



Action this day

cc BT  
GF

Prime Minister

Ref. A088/2244

MR WICKS

Content with the draft reply and the arrangements generally?

Thyssen Collection

N.C.W  
21.7

As you will have seen, I wrote to Mr Coleridge in the terms attached to my minute of 18 July, with the Prime Minister's amendments.

2. Mr Coleridge replied agreeing that a Written Answer should be given tomorrow, Friday. However, he suggested some amendments to the draft Answer, of which most were minor and unexceptionable, but one was major. This was that the Trustees wanted to remove the penultimate sentence which recorded their request that, should circumstances change, they would want to have the opportunity of contacting the Government again about a long term location in the United Kingdom. The Trustees felt that this sentence would cause them difficulties with the Spanish Government: that is understandable.

3. However, I have said to Mr Coleridge that, without making it clear that any further approach would have to come from the Trustees, I did not think that British Ministers would be prepared to say that they would look at the matter afresh. Mr Coleridge recognises this, and, subject to the Prime Minister's approval, we have agreed on a final sentence to the Parliamentary Answer, as follows:

"The Government has said that, should circumstances change and the Trustees approach the Government about a long term location in the United Kingdom, we would be ready to look at the matter afresh".

Yes not

TEMPORARILY  
RETAINEDS. Gray  
30/3/2016**THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS  
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)  
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT**

I believe that this protects the Government's position and makes it clear that the Government is not prepared to run after the Trustees.

4. I should therefore be grateful for the Prime Minister's approval to the attached Question and Answer, which will be given tomorrow. Briefing is being arranged for Press Offices.

5. Before the Answer is given, the Secretary of State for the Environment is arranging for Mr Reichman and the Birmingham City Council to be told how matters lie.

6. I have spoken to Sir Peter Smithers and told him what we intend. He has asked me to tell the Prime Minister that he is not despondent about the prospects of the Collection eventually coming here. Indeed, he thinks that the negotiations with the Spanish may be quite close to breaking down and a further approach to us from the Trustees may not be long delayed.

7. You asked for my advice on whether the Prime Minister should write to Baron Thyssen. I recommend that she should not do so at this stage. Baron Thyssen has not replied to her last letter and is not likely to be expecting a further letter from the Prime Minister. The view of both Sir Peter Smithers and Mr Coleridge is that a further letter from the Prime Minister to the Baron is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage.

8. I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Attorney General and the Minister for the Arts.

R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

21 July 1988

DRAFT WRITTEN QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. To ask the Minister for the Arts: whether the Government has received a reply to its proposal for the future of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.

A. The Trustees of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust have informed the Government that they have decided not to pursue the British proposal at the present time. Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza has entered into preliminary accord with the Spanish Government which is intended to lead to a loan of most of the Collection for display in Madrid for a period of up to 10 years. The Trustees have decided to try to achieve a full agreement with the Spanish Government along those lines. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government has withdrawn its proposal. The Government has said that, should circumstances change and the Trustees approach the Government about a long-term location in the United Kingdom, we would be ready to look at the matter afresh.

ACT + AMENITIES: Thussen PT2



CONFIDENTIAL

KK



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

**THYSSEN COLLECTION**

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 21 July about your discussions with Mr. Coleridge concerning the draft Parliamentary answer.

The Prime Minister is content with the draft answer attached to your minute.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Attorney General and the Minister for the Arts.

N.L.W.

N. L. WICKS  
22 July 1988

CONFIDENTIAL

ECU

CCB/1

From: Paul J.D. Coleridge

Tel: (01) 834 8509  
Telex: 913001  
Fax: (01) 828 0720

Asphalte House,  
Palace Street,  
London,  
SW1E 5HS

*After this day.*

*Prime Minister.*

*To see how the Trustees  
have suggested the answers  
should be changed. Their  
deletion of the parultimate*

*21st June 1988 sentence suggests  
we might omit the last  
sentence. But since it*

*Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO,  
Cabinet Office, represents our  
70, Whitehall,  
SW1*

*position, I think  
it can remain.*

*N.L.W.  
21.7*

*Dear Sir Robin,*

CABINET OFFICE
7844
21 JUL 1988
FILING INSTRUCTION
FILE No. ....

- cc- Mr Wilding (OAL)
- Mr Jefferson (DOE)
- Ms Case (Tsy)
- Mr Collins (Tsy Sol)
- Mrs Pestell (FCO)
- Mr Wicks (No. 10)
- Miss Goodison
- Mr J Wright

I enclose your draft written answer marked up with our requested changes. If you have any problems with them please ring, otherwise we are quite happy for the matter to be dealt with as per the timetable suggested by you yesterday (Thursday-Friday).

