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Dear Sirs,

In addressing the highly controversial application for a giant 'Holocaust Memorial' in Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster City Council should be aware of the full historical background to the question of 'Holocaust memorialisation' in London, dating back more than forty years.

In particular, the documentary record set out below – drawing on detailed research I have carried out in official archives – repeatedly touches on the following areas that demand consideration before planning permission could properly be granted:

1) Victoria Tower Gardens was considered and specifically rejected as a site for a far smaller memorial, when this question was debated by architectural and heritage experts within the Department of the Environment and other official bodies during the period 1979-82.

2) Some of Britain's most senior diplomats (as well as their ministerial masters) took the view that even a far more discreet 'Holocaust' memorial would – if erected on Crown land or elsewhere in the heart of London – have undesirable implications for our international relations, and that any memorial in Whitehall or Westminster should be of a "British national character".

3) Senior civil servants warned that this 'Holocaust' memorial project – even on the far more discreet scale proposed forty years ago – could be a precedent for other national minorities and interest groups to demand their own memorials, including memorials to events for which Britain could be argued to bear a direct responsibility, which is not the case with the 'Holocaust', however defined.

4) The archival record shows that the late Lord (Greville) Janner and his colleagues at the Board of Deputies of British Jews consistently accepted that any 'Holocaust' memorial in the heart of London should be on a 'modest' and 'appropriate' scale. The fact that their successors seem to have abandoned this modesty – and have adopted a grotesquely inappropriate scale – should be no reason for Westminster City Council to concur.

5) It is clear from the later documents quoted below that the British taxpayer ended up footing far more of a bill, even for the 'modest' Hyde Park memorial, than had been anticipated. Given this record, Westminster City Council should exercise due scepticism about any promises made by pro-Memorial lobbyists, especially regarding maintenance costs.

Yours faithfully,

**Peter Rushton**

Assistant Editor, *Heritage & Destiny*

## “The whole idea is preposterous.”<sup>1</sup>

London’s first ‘Holocaust Memorial’ was officially dedicated in June 1983, four years after it was first proposed. Within weeks of Margaret Thatcher taking office as Prime Minister in May 1979, Greville Janner – then President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (the main representative body of Anglo-Jewry) and Labour MP for Leicester West – spoke to Michael Heseltine, newly appointed Secretary of State for the Environment in Thatcher’s first Cabinet, “about the proposal that an appropriate and dignified memorial should be established in London to commemorate the Nazi Holocaust.” Janner wrote to Heseltine<sup>2</sup> following up his suggestion that the Board of Deputies should ask for a shortlist of suitable sites. He emphasised the “non-denominational” nature of the project, which would remember “some eleven million murdered people, of whom perhaps six million were Jews and five million non-Jews.”

The Board of Deputies would be working together with the Council of Christians & Jews, and its committee dealing with the project would be chaired by prominent Labour Party donor Sir Sigmund Sternberg; another committee to “decide on the artistic aspects” would be chaired by Baroness (Alma) Birk (1917-1996), associate editor of the women’s magazine *Nova* in the 1960s and a junior minister at Environment during the previous Labour government from 1974 to 1979. Baroness Birk was the wife of Ellis Birk (1915-2003), an influential London solicitor who had been a senior figure in the Mirror Group of newspapers during the 1950s and 1960s and chairman of the board of the *Jewish Chronicle* from 1987.

Janner pointed out that a similar Holocaust memorial effort was under way in the USA, where President Carter had appointed a high-powered committee, and stated: “We believe that we should have done this in the UK years ago.”

It was obviously the Board’s intention to ‘bounce’ the government into a rapid decision. Janner hoped to make “a preliminary announcement” on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War – 3<sup>rd</sup> September – and hinted that the Board was thinking of “a place not too far removed from the Cenotaph – perhaps a park or riverside

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<sup>1</sup> British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington’s handwritten note on the London ‘Holocaust’ memorial proposal, 20th January 1981, FCO 33/4845. Please note that all documents quoted (unless indicated otherwise) were consulted by the author at The National Archives, where they are available for public inspection. The only previous academic treatment of this topic – a chapter in Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) – is muddled and error-strewn.

