

Spain and the Common Market

six years, and the second, although as yet undefined to last for a shorter period. It was after that period that full membership would be discussed.

Although this led to such direct consequences as reduction in customs duty or concessions in agricultural products, there was also the all-important psychological feature. An example of this could be seen in the Spanish wine industry. Although the relative concessions granted to date were comparatively small, the impact on the Spanish producers was already decisive. They had been encouraged to look to the future, aiming to sell wines at prices of 25, 50 or 100 pesetas per litre, rather than the cheap product of 5 pesetas. In other words, export riches rather than poverty.

Dealing with agricultural exports to Britain, there were about a score of commodities which might face difficulties, and these were being studied in depth. The solution of these problems was of vital interest to both Britain and Spain, for although the flow is in one direction only, a decrease in quality or an increase in price would affect both producer and consumer.

On the question of customs protection, it all depended on the level of British duties being brought very gradually to that of the EEC countries, and

on their giving Spain an additional reduction so that on the one hand, the final position in Britain might not become too bad, and on the other, the general position for Spain in the Community would improve.

Investigation to date had shown that most Spanish exports to the UK are not significantly below, and in some cases, even above Common Market prices. On quality the general public does not change suddenly from one type of tomato to another, even when there is a difference in price, and thirdly the British market will continue to have to be supplied.

Portion of the market

Spain, Senor Illustres insisted, would only sell less to Britain if someone else took over that portion of the market she had lost through increased prices. Who else could that someone be? Certainly oranges are grown in the Community, but citrus cannot be grown just to fill a void. It took up to seven years for groves to reach full production.

Admittedly certain products, such as tomatoes, could be increased but only at the cost of large investments of

money. Spain grew winter tomatoes in the open, but the Community would have to produce them in hot-houses at a cost of about 2 million pesetas per hectare. And for what? Just to gain an extra fortnight before and after the season?

Prima facie, it might appear that British entry would be damaging to Spain. On the other hand if the trading, productive and business aspects are considered, it is realised that the problem may be restricted within certain workable limits, and that, even then, the position would be eased further by compensations. It may be that it will not be the tomato grower who will get such a compensation, but the Spanish economy will benefit, but the blow to the traditional exporter must be lessened as far as possible.

The speaker concluded by declaring that if the *per capita* earnings of the average Briton increased by 4 per cent—rather than the present one per cent—it was likely that the demand for Spanish products, which has been so stable for so long, would increase, even if new competitors should appear, and might even compensate for loss of ground resulting from Britain's joining.

In any case, the Community would play fair, and have already acknowledged that the countries with whom they have signed agreements, should not be made to suffer on account of later events.

FINEST SPANISH FRUIT

BY
Antonio Pujante Galindo

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LEMONS GRAPES



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