*Yours sincerely*

*Paul Coleridge*

DRAFT WRITTEN QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q. To ask the Minister for the Arts: whether the Government has received a reply to its proposal for the future of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.

A. ~~The Chairman of~~ The Trustees ~~and Protector~~ of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust has<sup>ve</sup> informed the Government that they ~~Trustees~~ have decided not to pursue the British proposal at the present time. Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza has entered into preliminary ~~agreement~~<sup>accord</sup> with the Spanish Government which is ~~expected~~<sup>INTENDED</sup> to lead to a loan of most of the Collection for display in Madrid for a period of up to 10 years. The Trustees have decided to try to achieve a full agreement with the Spanish Government along those lines. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government has withdrawn its proposal. ~~The Trustees have indicated that, should circumstances change, they would wish to have the opportunity of contacting the Government again about a long-term location in the United Kingdom.~~ The Government has said that, ~~in those circumstances,~~<sup>change they ve</sup> ~~it~~<sup>should</sup> would be ready to look at the matter afresh.

and the Trustees approach the Government again about a long term location in the United Kingdom,



cc - PS/Foreign Secretary  
PS/ Chancellor of the Exchequer  
PS/ SS/DOE  
Attorney General  
m. Luce  
m. Wilding  
m. DJ Wright  
m. J Wright  
~~m. Wicks~~

For your files

**CABINET OFFICE**  
70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS  
01-270 0101

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

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

Ref. A088/2227

20 July 1988

Dear Mr. Coleridge,

--- I now enclose the Government's formal reply to your letter of 15 July.

--- I suggest that we should agree both the terms and the timing of a suitable announcement. As you know, there has been a good deal of press speculation on this matter, and it will be helpful if the British Government and the Trustees can keep to a short statement in similar terms. I enclose the draft of a Written Parliamentary Question accordingly. It would help to forestall press stories if the Minister for the Arts could answer the Question before the end of this week or at the beginning of next week.

By way of a follow-up, the Government is bound to be asked about the terms of its offer. We propose to say that the Government offered a substantial sum subject to negotiation in respect of the paintings, the provision of a suitable gallery and a contribution to its running costs, but not to specify any figures. In other words, the detail of the proposal would remain confidential between us.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Butler

Paul J D Coleridge Esq  
Asphalte House  
Palace Street  
London  
SW1E 5HS





## CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall London SW1A 2AS

01-270 0101

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

Sir Robin Butler KCB CVO

Ref. A088/2226

20 July 1988

*Dear Mr. Coleridge,*

Thank you for your letter of 15 July conveying the reply made by the Trustees and Protectors of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust to the proposal by Her Majesty's Government of 19 May 1988. I have shown the reply to the Prime Minister and the other Ministers concerned.

Her Majesty's Government is glad that the Trustees welcomed its proposal. I have been asked to say in reply that in the circumstances described in your letter the Government fully understands, and accepts, the reasons for the Trustees' decision. Her Majesty's Government now withdraws the proposal of 19 May. If at some future date the circumstances change in such a way that the Trustees wish to pursue the idea of a long-term location for the Collection in the United Kingdom, the Government will be ready to look at the matter afresh.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Robin Butler*

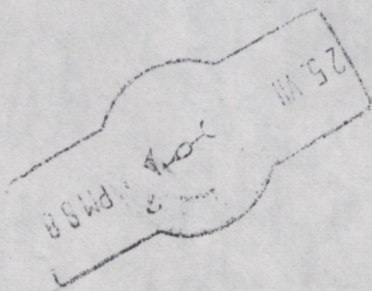
Paul J D Coleridge Esq  
Asphalte House  
Palace Street  
London SW1E 5HS

DRAFT WRITTEN QUESTION AND ANSWER

- Q. To ask the Minister for the Arts: whether the Government has received a reply to its proposal for the future of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.
- A. The Chairman of the Trustees and Protectors of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust has informed the Government that the Trustees have decided not to pursue the British proposal at the present time. Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza has entered into preliminary agreement with the Spanish Government which is expected to lead to a loan of most of the Collection for display in Madrid for a period of up to 10 years. The Trustees have decided to try to achieve a full agreement with the Spanish Government along those lines. In these circumstances, Her Majesty's Government has withdrawn its proposal. The Trustees have indicated that, should circumstances change, they would wish to have the opportunity of contacting the Government again about a long-term location in the United Kingdom. The Government has said that in those circumstances we would be ready to look at the matter afresh.