<sup>2</sup> WORK 17/795, Greville Janner to Michael Heseltine, 16th July 1979. It’s likely that Janner and Heseltine had known each other slightly since student days, since Janner was President of the Cambridge Union in 1952, at a time when the young Heseltine was just starting his carefully planned ascent of the ladder in the Oxford Union.

site – but clearly it must be one which is visible from afar, so as to make it as difficult as possible for those who might wish to destroy the memories of the Holocaust or to recreate its realities.”

Until a site had been agreed, the Board wanted “absolutely no publicity for the project”.

The proposal was circulated to senior civil servants, including directing architect John Kaye, who sent a detailed reply ten days after Janner’s letter. After informal discussions with Prof. Freddie Fielden, secretary of the Royal Fine Arts Commission, Kaye wrote suggesting four possible sites.<sup>3</sup>

Site A was on the site of a single-storey block (planned for demolition) behind Richmond Terrace. This location, very near the Cenotaph, on the side of a terrace running off Whitehall opposite Downing St and adjacent to the Ministry of Defence, was “a prestigious location which is very public and well patrolled”.

Site B would replace the Burghers of Calais Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. There had already been discussions about removing the Rodin statue because the bronze was being damaged by public handling. Kaye and others believed that “in view of its importance as a work of art, it might be best removed to a place of greater safety”, such as the planned Tate Gallery open-air Sculpture Court. The new Holocaust Memorial could then be placed on the vacated site in Victoria Tower Gardens, which Kaye noted “is prestigious with the backdrop of the Houses of Parliament, but rather more out of the hurly-burly than the Whitehall site ‘A’. In this location a monument to be seen from all sides, i.e. in the round would seem appropriate”.

Site C was also in Victoria Tower Gardens, but at its southern-most end beyond Lambeth Bridge. The disadvantage of this site would be that it was “possibly too secluded and liable to vandalism. It is also somewhat restricted as the Gardens are very narrow at this point.”

Site D was at the junction of Victoria St and Tothill St near Westminster Abbey, where new development (which today includes a branch of Barclays Bank) left “a modest triangular site behind the pavement line, ...on the axis of Westminster Abbey and in line with the columnar memorial in the Abbey Yard.” [Kaye is referring to a memorial to former pupils of Westminster School who died during the Crimean War (1854-56) and the Indian Mutiny (1857-58), including the Crimean War commander Lord Raglan.] Kaye suggested: “This again is a prestigious and public location which is well patrolled and should be free from vandalism. It is, however, rather restricted and I am uncertain as to the ownership of the site if it has not been dedicated to Westminster City Council.”

Kaye’s overall preference was for the Richmond Terrace site, as this was the only suitable spot close to the Cenotaph that he could think of. (The government was already

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<sup>3</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to Miss Preston, 26th July 1979

committed to erecting a statue of Field Marshal Montgomery on a then-vacant patch outside the MoD.) He was “not in favour of a site within the Royal Parks and in any case there has in the past been some criticism in respect of the amount of statuary already there.”

At the start of August the Secretary to the Board of Deputies telephoned the Department, passing on Janner’s own suggested site<sup>4</sup> which was on a patch of grass near the Jewel Tower – the remaining fragment of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Palace of Westminster, opposite Victoria Tower. (This is on the opposite side of Abingdon St from Victoria Tower Gardens, and slightly closer to the Houses of Parliament.)

Kaye was not keen on this suggestion:<sup>5</sup> “While there is space at the back in the zone between the ramp down to the Abingdon Street car park and the Jewel Tower moat, I am not sure that the juxtaposition would be very happy as the area is relatively open and uncluttered. There is the further consideration that whilst a suitably designed memorial might conceivably be placed in this location, the site is one of the very few remaining within the precincts which might provide a location for a Parliamentary or State memorial in the future.”

