



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

27 March 1987

Dear Charles,

Tate Gallery's Proposed Exhibition of Matisse Paintings

with COP? You asked for a note on the Tate Gallery's proposal to hold an exhibition of Matisse paintings from the Soviet State collections. The Director of the Tate copied to you his letter of 20 March to the Foreign Secretary about this.

The Tate first contacted us in June last year about their idea, when they were thinking of staging the exhibition in 1989. The Embassy in Moscow approached the Ministry of Culture but were told that the Russians could not offer any paintings by Matisse in 1989 due to commitments elsewhere. The Tate is now looking at holding the exhibition in 1990 but has not so far returned to the charge with the Russians. If the Prime Minister was to float the idea, and the Soviet response was positive, officials of the Tate would be ready to travel to Moscow for talks.

Two key selling points are that the Tate is offering effectively to construct an exhibition exclusively around Soviet holdings and that in 1975/76 the Tate supplied 87 works of Turner for a major winter exhibition in Leningrad and Moscow. One possibility might be to broach the subject during the restricted dinner with the Gorbachevs in order to engage the personal interest of Mrs Gorbachev. She has a known interest in cultural matters, and spent a morning at the Tate during Mr Gorbachev's 1984 visit.

I enclose a note of points which could be drawn on as appropriate. The subject has also been included in the Foreign Secretary's brief for his discussions with Mr Shevardnadze.

Yours ever,  
L Parker

(L Parker)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
PS/10 Downing Street



## PROPOSED MATISSE EXHIBITION AT THE TATE GALLERY

### Speaking Note

- Tate Gallery interested in holding an exhibition of works by Matisse in 1990; would like to show in a special exhibition all Matisse paintings in the Soviet State collections. Wonderful opportunity to display extraordinary quality of these paintings to wide UK audience.
- Failing that, they hope you could agree to be a generous lender to such an exhibition.
- Understand were some contacts last year; but proposal then for an exhibition in 1989, when many paintings already committed. Hope something can be done for 1990. Tate officials ready to come for talks.
- Exhibition such as this would further cement ties between Tate and Soviet Union. Recall Tate was exclusive lender to the great Turner exhibition of 1975/76. Mrs Gorbachev visited Tate in 1984.



121.Matisse/AB/MC/WIC

20 March 1987

The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe MP  
1 Carlton Gardens  
London SW1

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

I understand from Charles Powell that you will, if you can, raise the Tate's interest in a Matisse exhibition during your forthcoming visit to Moscow. We have already been in touch with the Soviet authorities on the matter, and I have also corresponded with our Ambassador.

We would ideally like to show in a special exhibition all the Matisse paintings in the Russian State collections, and feel that in this way their extraordinary quality would be displayed to a western audience. If the Russians find this proposal unacceptable, we would nevertheless go ahead with our plans for a Matisse exhibition, and would hope that the Russians would be generous lenders.

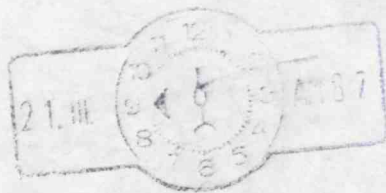
I enclose a copy of a recent publication on the paintings by Matisse in the Soviet State collection. Perhaps you will have an opportunity to visit the Moscow Museum?

We look forward to seeing you here for the opening of the Clore Gallery.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Bowness  
Director

cc: C.D. Powell  
Richard Rogers





The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

2 March 1987

*Mr Powell  
(Spare copy)*

*The Prime Minister told the  
Chairman of the Tate Gallery during her  
visit today that she was sympathetic to  
this request and would "see what she could do".*

Dear Prime Minister,

The Trustees of the Tate Gallery are very anxious to arrange a major exhibition devoted to the work of Matisse, possibly the greatest twentieth century painter. We would like to hold it in 1990, and have already begun discussions with our colleagues in France and the United States.

*OK.  
2/3*

The Russian State Collections have 55 important early paintings by Matisse, and it would enormously add to the exhibition if we were able to borrow them. As there has been no major international exhibition which includes these paintings, it would be a great coup for Britain and the Tate to mount such a show and I believe half a million visitors could be expected.

The National Gallery and the great Moscow and Leningrad Museums are negotiating an exchange of forty nineteenth century paintings in 1988 which may include five or six paintings by Matisse. This encourages us to believe that the Russians are pursuing a more open cultural exchange policy. Naturally we would expect to make equivalent loans in return for the Matisses.

We should be most grateful if when you visit Moscow you could make known to the Russians our plans. If you meet with a positive response, I together with representatives of the Tate, would be very happy to visit Moscow to discuss the matter further with their Ministry of Culture and Museums.

With many thanks.

*Richard Rogers*  
Richard Rogers  
Chairman

cc Trustees  
Director  
RR/jm

cc Miss J Molyneux  
Sir Geoffrey Howe  
Richard Wilding Esq