other Conservative Members of Parliament whom he was meeting later in the day that he had called on her. In answer to questions, No.10 would if necessary confirm that he had made a brief call on the Prime Minister, in return for the Prime Minister's own meeting with him in Washington during her visit as Leader of the Opposition. Senator Helms accepted this, but with evident reluctance.

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Senator Helms told the Prime Minister that when President Carter had announced his "unfortunate" determination concerning sanctions against Rhodesia, he had suggested to the President that he should take an early opportunity of meeting Bishop Muzorewa. President Carter had telephoned him on the following day to ask him to invite the Bishop to visit the United States as his (the Senator's) guest. This was the genesis of Bishop Muzorewa's forthcoming visit to Washington on 7 July. President Carter, Mr. Vance and Dr. Brzezinski were taking the line that the US could not unilaterally move ahead of the UK on the Rhodesia issue. The Senator greatly feared, however, that any inordinate delay in recognising the Muzorewa Government would cause it to fall apart. The Prime Minister's own statements had been helpful but what was now needed was a clear statement by the US and British Governments together that sanctions would be lifted. This might

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enable Bishop Muzorewa to survive. The present mood on the Hill was generally supportive of lifting sanctions although some highly placed members of the Administration were in favour of holding back, thereby playing, in the Senator's view, into the hands of the terrorists. The best way of defeating the terrorists would be to revive the Rhodesian economy by lifting sanctions.

Mr. Carbaugh said that President Carter was now seeking a way out of the impasse. The Prime Minister should make it clear that the British Government intended to lift sanctions after Bishop Muzorewa's forthcoming visits to Washington and London. If she did not make this move before the Commonwealth meeting in Lusaka, the pressures there would be hard to resist. It would be much better to present the Lusaka meeting with a fait accompli. Mr. Carbaugh said that it would be wrong to anticipate that in these circumstances the Commonwealth would fall apart. It would be useful if Bishop Muzorewa could have had some firm indication of support and of an end to sanctions from the Prime Minister before he went to see President Carter.

The Prime Minister told Senator Helms that most African countries now accepted that there was a new situation in Rhodesia, following the elections in April. The next step was to determine whether the existing constitutional arrangements were, in accordance with the Fifth Principle, acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole. The Prime Minister said that she did not share Senator Helms' approach to the Lusaka meeting. She thought it essential that the UK should attend that meeting in the position of being able to point to continuing consultations with all the parties concerned. The impact of any premature move on the forthcoming meeting of the Organisation of African Unity also had to be borne in mind. The Prime Minister said that she disagreed with Mr. Carbaugh on the desirability of presenting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting with a fait accompli: it was essential to persuade some countries to go along with the UK - a wide degree of international acceptance would be essential to the future of Bishop Muzorewa's Government, which would be gravely handicapped by an unnecessary measure of African hostility towards it. For all these reasons, the Prime Minister said, she did not think it wise to make any further move before the Lusaka meeting.

As you know, the Prime Minister wishes knowledge of her meeting with Senator Helms to be confined to the smallest possible circle. The above account, therefore, is for the personal information of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary only. Lord Carrington may wish to authorise you to convey the gist of it to the one or two senior officials who were directly concerned in preparing the brief for Senator Helms' call.

Yours ever,
Elizabeth

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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