At the start of September Kaye consulted a “Mr Piper”<sup>6</sup> – whose identity is not made clear in the documents, though evidently a respected expert on architectural heritage questions. This was very likely the official war artist John Piper (1903-1992), most famous for his painting of the bomb-damaged Coventry Cathedral. Piper was “concerned to know what form the Memorial might take and voiced to me his private fears that the Memorial might take an ostentatious form. He was prepared to go along with the idea of the Parliament Street site providing the Memorial was of a simple inscription on a screen wall, near the Cenotaph and to the south of Richmond Terrace as proposed. However, he was afraid that anything so simple would not be acceptable to the sponsoring committee”.

Piper was “fiercely against” Janner’s most recent idea of a site next to the Jewel Tower, and “not much enamoured” of the Victoria Tower Gardens suggestion, favouring “a location right away from the Westminster area, which he feels is already over-populated by statues and memorials”. Kaye was sure that Piper’s own idea of a site such as Kenwood, a former stately home on the edge of Hampstead Heath owned by the GLC, would not be acceptable to the Board of Deputies, but they then discussed a riverside site in front of Lambeth Palace, on the south bank of the Thames “in a reasonably prominent position facing across towards Victoria Tower Gardens and the Palace of Westminster”. This was

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<sup>4</sup> WORK 17/795, DoE memo to A.J. Kaye, 3rd August 1979

<sup>5</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to Miss Preston, 7th August 1979

<sup>6</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to Miss Preston, 6th September 1979

the germ of an idea later floated by Heseltine.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1979 Heseltine suggested two alternatives to Janner<sup>7</sup> – the Richmond Terrace site (which being close to the Cenotaph would, he emphasised, “of course call for very simple, restrained treatment”) and the Lambeth Palace river front alternative. In this letter Heseltine explicitly rejected the Jewel House option near Victoria Tower Gardens, telling Janner that “while a suitably designed memorial might conceivably be placed in this location, it is one of the few remaining sites close to the Palace of Westminster which might provide a location for a Parliamentary or State memorial in the future.”

Janner was delighted with the Richmond Terrace site,<sup>8</sup> writing to Heseltine that this was “not only acceptable but the finest which could have been provided”. The Board was to “take immediate steps to set about commissioning the design of an appropriately simple and restrained memorial ...appropriate both to the dignified and hallowed memory of the eleven million murdered people, and to the site itself.”

Alongside the stone memorial, the Board was also making plans for educational projects, in conjunction with (among others) the Oxford Centre for Post Biblical Hebrew Studies. Both the monument and these educational projects would be under the auspices of a new inter-denominational committee, co-sponsored by the Board of Deputies and the Council of Christians and Jews, in association with the Yad Vashem (UK) Committee.

The artistic side of the monument project would be handled by a committee chaired by Baroness Birk, while others involved would include Lord Pitt (a former GP of West Indian origin and Labour chairman of the GLC, who was a well-known anti-racist activist), Merlyn Rees (Home Secretary in the outgoing Labour government), Sir Monty Finniston (a retired Scottish industrialist who had been chairman of British Steel from 1973 to 1976), Sir Sigmund Sternberg (property speculator and Labour donor who founded several interfaith organisations), and the Archdeacon of Oxford, Carlyle Witton-Davies, who had been Canon Residentiary at St George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem, from 1944 to 1949 during the last years of the British Mandate in Palestine and the first year of the State of Israel.

Janner announced the project at the next Board meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October, and it was reported in the press the following day<sup>9</sup>. It was announced as being co-sponsored by the Council of Christians and Jews, whose chairman the Rev. Douglas Webster, Canon of St Paul’s, said: “So long as racial hatred and religious intolerance continue, we need massive

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<sup>7</sup> WORK 17/795, Michael Heseltine to Greville Janner, 20th September 1979

<sup>8</sup> WORK 17/795, Greville Janner to Michael Heseltine, 11th October 1979

<sup>9</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 22nd October 1979

reminders of what they do, and constant stimulus to explore the paths of peace, understanding and reconciliation.” Janner confirmed that the project “will not involve any public funds”.

