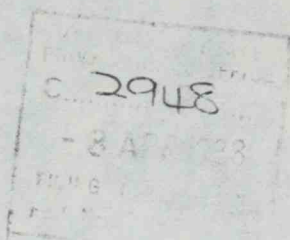


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FROM R W L WILDING  
8 April 1988

cc Mr Stone  
Mrs Brown  
Miss Morrison

*Morrison*



~~MINISTER~~

**THYSSEN COLLECTION**

Following the press reports of an agreement with the Spanish Government, Miss Morrison has spoken to Mr Hanks-Drielsma, now returned from the USA.

2. Hanks-Drielsma said that he had spoken today to the Chairman of the Swiss Foundation which owns the pictures, an English lawyer. It appeared that negotiations with the Spaniards, which had been proceeding in a fairly leisurely way, had recently been accelerated because the Baroness said more than she should to the Spanish Minister and the Minister then said more than he should to the Spanish Parliament. The Foundation was thus bounced into an agreement. But the Chairman was quite clear that the agreement constituted no more than an agreement to negotiate further within a framework of

- (a) putting the Villahermosa in order to receive the pictures
- (b) housing the pictures there temporarily
- (c) considering the terms of a possible final acquisition.

In principle therefore the field was still open for a British proposition.

3. Miss Morrison said, quite rightly, that this development made matters very difficult for the British Government. Our own Ministers would need precise information about the commitment to the Spanish Government before they could decide whether to pursue the matter. She asked for a copy of the agreement.

4. Mr Hanks-Drielsma said that he would ask for a copy. He also expected to see the Baron over the weekend, and would report to us again on Monday 11 April.

5. We need harder information before we can come to a decision. But if it is confirmed that the Spanish

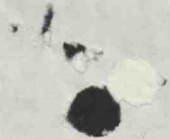
Government are now to start spending money on putting the Villahermosa in order, and that there is at least something of a commitment to housing the pictures there for up to 10 years, I do not at this stage see adequate grounds on which to pursue a UK proposition. The Government will hardly be prepared to commit itself to spending £200m or more ten years in advance. And the prospect of prising the pictures out of Spain once they are lodged there does not look a real one. I must say that I wonder whether our interest has been aroused and made use of with the main object of hurrying the Spaniards along.

Rw

R W L WILDING



Ants





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From the Minister for the Arts  
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A Bearpark, Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

11 April 1988

Dear Andy, <sup>PM 12/4</sup>

You may care to see the enclosed copy of a note on the latest developments on the Thyssen collection for your own information. (The final paragraph is of course Mr Wilding's opinion and not necessarily that of my Minister). Since the note was written we have established that Mr Hanks-Drielsma has not yet been able to meet Baron Thyssen but, as I told you on the telephone, officials here are hoping to meet the Thyssen lawyer today and to obtain further details from him. I will pass on anything more they are able to learn immediately.

I am copying this letter to Deborah Lamb.

Yours ever,

Bleanor

Miss E M Goodison  
Private Secretary