

Confidential File

EEC Fishing licences for Spain.

SPAIN

January 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
<del>30.1.80</del>							
<del>6.2.80</del>							
8.2.80.							
PREM 19/373							

8 February 1980

Message to the Spanish Prime Minister

Further to my letter of 30 January to Garth Waters, I enclose the text of a message from the Prime Minister to the Prime Minister of Spain. I should be grateful if you could arrange for this to be delivered by HM Ambassador, Madrid.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Garth Waters (MAFF).

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Paul Lever Esq  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



ju gfh

c FCo.  
MAFF.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 February 1980

Dear Mr. President,

Your Private Secretary has been in contact with mine by telephone to stress the great importance which you attach to fishing by Spanish fishermen in the waters of EEC member states and in particular to the licences issued for hake fishing.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has also reported to me the representations made to him by the Spanish Ambassador on several occasions most recently on 25 January. The Ambassador stressed the importance of the fishing industry to Spain and the political significance of the fishing licences issue for the Spanish Government especially in certain regions of the country.

I fully understand your problems. But Mr. Walker has explained to the Ambassador the difficulties faced by our fishermen who have to cope with falling catch rates and mounting costs and who have recently been excluded from important areas where they had traditionally fished. These difficulties constitute a very real political problem for the United Kingdom government which we are seeking to have resolved within the European Community.

The problems facing Spain, the United Kingdom and, no doubt, other member states of the Community in the fishing sector are serious. They are bound to make for complex and difficult negotiations between Spain and the EEC. I was very pleased

/therefore to

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therefore to learn that at the negotiations in Brussels on  
4 February it proved possible to reach an agreement for 1980.

Yours sincerely

Raouf Taha

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His Excellency Senor Don Adolfo Suarez Gonzalez.



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH

From the Minister's  
Private Office

Michael Alexander Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

6 February 1980

Dear Michael,

T.M.

I much regret that there was an error in the draft letter for the Prime Minister to send to the Spanish Prime Minister attached to my letter of yesterday.

I would be grateful if you would replace the final sentence beginning "But I am sure" with the following:-

"I understand, however, that at the negotiations in Brussels on 4 February it proved possible to reach an agreement for 1980."

Yours sincerely  
Frances Thompson

MISS F H THOMPSON  
Assistant Private  
Secretary

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K-7 FEB 1980

Spain Jan 80 - VB 7.2



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HH

From the Minister's  
Private Office

*Fr. Pauls - 8/2*

Michael Alexander Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON

5 February 1980

*Dear Michael,*

- .. As requested in your letter of 30 January I attach a draft letter which the Prime Minister might like to send to the Spanish Prime Minister on fishing licences for Spain.

I am copying this letter to Paul Lever (FCO) as you did yours.

*Yours sincerely,  
Frances Thompson*

Miss F H Thompson  
Assistant Private Secretary

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE SPANISH PRIME MINISTER

Your private secretary has been in contact with mine by telephone to stress the great importance which you attach to fishing by Spanish fishermen in the waters of EEC member states and in particular to the licences issued for hake fishing.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has also reported to me the representations made to him by the Spanish Ambassador on several occasions most recently on 25 January. The Ambassador stressed the importance of <sup>the industry</sup> fishing to Spain and the political <sup>significance</sup> problem ~~of the~~ <sup>of the</sup> fishing licences ~~pose~~ <sup>pose</sup> for the Spanish Government especially in certain regions of the country.

I fully <sup>understand</sup> appreciate your problems. But I ~~understand~~ <sup>find by now</sup> that Mr Walker has also explained to the Ambassador the difficulties ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> United Kingdom fishermen who <sup>have to cope with</sup> ~~face~~ falling catch rates and mounting costs and <sup>who</sup> have recently been excluded from important areas where they had traditionally fished. These difficulties constitute a very real political problem for the United Kingdom government which we are seeking to have resolved within the European Community.

The problems ~~are~~ factors,

Spain, the United Kingdom, and, no doubt, other member states of the Community therefore have serious problems in the fishing sector <sup>are serious. They</sup> which <sup>are bound to</sup> ~~must~~ make for <sup>complex</sup> difficult negotiations between Spain and the EEC.

~~But I am sure that given goodwill and patience at the negotiations which resume on 4 February a mutually satisfactory outcome, in conformity with the EEC/Spain fisheries framework agreement, can be agreed for 1980.~~

<sup>was</sup> I ~~understand~~ <sup>very pleased therefore to learn</sup> however, that at the negotiations in ~~June~~ or 4 February it proved possible to reach an agreement for 1980.