*The Guardian* reported the project under the headline<sup>10</sup> “Cenotaph for Jewish war dead”, saying:

“The Board of Deputies of British Jews is to erect its own cenotaph in Whitehall as a memorial to victims of the Nazi oppression.

“The memorial ...will stand on the site of a building due for demolition near the existing Cenotaph.

“It will be the Jewish community’s first public memorial in Britain to their war dead, and has been given impetus by the screening of the American television serial, *Holocaust*.”

Problems began immediately, initially between different sections of Heseltine’s own Department. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October R.G.S. Johnston of the Directorate of Civil Accommodation raised objections<sup>11</sup> with Maurice Mendoza of the Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings. Johnston had only three days earlier obtained a copy of Janner’s 11<sup>th</sup> October letter to Heseltine, and had immediately telephoned Mendoza. He complained that Heseltine’s private office had not sent a copy to DCA though the Richmond Terrace site was owned by the Property Services Agency and was planned for development. So far only the architectural side seemed to have been consulted – not those within the civil service who were actually responsible for the site in question.

Johnston was distinctly lukewarm about the entire proposal:

“A modest memorial could be achieved on the site if this really is the best location for it. I would however add two riders – first, it is unlikely that any memorial could be set up before the mid-1980s (we would not want any fixture while demolition and construction were going on); secondly, we need to consider any wider implications. The Foreign Office may well have views on a memorial on the wall of a building we expect them eventually to occupy. Other departments (e.g. the Home Office) might also be able to claim an interest on general policy grounds.”

After a few weeks consultation within his side of the DoE, Mendoza sent a somewhat combative reply<sup>12</sup>, admitting it was “a pity” that Johnston had not been copied in on the earlier consultations but coolly pointing out that the architects in Johnston’s directorate had been consulted by Mendoza’s architects from DAMHB and he had not expected them to “have kept this matter to themselves”.

Mendoza emphasised that although there would be detailed consultations as the

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<sup>10</sup> *The Guardian*, 22nd October 1979, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> WORK 17/795, R.G.S. Johnston to Maurice Mendoza, 22nd October 1979

<sup>12</sup> WORK 17/795, Maurice Mendoza to R.G.S. Johnston, 19th November 1979

project proceeded: “There is no doubt that this site really is the best one for the memorial. ...In the circumstances I think there is little to worry about. ...I am sure that with a little good will we can achieve something which will give pleasure to some and offence to no one and also overcome whatever problems there may be over time scale.”

In common with Heseltine, Kaye and several others involved at this stage, Mendoza was keen to stress Heseltine’s suggestion to Janner that “the close proximity of the Cenotaph would, of course, call for very simple, restrained treatment”.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1980 a meeting was held<sup>13</sup> to discuss the project between Baroness Birk, representing the Memorial Committee; William Whitfield, the architect in charge of the Whitehall redevelopment; and three civil servants – a Mr Ratcliffe, project manager from the DCA, and Kaye and Clubley from DAMHB.

Echoing Johnston’s views expressed two months earlier, Ratcliffe warned that because of the extensive demolition and construction work on the Richmond Terrace site “it would therefore be at least 1984 before any form of Memorial could be considered in this location”. By contrast Lady Birk conveyed her Committee’s impression that they were hoping for “something realised within about a year”.

At Whitfield’s instigation, the meeting settled on an alternative site in the same area, namely “the strip of green sward on the north side of the Terrace”. This might involve “a very simply landscaped area in grass, with possibly the addition of one or two trees; the Memorial to take the form of a very few pieces of stone which ideally should have some significance. It was suggested that Israel might provide one of these.”

While there would continue to be scaffolding and polythene shrouding around the area for some time, it was thought that something on these lines might indeed be possible within about a year, and it was agreed to put this revised proposal to the Memorial Committee.

Clubley wrote to Heseltine’s private secretary<sup>14</sup> with copies to other interested officials on 9<sup>th</sup> January, pointing out the slight change of site which would require Heseltine’s approval. The memorial would now be “not on the West (Whitehall) side of Richmond Terrace but to the North, making use of the long narrow grass plot which will be restored fronting Richmond Terrace itself”.