ARTS + AMENITIES.

Thyssen Coll. Pt 2



CONFIDENTIAL



FILE  
Ecu

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

THYSSEN COLLECTION

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 18 July which covered draft letters to Mr. Coleridge and a draft Written Answer about the withdrawal of the Government's offer for the Thyssen Collection.

The Prime Minister is content with the draft Answer subject to the two following changes:

- (i) The word "formally" in the fourth sentence should be omitted. The inclusion of the word "formally" might be interpreted as suggesting that while the proposal has been withdrawn "formally" it is still in some way on the table. The Prime Minister does not wish to give this impression.
- (ii) The last word in the draft Answer "again" should be replaced with "afresh".

As for the draft of your letter to Mr. Coleridge replying to his letter of 15 July, the Prime Minister is generally content with the draft attached to your minute, though the omission of the word "formally" from the draft Answer will require a corresponding omission in line 10 of the draft letter. Similarly the word "again" at the end of the draft will need to be replaced by the word "afresh".

The Prime Minister agrees with the suggested line regarding details of the Government's offer, which you suggest in paragraph 4 of your minute. As you know from your short discussion with the Prime Minister this morning, she was herself inclined to give the Answer to Parliament, but agreed that it should be given by the Minister for the Arts as you recommended. She thinks it important that Baron Thyssen should be made aware of the Government's position and you undertook to see that this was done. You will wish to consider whether to advise the Prime Minister that she should write to him. The Prime Minister would also like Sir Peter Smithers to be told.

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I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Attorney General and the Minister for the Arts.

N.L.W.

N.L. WICKS

19 July 1988

One Minute  
Content with  
A, B, and C?

I am rather  
unhappy about the  
last sentence of  
the statements.  
not

Also content with  
the suggested line at  
X below ?

Ref. A088/2182

MR WICKS

Thyssen Collection

N. C. U.

As requested in your minute of 18 July, I attach:-

18.7

- A - a reply which I would propose to send to Mr Coleridge's letter of 15 July, formally withdrawing the Government's offer;
- B - a draft Written Answer, which might be given by the Minister for the Arts;
- C - a further letter to Mr Coleridge to cover this draft Answer.

2. I should be grateful for Ministers' clearance of these drafts.

3. I confirm that we had not at any stage been told that the Trustees had indicated to the Spanish Government prior to receipt by them of the 19 May proposal from the British Government, that they would seek to try and achieve an agreement along the lines of the Memorandum of Understanding between Baron Thyssen and the Minister of Culture. I agree that it would have been a material factor if they had told us this.

4. Ministers will no doubt be pressed to reveal the full extent of the Government's proposal. I suggest that the Minister for the Arts should be authorised to reveal in answer to inquiries that the Government offered a substantial sum in the event of successful negotiations in respect of the

X

L



paintings, the provision of a suitable gallery and a contribution to its running costs, but should decline to state specific figures. In other words, the detail of the Government's offer should remain confidential.

5. I have copied this minute to the <sup>Private Secretaries to the</sup> Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Attorney General and the Minister for the Arts.

FR.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

18 July 1988

DRAFT

Paul J D Coleridge Esq  
Asphalte House  
Palace Street  
London SW1E 5HS

Thank you for your letter of 15 July conveying the reply made by the Trustees and Protectors of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust to the proposal by Her Majesty's Government of 19 May 1988. I have shown the reply to the Prime Minister and the other Ministers concerned.

Her Majesty's Government is glad that the Trustees welcomed its proposal. I have been asked to say in reply that in the circumstances described in your letter the Government fully understands, and accepts, the reasons for the Trustees' decision. Her Majesty's Government now formally withdraws the proposal of 19 May. If at some future date the circumstances change in such a way that the Trustees wish to pursue the idea of a long-term location for the Collection in the United Kingdom, the Government will be ready to look at the matter again.

MJ



DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBIN BUTLER TO:

Paul J D Coleridge Esq  
Asphalte House  
Palace Street  
London SW1E 5HS

I now enclose the Government's formal reply to your letter of 15 July.

I suggest that we should agree both the terms and the timing of a suitable announcement. As you know, there has been a good deal of Press speculation on this matter, and it will be helpful if the British Government and the Trustees can keep to a short statement in similar terms. I enclose the draft of a Written Parliamentary Question accordingly. It would help to forestall Press stories if the Minister for the Arts could answer the Question before the end of this week.