Paul





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F-7 FEB 1980

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE SPANISH PRIME MINISTER

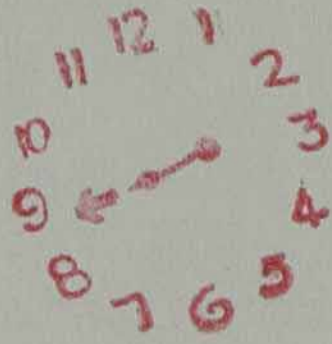
Your private secretary has been in contact with mine by telephone to stress the great importance which you attach to fishing by Spanish fishermen in the waters of EEC member states and in particular to the licences issued for hake fishing.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has also reported to me the representations made to him by the Spanish Ambassador on several occasions most recently on 25 January. The Ambassador stressed the importance of fishing to Spain and the political problem that fishing licences poses for the Spanish Government especially in certain regions of the country.

I fully appreciate your problems but I understand that Mr Walker has also explained to the Ambassador the difficulties of United Kingdom fishermen who face falling catch rates and mounting costs and have recently been excluded from important areas where they had traditionally fished. These difficulties constitute a very real political problem for the United Kingdom government which we are seeking to have resolved within the European Community.

Spain, the United Kingdom, and no doubt other member states of the Community therefore have serious problems in the fishing sector which must make for difficult negotiations between Spain and the EEC. But I am sure that given goodwill and patience at the negotiations which resume on 4 February a mutually satisfactory outcome, in conformity with the EEC/Spain fisheries framework agreement, can be agreed for 1980.

- 8 FEB 1980



AFS-280.

*Spain*

30 January 1980

Fishing Licences for Spain

We spoke on the telephone a few days ago about the meeting between the Minister of Agriculture and the Spanish Ambassador on 25 January at which the Spanish Ambassador raised the question of licences for Spanish fishermen to fish in Community waters. You told me that the Spanish Prime Minister, Senor Suarez, might try to get in touch with the Prime Minister on this problem. In the event, as I told Frances Thompson yesterday, Senor Alberto Aza, the Spanish Prime Minister's Private Secretary, rang me.

Senor Aza said that Senor Suarez would have rung the Prime Minister had it not been for the language problem. Senor Suarez wanted the Prime Minister to be aware of the very great importance he attached to the demarche which the Spanish Ambassador had made to Mr. Walker. He was anxious that Mrs Thatcher should take into account the fact that the issue of licences to Spanish fishermen was a major political problem for the Spanish Government. Among the areas most affected by the problem were the Basque provinces in Northern Spain where elections were pending. If Spain was not offered a reasonable number of licences, the ability of the Government to achieve a reasonable result in those provinces would be seriously impaired.

I told Senor Aza that I would, of course, inform the Prime Minister about his call. I added that the pressures on our own fishing industry were no less severe than those on the Spanish industry. I added that I was sure the Prime Minister would wish to reply to the message from Senor Suarez and that I would arrange for a reply to be forwarded via our Embassy in Madrid.

I subsequently informed the Prime Minister about my conversation with Senor Aza and she confirmed that she would wish to reply. I believe that Frances Thompson has arranged for the drafting of the message to be put in hand.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(SGD) MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Garth Waters, Esq.,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

*AFS*

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PRIME MINISTER

Licences for Spanish Fishermen

A problem has arisen between us and the Spanish Government about the issue of fishing licences to Spanish fishermen. You will wish to see the attached record of a conversation between Mr. Walker and the Spanish Ambassador.

Senor Alberto Aza, the Secretary of the Spanish Cabinet and Private Secretary to Senor Suarez the Spanish Prime Minister, rang me this afternoon on the problem. He said that Senor Suarez would have rung you himself were it not that he speaks no English. Senor Aza said that Senor Suarez wanted you to be aware of the great importance he attached to the demarche made by the Spanish Ambassador. He was anxious that you should take into account the major political problem which this issue posed for the Spanish Government. Among the areas most affected by the licensing problem were the Basque provinces where new elections were pending. If the Spaniards did not get a reasonable number of licences the outcome of the election would be affected.

I told Senor Aza that I would of course report his call to you. I added that I knew the difficulty had arisen because of pressures on our own fishing industry were no less severe than those on the Spanish industry. I said that I was sure that you would wish to reply and that I would arrange for a message to be forwarded to our Embassy in Madrid.

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If you agree I will have the drafting of such a message put in hand.

Yes - where call  
dep me on our  
for business  
and

And

28 January 1980

## MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR - 25 JANUARY 1980

The Minister of State (Commons) and I were present when the Spanish Ambassador called on the Minister this morning.

The Ambassador said that licences to fish in Community waters were of great importance to Spain. The Spanish Prime Minister was attempting to telephone the French Prime Minister and would be prepared to speak to the British Prime Minister about it. However, as he did not speak English, it might be more useful for the Spanish Minister for European Relations, Senor Sotelo, to visit the British Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Ambassador pointed out that Basque terrorists were stepping up their activities ahead of the Spanish Election in March. The issue of fishing was involved to an extent disproportionate to its real importance. Spain had asked for 200 fishing licences from the EEC and would accept 180. However, it would be politically dangerous for Spain to accept many fewer than 180.