The DCA were still not happy. R.E.K. Holmes raised further objections with Clubley on 21<sup>st</sup> January<sup>15</sup>, concerned that Whitfield (as architect for the overall project) had raised

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<sup>13</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye, Note for the Record, 3rd January 1980

<sup>14</sup> WORK 17/795, R.G. Clubley to Private Secretary, 9th January 1980

<sup>15</sup> WORK 17/795, R.E.K. Holmes to R.G. Clubley, 21st January 1980

the alternative Richmond Terrace site before consulting DCA and other interested Whitehall parties. In particular Holmes was worried that the new proposal might not be “acceptable to FCO (likely occupants of Richmond Terrace) and MOD (opposite)? Foreign policy attitudes and British involvement in Palestine are surely not totally irrelevant?”

Among several suggestions, Holmes hinted that it might be “easier to resolve some of the problems if the project is presented as an inter-denominational one”. Janner had touched on this in his 11<sup>th</sup> October letter to Heseltine, but Holmes suggested “it would need much greater emphasis”.

Replying to one of Holmes’ concerns<sup>16</sup>, Clublely emphasised: “the Board of Deputies are quite prepared to pay for any commission which may come to Mr Whitfield following this proposal. There is no question of DCA or DAMHB having to find the money.”

Clublely apologised for any misapprehension that Ratcliffe had authority to represent DCA at the meeting, but struck a warning note:

“I may be wrong but I sense a general antipathy in DCA towards the proposed Memorial. My understanding is that the Secretary of State is quite keen himself and in the circumstances I would have thought that a helpful attitude would have been appropriate from the Department.”

Holmes replied<sup>17</sup> that “there is no antipathy in DCA towards a memorial but there is concern about the site for it. I certainly do not consider that desirable consultations on this were fully undertaken.” With some prescience (and no doubt reflecting informal discussions with other departments) Holmes hinted that he expected the project would run into objections from the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and perhaps Home Office, and concluded:

“I strongly urge that this issue now be discussed further at the meeting of the Whitehall Coordination Group.”

It was against this background that Heseltine (belatedly) consulted his Cabinet colleagues during the spring of 1980.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1980 Heseltine wrote to Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington<sup>18</sup> drawing his attention to Board of Deputies’ proposals, as Heseltine put it:

“to erect a memorial to those of all faiths who died in the Nazi Holocaust, a project

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<sup>16</sup> WORK 17/795, R.G. Clublely to R.E.K. Holmes, 30th January 1980

<sup>17</sup> WORK 17/795, R.E.K. Holmes to R.G. Clublely, 21st February 1980

<sup>18</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Heseltine to Lord Carrington, 24th April 1980

that has the support of the Council of Christians and Jews.”

Heseltine acknowledged that after his initial talk with Janner, MoD civil servants had met with Board of Deputies representatives for further discussions and had ascertained that “the site favoured by the Board is in front of the north face of Richmond Terrace. Their representatives are conscious that any memorial there must be restrained in design to avoid any visual clash with the Cenotaph and have in mind a landscaped area on grass, with possibly one or two trees, on which a memorial in the form of a few pieces of stone would stand. No firm decisions have been taken on the design, which would eventually have to be approved by the Royal Fine Arts Commission and the local authority.”

This became a matter for the Foreign Office as well as MoD because Richmond Terrace was under redevelopment and new offices there were set to be occupied by Foreign Office officials. The proposed memorial would thus be in front of what was to be a Foreign Office building. (In fact eventually these new offices were occupied not by the FCO but by the Department of Health & Social Security from their completion in 1986 until 2018 when Parliament took over the building.)

The proposed site would have been diagonally opposite the Cenotaph and directly across Whitehall from the entrance to Downing Street. Richmond Terrace runs off Whitehall, with the Ministry of Defence on one side and the Richmond House offices (then under construction) on the other.