*I really think I should answer it.*

By way of a follow-up, the Government is bound to be asked about the terms of its offer. We propose to say that the Government offered a substantial sum subject to negotiation in respect of the paintings, the provision of a suitable gallery and a contribution to its running costs, but not to specify any figures. In other words, the detail of the proposal would remain confidential between us.

DRAFT WRITTEN QUESTION AND ANSWER

PM

Q. To ask the Minister for the Arts: whether the Government has received a reply to its proposal for the future of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection.

A. The Chairman of the Trustees and Protectors of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust has informed the Government that the Trustees have decided not to pursue the British proposal at the present time. Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza has entered into preliminary agreement with the Spanish Government which is expected to lead to a loan of most of the Collection for display in Madrid for a period of up to 10 years. The Trustees have decided to try to achieve a full agreement with the Spanish Government along those lines. In these circumstances Her Majesty's Government has ~~formally~~ withdrawn its proposal. The Trustees have indicated that, should circumstances change, they would wish to have the opportunity of contacting the Government again about a long-term location in the United Kingdom. [The Government has said that in those circumstances we would be ready to look at the matter <sup>again</sup> again.]

~~without comment.~~



SRW

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

THYSSEN COLLECTION

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 15 July about the letter of the same date from the Chairman of the Thyssen trustees.

The Prime Minister thinks that we should get a statement - presumably by Written Answer - to Parliament informing them of the latest position. She takes this view because the offer lapses at the end of July and we should therefore not leave matters in the air. She thinks that the draft announcement should be cleared in draft with the trustees and the Baron. The Prince of Wales should also be made aware of the position.

BF // I should be grateful if you could let me have a suitable draft answer which might make the position clear in the way the Prime Minister has suggested. I do not think that it necessarily follows that she should give the reply herself. But that is something on which we can seek her views at the same time as she approves the text.

Finally, you should know that the Prime Minister believes that the trustees might have told us about the information contained in the third paragraph of the letter concerning their contacts with the Spanish government. She has commented that we did not know that the trustees had indicated to the Spanish government prior to their receipt of HMG's proposal that they would seek to try to achieve an agreement along the lines of the preliminary accord reached with the Spanish government in April.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Alex Allan (HM Treasury), Roger Bright (Department of the Environment), Michael Saunders (Attorney General's Office) and Eleanor Goodison (Office of the Minister for the Arts).

N.L.W.

(N. L. WICKS)  
18 July 1988

cu

cc Press Office 2



Prime Minister

Ref. AO88/2166

MR WICKS

to note.

I think we must get a return to Parliament - the other lapses 15.7 at the end of July -  
The Thyssen Collection and we should leave matters in the air. We should discuss

N.C.U.

attached

You will have seen the letter from the Chairman of the Thyssen Trustees in which he says that the Trustees do not feel it appropriate to enter into discussions with other interested Governments or Institutions while negotiating the loan to Spain. The letter says that while the Trustees appreciate that Her Majesty's Government's offer cannot remain on the table beyond the end of this month, they hope they might be at liberty to contact HMG in the event that circumstances change at some time in the future.

reply with the Trustees and the Baron

I feel the Trustees might have told us the information contained in their letter about their contact with the Spanish Government.

2. I interpret this letter as saying that the Trustees do not feel able to pursue our proposal at present but may wish to approach us if the negotiations with Spain fall through. This is not an altogether unsatisfactory outcome at this stage.

The British Museum should also know.

3. I have not been able to reach Mr Coleridge to establish whether the Trustees have said, or propose to say, anything to the press. I suggest that until we know their intentions about that, the Government should not take an initiative, but, in case the story breaks over the weekend, I suggest the following press line which I have discussed with the Office of Arts and Libraries and yourself:



"Her Majesty's Government have been informed by the Trustees of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collections Trust that they have considered the British Government's proposal to provide a long term location for the Thyssen Bornemisza Collection. They have indicated that, while grateful for the British Government's proposal, discussions with the Spanish Government about a loan of the Collection for display in Madrid are at an advanced stage, and that it would be inappropriate to enter negotiations with another Government while these discussions continue. Her Majesty's Government fully understands and accepts this position."

4. I shall submit after the weekend a draft reply to Mr Coleridge, on the lines previously agreed - ie that HMG would be prepared to consider the matter further if at some time in the future Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Trustees decide that they would wish to pursue the provision of a long term location for the Collection in the United Kingdom.

5. I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Attorney General and the Minister for the Arts.

*NS Wadley*  
(Private Secretary)

ROBIN BUTLER

*Approved by the  
Cabinet Secretary and  
signed in his absence*

15 July 1988