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From the Minister for the Arts

C88/1640

A Bearpark Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1A 2AA

17 March 1988

Dear Andy, *psu by psu*

THYSSEN COLLECTION

Thank you for your letter of ¹⁶ March and its account of the meeting between the Prime Minister and Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza.

My Minister held a follow-up meeting with Mr Palumbo and Mr Hanks-Drielsma this morning to agree next steps. They concluded as follows:

- Mr Palumbo's group will now work up a concrete proposal to put to the Baron by the first week in May at the latest;
- the group will consider the possibilities of both a brand-new building and the conversion of a prestigious existing one;
- Mr Jefferson of the Department of the Environment will be invited to join the working group as suggested by the Secretary of State to advise on possible buildings;
- Mr Hanks-Drielsma will provide a note on the possible options as regards purchase of the "B" collection, including spreading the cost over a number of years.

Mr Hanks-Drielsma mentioned that the Prince of Wales had written to Baron Thyssen offering his support in bringing the Collection here. Mr Hanks-Drielsma is apparently in direct touch with the Prince of Wales's office.

It was agreed that it would be preferable to keep the fact that the government was preparing a proposal as quiet as possible at this stage. Newsnight interviewed Mr Luce last night at the opening of the Thyssen exhibition at the Royal Academy and he maintained the line that the government was interested in the possibility of the Collection coming here but that any decision was a matter for the Baron. If pressed, it might be said that the government was prudently examining the options. The Baron has announced that he is deferring a decision in the hope of reducing speculation.

After the main meeting, my Minister had a private word with Mr Palumbo and Mr Hanks-Drielsma about the latter's role. He confirmed that we would be ready to continue to treat Mr Hanks-Drielsma as a linkman with Baron Thyssen, but made it clear that he must not claim to represent the British Government unless specifically asked to do. Mr Hanks-Drielsma accepted this. I gather that the Secretary of State for the Environment may be seeing him briefly on Sunday and he may wish to confirm this position.

We spoke about your final point and you will liaise direct with the Royal Academy about a possible visit to the exhibition by the Prime Minister.

... I think the time is now ripe for the Prime Minister to reply to Sir Peter Smithers' letter and I enclose a draft.

I am copying this letter to Jill Rutter (Chief Secretary's office), Deborah Lamb (Secretary of State for the Environment's office) and Trevor Woolley (Sir Robin Butler's office) and I will of course continue to keep them in touch with progress.

*Yours ever,
Eleanor*

MISS E M GOODISON
Private Secretary

D R A F T

Sir Peter Smithers
6911 Vico Morcote
Switzerland

AND

Thank you ^{so} ~~very~~ much for your letter of 27 February and for alerting me to the exciting possibility of the Thyssen Collection coming permanently to Britain.

I am taking this idea very seriously and Richard Luce has set up a working group to prepare a concrete proposal which we could put to Baron Thyssen as soon as possible. I took the opportunity of his visit to London for the exhibition of his pictures at the Royal Academy to meet Baron Thyssen myself and we discussed a number of possibilities.

We are now taking this forward with all speed, ^{and} Richard Luce is in touch with Claud Hankes-Drielsma. ~~I am sure we can come up with a positive response.~~

Thank you again for contacting me on this.

With very best wishes



Thank you very much for your letter of 11-15-87 by which you
 directed me to the excellent collection of the Thurston Collection
 and to which I have had access since that time.

I am pleased that these are being made available to the public
 and that you have taken the time to make a copy of the inventory of
 the collection for me. I look forward to the opportunity of
 visiting the collection in the future and to discussing a
 possible loan of some of the items.

Very truly yours,
 [Signature]

Thank you again for your letter of 11-15-87.