In addition to the formality of consulting Carrington on the proposed site, Heseltine added:

“I should also of course be grateful for your comments on any wider political or diplomatic implications that the proposal might have.”

Carrington replied on 9<sup>th</sup> May,<sup>19</sup> playing down his departmental interest in the site but adding:

“...on more general grounds, I think that in any case it would be inappropriate to allow the erection of a memorial of this sort on that particular site. It is surely an area which, facing the Ministry of Defence, near the Cenotaph and across the road from

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<sup>19</sup> PREM 19/841, Lord Carrington to Michael Heseltine, 9th May 1980. Early in 2019 a highly partisan series of tweets by Dr James Vaughan, Lecturer in International History at Aberystwyth University, posted six months after Lord Carrington’s death, attacked Carrington personally for his opposition to the Memorial. It seems that Dr Vaughan had only read one of the relevant documents, so was unaware that Carrington’s position reflected a consensus right across the highest echelon of the Foreign Office – *see below*.

Downing Street itself, should be reserved for British national monuments. I hope therefore that the Board of Deputies can be persuaded to think in terms of a site elsewhere.”

On the same day Heseltine had sent a similar letter to Francis Pym, then Defence Secretary, as the MoD was the other department adjacent to the proposed site. A few weeks later Heseltine and Pym discussed the proposals privately, and Pym wrote to Heseltine on 24<sup>th</sup> June. It became clear that Pym was strongly opposed to the Richmond Terrace site:<sup>20</sup>

“While, however, I recognise your commitment to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and that it could be difficult to go back upon your support for the memorial, I think that I must repeat that I see serious objections to the selection of the north face of Richmond Terrace as a site.

“I would not wish to place too much weight on the possibility that the memorial might become a focus for National Front or anti-Nazi demonstrations, although it cannot be ruled out. More important is that it would be rather a strange newcomer to a part of London where the existing memorials – whether one thinks of the Cenotaph itself or of the military leaders commemorated in Whitehall or around the Ministry of Defence Main Building – relate very much to the British national tradition and to our own victories and sorrows.

“Indeed I am afraid that I am still not entirely clear what is the object of the proposed memorial. I had understood initially that it was to commemorate the victims of the Nazi holocaust; but in the sketch which you showed me the only three words legible along the front of the monument are Dresden, Warsaw and Hiroshima. It is a legitimate subject for debate whether the monument should refer by implication to the victims of Allied bombing, but it is one which certainly needs to be discussed. And, more immediately, I am concerned that the evocative name of Hiroshima on a memorial facing my Ministry would gratuitously provide ammunition for the anti-nuclear lobby who are showing signs of renewed activity in the context of our decision on GLCM basing and may be expected to be very much more active if we announce a decision on a strategic nuclear successor system.”

(Pym’s reference here is to Ground Launched Cruise Missiles. In June 1980 the British Government had announced that Cruise missiles were to be stationed at Greenham Common, an RAF base in Berkshire operated jointly with the Americans. A month later – and about three weeks after this letter to Heseltine – Pym announced the decision to purchase Trident missiles as Britain’s new submarine-based strategic nuclear deterrent.)

Pym concluded that a memorial to the recently murdered Lord Mountbatten might

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<sup>20</sup> PREM 19/841, Francis Pym to Michael Heseltine, 24th June 1980

be more appropriate for the Richmond Terrace site, especially given Mountbatten's own association with this location when he was Chief of Combined Operations from 1941 to 1943.

He suggested a further meeting with Heseltine, and copied his letter to Prime Minister Thatcher, Home Secretary William Whitelaw, and Foreign Secretary Carrington.

Whitelaw – who was then the most senior figure in the British government next to Thatcher herself – replied to Pym agreeing with his reservations<sup>21</sup> (and again copying this reply to Thatcher, Carrington and Heseltine):

“I must say that, like you, I have strong reservations about the erection in Whitehall of such a memorial. I am responsible for the arrangements at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday and I share your disquiet about the possibility of such a memorial becoming a focus for disorders, perhaps even during the Cenotaph service. I am also puzzled about the purpose of the memorial. If it is indeed to commemorate victims of Nazism it seems quite inappropriate to mention Dresden and Hiroshima.”