The Minister replied that fishing was of immense political importance to the United Kingdom too. The loss of Icelandic waters and the disappearance of traditional stocks such as the herring had dealt severe blows to the British fishing fleet, large parts of which were now laid up in our major ports. The United Kingdom Government was having to apply quota restrictions to what was left of the fishing fleet. In Scotland, the fishing communities were of critical importance in marginal constituencies. The Prime Minister herself had given categorical pledges to the fishing industry in the last Election campaign. The Minister was under instructions to safeguard what was left of the British fishing fleet.

The Minister explained that the EEC understood the significance of fishing to Spain. It was disposed to be friendly towards Spain. However, he could not tell British fishermen that they were to suffer a larger percentage cut in their effort than Spain. The desperation of the British fishermen had reached the point where blockades of North Sea oil rigs were threatened. Last year, catches had fallen by 17%, costs (mainly fuel) had increased by 30% with prices increasing by only 2%. Many of the fishermen were near to bankruptcy and their anger was almost at boiling point. There were very strong emotional pressures on the Government because the industry was in such a bad financial state.

The Minister of State emphasised that the United Kingdom Government could not concede more to Spain than it was prepared to allow its own fishermen. The reduction in the total allowable catch (TAC) of hake was similar to the cuts in the TACs of stocks important to us. The British fishing industry would not tolerate an exception for hake.

The Ambassador took note of these points, but asked whether the Spanish Prime Minister should telephone the British Prime Minister. Perhaps the British Prime Minister did not understand the importance of fish to Spain. He understood the problems facing the United Kingdom Government and asked it to understand those facing the Spanish Government.

The Minister said that the Spanish Prime Minister would find that the British Prime Minister would take a hard line on this issue. British Ministers understood the difficulties of the Spanish Government. If they did not, they would not agree to the issue of any licences at all to Spain. It was, however, impossible for the British Government to make further concessions to Spain. Besides, Spanish fishermen had a bad reputation throughout Europe for breaking fishing rules. He understood that the Spanish Government was beginning to take tough measures but, for the moment, the reputation of Spanish fishermen remained poor.

The Minister of State said that British Ministers had examined the suggestion made by the Spanish Minister of Agriculture the previous week that control over fishing effort could be exercised through mesh size measures. They had, however, concluded that such methods were unenforceable. The United Kingdom Government appreciated that hake was not a fish of direct interest to British fishermen, but large by-catches of fish important to British fishermen were associated with the hake fishery. Any increase in the hake catch would therefore affect species of interest to British fishermen.

The Ambassador asked whether temporary arrangements could be made for this year to cover the needs of the Basque country and Galicia in the Spanish Election. The Minister replied that he was not unsympathetic, but that the issue was very important to the United Kingdom. A dangerous point had been reached when fishermen threatened to blockade the oil rigs; and British fishermen were very sensitive to agreements that gave concessions to third countries.

As for the possibility of some token reduction below 180 licences, the Minister promised to do as much as he could, but warned that he could not risk what was politically impossible. He urged that the leaders of the Spanish fishing industry should meet and talk to their British counterparts so as to dissipate the atmosphere of hostility. Such moves had been successful in dispelling the suspicions of Danish and British fishermen. The Minister promised to take the initiative in inviting Spanish fishermen to the United Kingdom. The Ambassador offered to help to organise reciprocal visits.

The Minister promised to convey to the Prime Minister the message that the Spanish Prime Minister wished to speak to her. He suggested that the Spanish Minister, Senor Sotelo, might speak to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. He repeated

that the United Kingdom would be prepared to go as far as possible to assist Spain consistent with retaining the confidence of our own fishermen. It was no so much that Britain contributed the largest share of EEC waters, as that the restrictions and decreasing stocks and low prices had produced real trouble amongst the fishermen. They knew that the Government was unlikely to offer financial assistance and were therefore running scared. The younger fishermen who had invested heavily in equipment were those who were suffering most, while their leaders tended to be older men.

*G R Waters*

G R WATERS  
Principal Private Secretary  
25 January 1980

Mr Packer + 1

cc Miss Rabagliati  
Mr Steel  
Mr Sadowski  
Mrs Brock  
Mr Moss  
Mr Kelsey  
PS/SOSFA  
PS Lord Privy Seal  
PS/SS Scotland  
PS/SS Wales  
PS/SS Northern Ireland  
Mr Alexander - 10 Downing Street ✓  
PS Cabinet Secretary  
Mr Andrews  
Mr Ring



28 JAN 1980

