

CONFIDENTIAL



PRIME MINISTER

I have seen the account of your meeting with Dr Hammer last Thursday about the Leonardo Codex. Under all the circumstances I suggest that I accept in principle the Reviewing Committee's decision to delay export, but reduce the delaying period before a licence is granted from 3 months to 1 month.

2. This is a wholly exceptional case. The object is a manuscript, so that at most 7 or 8 institutions in the UK would be seriously interested. They would have to mount a public appeal for money. I understand that in fact none of them wish to do so.

3. Your office has told mine that Dr Hammer would be unlikely to cause trouble over a delay of say a month. Of course the crucial thing is that he should keep to his generous offer of exhibiting the Codex regularly in this country.

4. If you think this is a reasonable course I could announce this with another case within the next few days as a routine matter, though I would want Dr Hammer to have a day's advance notice.

5. I enclose a possible draft Press Notice. Would you be content with this?

P.C.

PAUL CHANNON

10 February 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT PRESS NOTICE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

TWO EXPORT LICENCES SUSPENDED

Mr Paul Channon, Minister for the Arts, has decided that licences to export the Leicester Codex by Leonardo da Vinci and a painting by Edward Haytley 'Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh with Haigh Hall, Lancashire, beyond' should be withheld for one month and three months respectively.

The cases were considered by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art at their meeting on 28 January 1981. The Committee considered that both items were of national importance under the criteria laid down by the Waverley Committee. They recommended that licences should be withheld for three months in both cases.

In deciding that the suspension period for the Leicester Codex should be one month rather than three months as recommended by the Reviewing Committee, the Minister took into account information available to him and the result of particular enquiries made both before and after the sale about the prospects of a public collection seeking to acquire the Codex. These consultations have shown that there are at present no plans by any major public collection for launching an appeal which would be needed in order to raise the necessary funds. The Minister considers nevertheless that a waiting period is desirable to establish beyond all doubt whether any public collection wishes to make an offer to purchase the manuscript, but considers that in the particular circumstances one month will be adequate.

Mr Channon also took into account the offer which has been made by Dr Armand Hammer, purchaser of the Codex, to exhibit the manuscript regularly in the United Kingdom. He has described it as "a very generous offer which would achieve the regular display in this country of a manuscript that has been on public view only once in the last 300 years".

Any public collection in the United Kingdom which is interested in making an offer to purchase either of the items can obtain further information from the expert adviser concerned.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Leicester Codex by Leonardo

1. This manuscript, which was compiled in about 1508, consists of 36 sheets (ie 72 pages) in folio, measuring approximately 299 x 225mm. It is written in Leonardo's hand from right to left. There are drawings on 59 of the pages. The main theme of the manuscript is the flow of water or, more broadly, physical geography. The manuscript was sold at Christie's on 12 December 1980 by order of the Trustees of the Holkham Estate.
2. A licence was granted on 29 December 1980 for the temporary export of the manuscript to Washington for the Inauguration ceremonies. The manuscript was returned to this country in time for the meeting of the Reviewing Committee on 28 January 1981 to consider the application of an export licence for the longer term.
3. The Reviewing Committee attached to their recommendation a note of concern about Dr Hammer's plans for the manuscript to be displayed throughout the world in view of the risks involved. This has been drawn to Dr Hammer's notice.
4. If a public collection offers to buy the manuscript for £2,420,000 by midnight on March 1981, an export licence will not be granted. (This figure represents the auction price plus the 10 per cent buyer's premium.) The expert adviser, from whom further details can be obtained, is:

The Keeper of Manuscripts
The British Library
2 Sheraton Street
LONDON
W1V 4BH

Painting by Edward Haytley