It is worth pointing out that the three senior ministers with reservations or objections had all seen active service during the Second World War, and all three had been awarded the Military Cross, granted for “an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land.” Carrington spent a decade with the Grenadier Guards from 1939 to 1949, eventually with the rank of acting major, and was awarded the MC in March 1945 for his bravery while commanding a tank crossing the Rhine, capturing and holding a bridge at Nijmegen. Pym served in the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers in North Africa and Italy, also to the rank of major, and was awarded the MC after being twice mentioned in despatches. Whitelaw was with the Scots Guards, and later the 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade, commanding tanks during the Battle of Normandy in the summer of 1944. His MC was awarded after the 26-year-old Whitelaw took over from his battalion's second-in-command who had been killed in front of him.

After receiving these initial negative reactions from the MoD and Foreign Office, DoE civil servant John Hobson circulated a minute to Heseltine's office<sup>22</sup> and other senior officials, pointing out that since the Board of Deputies were so delighted with Richmond Terrace, “it would not be a simple matter to persuade them to accept another site”, but attaching a list of possibilities “some very tentative” which Heseltine might wish to consider mentioning.

These included one option that had already been offered to Janner, namely the

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<sup>21</sup> PREM 19/841, William Whitelaw to Francis Pym, 1st July 1980

<sup>22</sup> WORK 17/795, John Hobson to Assistant Private Secretary, 19th May 1980

Lambeth Palace riverside site on the south bank of the Thames, facing towards the Palace of Westminster; also three sites considered by civil servants at an earlier stage though not yet mentioned to Janner. These were:

1) “On the site of the Burghers of Calais Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. Moving the Rodin sculpture could be controversial, though it is at present suffering some erosion through being unprotected.”

2) “In Victoria Tower Gardens but south of Lambeth Bridge. Rather restricted.”

3) “At the junction of Victoria Street and Tothill Street. (I believe the Iranian Government are involved in the ownership of this site, which militates strongly against it).”

Three other possibilities were tentatively offered:

1) “On the Western corner of Green Park, adjacent to Duke of Wellington Place.”

2) “Birdcage Walk, in St James’s Park, opposite the entrance to Queen Anne’s Gate.”

3) “Park Lane, on the traffic island at the south end bounded by Achilles Way and Curzon Gate, opposite the London Hilton.”

Another possible alternative was to look at a site away from central London, such as Kenwood.

Later in July, Heseltine’s private secretary Jeff Jacobs wrote to Downing Street on his minister’s behalf<sup>23</sup>, hoping that Thatcher would be able to resolve the disagreement. Jacobs gave what turned to be a misleading impression that Carrington was backing down from his main objection:

“Lord Carrington is now prepared to agree to the project on the site proposed, provided that it does indeed commemorate the victims of the Nazi Holocaust and that it does not bear references to Dresden, Warsaw and Hiroshima. ...But Mr Pym’s objections are more sustained in that he is both doubtful about the appropriateness of having the memorial at all and is strongly opposed to its location in front of Richmond Terrace for reasons which are essentially the concern of the Ministry of Defence.

“Notwithstanding these objections, my Secretary of State has on record a very strong public commitment to this site for the Holocaust memorial; and the Jewish community would undoubtedly be extremely offended if we were to go back on it now. Moreover, while my Secretary of State well understands the concern expressed by Ministerial colleagues about the memorial, the Prime Minister will no doubt wish to be aware that there has in fact been no adverse public reaction at all to the proposal.”

Pattison sent a note to Thatcher<sup>24</sup> reminding her that they had spoken previously

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<sup>23</sup> PREM 19/841, Jeff Jacobs to Mike Pattison (Private Secretary to the Prime Minister), 24th July 1980

<sup>24</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Prime Minister, 25th July 1980

about the Holocaust memorial proposal when they had been looking at possible sites for a Mountbatten memorial:

“I think you were sympathetic to Mr Pym’s objections to siting this right outside the Ministry of Defence.”

