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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

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From the Minister

- 1 NTS to see MS
- 2 Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

The Lord Carrington PC KCMG MC  
 Secretary of State for Foreign  
 and Commonwealth Affairs  
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
 Downing Street  
 London  
 SW1

MAP 15/4

15 April 1981

*Robbie*

- 1. MODBA to see
- 2. RA MAP 27/4

SALES OF BEEF TO THE SOVIET UNION

I thought I should draw your attention to the situation that has arisen over sales of beef to the Russians. At a recent meeting of the Beef Management Committee the Commission reported that export licences for the sale of 44,000 tonnes of beef to the USSR had been issued between 1 January and 23 March. As this is already double the annual average for 1977 to 1979 of some 22,000 tonnes - and is indeed above the average of 38,000 tonnes for the period 1974 to 1978 - my officials asked what action the Commission proposed to take. In reply they were told, apparently on the instructions of the Commissioner, that this was a political question which could not appropriately be discussed in the Management Committee.

In 1980 the Commission took action so late that exports to Russia eventually reached 103,000 tonnes, which is massively in excess of any possible assessment of traditional trade. Given the Commission's attitude, it seems clear that there is nothing that we can do in the Management Committee to try to avoid a repetition of last year's failure to implement the Foreign Affairs Council's decisions of 15 January 1980. As I see it, the only chance of limiting beef sales to Russia to a reasonable level is to take the matter up in COREPER and the Foreign Affairs Council. In the circumstances you may like to consider doing this.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, members of OD(E) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
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PETER WALKER

15 APR 1981



*Faint, illegible handwritten text, possibly including a name and address.*