

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Wicks



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From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

Ref. A088/1546

18 May 1988

Dear Richard,

Thyssen Collection

Claude Hanks Drielsma called on me this morning to discuss the Prince of Wales' lunch with Baron Thyssen on Saturday and to offer his advice on the draft letter to Baron Thyssen covering the Government's proposal for the acquisition of the Thyssen Collection.

Hanks Drielsma said that the lunch had gone very well and had been helpful to the Government's cause. It was clear, however, that the Baroness remained firmly committed to a Spanish home for the Collection, although at one point she appeared to envisage that the Spanish Government would be unwilling to put up the funds.

Hanks Drielsma suggested some minor amendments to the draft letter to Baron Thyssen which I have indicated in manuscript on the attached draft. I think these are helpful and you may wish to incorporate them in the next version of the letter. On the proposal itself, he made the point that paragraph 3(f) should make clear that HMG's contribution of up to £4 million pounds would be on a recurrent annual basis. He said that he thought that the letter itself need not be signed by the Prime Minister but that there might be a case for it being accompanied by a warm note signed by the Prime Minister: this is a point which can be resolved following the Cabinet's discussion tomorrow. He advised that the letter should be delivered to the Baron by low key means - for example via our Embassy (though not the Ambassador) in Berne.

Finally, Hanks Drielsma returned to the question of his role in future negotiations. I said that we would continue to value his advice and would need his support, but that negotiations would have to be conducted by the Government direct with the Trustees and not through an intermediary.

I am copying this letter to Terry Heiser, John Bailey, John Anson, and Nigel Wicks.

Yours ww,

R W L Wilding Esq CB

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Robin

DRAFT COVERING LETTER TO BARON THYSSEN

Her Majesty's Government understands that ^{you and} the Trustees of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection are considering the long-term future of the Collection.

Her Majesty's Government wishes to take this opportunity to propose arrangements for providing a permanent home for this pre-eminent Collection in the United Kingdom. Her Majesty's Government believes that this would bring great benefits both to the British people and to the many visitors to this country; and would thus at the same time fulfil your own objective of making the collection as widely accessible as possible. If the Trustees were to decide, with your own approval, that this magnificent Collection should be located in the United Kingdom such a decision would be warmly welcomed by Her Majesty's Government.

Of course, the decision cannot be that of Her Majesty's Government alone. An acquisition as important as this must be sanctioned by Parliament. Her Majesty's Government would be willing to seek approval from Parliament to the acquisition if arrangements to the satisfaction of both the Trustees and Her Majesty's Government can be agreed in principle. I have been authorised to say that, to achieve such agreement, Her Majesty's Government would welcome the opportunity to discuss ~~[with the Trustees]~~ arrangements on the lines set out in the note enclosed with this letter.

Her Majesty's Government, and Parliament before it sanctioned the acquisition, would need to be satisfied of various important matters included in the note and its annexes. It would of course be especially important to be clear, before Her Majesty's Government approached Parliament, that no dispute could foreseeably arise over the power of the Trustees to pass an absolute and unencumbered title in the pictures to the new

Foundation in the United Kingdom. I feel sure that you and the Trustees would give our representatives the assistance they will require to confirm this and other points.

Because of the pre-eminent position of the Collection Her Majesty's Government would intend not only to seek the sanction of Parliament to its acquisition but would also ask Parliament to provide, through legislation, for the establishment of the new Foundation in the United Kingdom which would own and control the pictures. It is considered that the status conferred on the Foundation by such statutory authority would be commensurate with the importance of the Collection and would best achieve the arrangements for the Foundation which Her Majesty's Government believes will be thought desirable by yourself as well as by Parliament.

Her Majesty's Government would hope that ^{you and} the Trustees would decide in principle before the end of July whether they wish to pursue this proposal.

Her Majesty's Government recognise and admire the generosity and munificence involved in the suggestion ^{that this collection} ~~which originated with~~ ^{might have its permanent home in the United Kingdom and your own} ~~yourself and to which its own proposals relate and it warmly~~ ^{indication that you would welcome a proposal to this end, and it warmly} hopes that you and the Trustees will give ^{these proposals} ~~them~~ favourable consideration.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Paul Coleridge as chairman of the Trustees.