Thatcher agreed to Pattison’s suggestion that she should have a brief meeting with the three ministers concerned – Pym, Whitelaw and Heseltine – after the following Thursday’s Cabinet (30<sup>th</sup> July 1980).

Immediately before this meeting, Pattison prepared a briefing note for Thatcher<sup>25</sup>. This stressed that Pym “finds the Richmond Terrace site wholly inappropriate, and indeed possibly offensive”, that Whitelaw also had doubts, and that Carrington was “a firm supporter of the line taken by Messrs Pym and Whitelaw”. (Carrington would not be at the meeting, since he was abroad on Foreign Office business.)

Since Thatcher herself also had “reservations about the Richmond Terrace site”, Pattison suggested she would “want to use the meeting to explore with Mr Heseltine how he, perhaps with assistance from other Ministers, can get himself out of this particular blind alley.”

At this post-Cabinet meeting<sup>26</sup>, Heseltine sought to mollify his colleagues by insisting that he would have control over the wording on the memorial and could ensure that references to Dresden and Hiroshima would be removed. He repeated that “he had publicly committed himself to the Richmond Terrace site for the Memorial. He recognised that this had left colleagues in a difficult position, but he felt that Jewish groups in the country would be seriously offended if he was now to withdraw this site, unless there were overriding reasons which would make sense to British Jews.”

Pym repeated his objections and added:

“Further, the site might tend to cause unfavourable reactions from potential Arab customers for British defence equipment, and it could well prove to be a rallying point for anti-nuclear demonstrations, at a time when the Government appeared to be making progress in strengthening public understanding of the need for a British deterrent. Against this background, he felt that the possible reaction from Jewish interests if the site were to be changed might be the lesser of the two evils.”

Whether or not prompted by advisers, Mrs Thatcher made an extremely shrewd suggestion – that Heseltine should point out to the Board of Deputies that there were some security restrictions applicable to the area adjacent to the MoD which might

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<sup>25</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Prime Minister, 30th July 1980.

<sup>26</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Jeff Jacobs, 1st August 1980

become even more restricted over time. Therefore free access to the memorial could not be guaranteed and “there might also be some police objections to the traffic generated by a memorial on this site.”

Heseltine agreed to reopen discussion of alternatives with the Board of Deputies.

On 18<sup>th</sup> August Carrington’s assistant private secretary Paul Lever (writing to Pattison at Downing St) reiterated the Foreign Secretary’s continuing objections<sup>27</sup> to the Richmond Terrace site. Further to the arguments Carrington had put to Heseltine on 9<sup>th</sup> May, Lever added:

“He believes, like the Defence Secretary, that any monuments in the area concerned should be of a British national character.

“...Lord Carrington has also considered the possible foreign reactions. Although he would not wish to put too much weight on these, he thinks that our friends in the Federal Republic of Germany might wonder why, after this lapse of time, the British Government should decide to allow old wounds to be kept open in perpetuity in the heart of Whitehall; and that some Arabs might see the monument as endorsing Mr Begin’s point that the fate of the European Jews in the ‘30s and ‘40s should influence British policy on the Arab/Israel question in the ‘80s.

“The Foreign Secretary greatly hopes that the Environment Secretary will be successful in persuading the Board of Deputies of British Jews to choose an alternative site, preferably not on Crown land. He wonders also whether an even more enlightened solution would not be that the monument should take the form of a park, playing field or other useful amenity.”

During September some of Heseltine’s DoE civil servants discussed their options. John Hobson wrote<sup>28</sup> to a “Mr Walters”, and to Kaye and Mendoza on 23<sup>rd</sup> September with his draft of a proposed submission to Heseltine. By this point they had at least ruled out one of the tentative options – the traffic island at the south end of Park Lane where (even in 1980) the civil servants concluded the traffic was too busy and there would be insufficient access. The draft began by acknowledging that the DoE team had “unfortunately... not found it easy to come up with many workable possibilities.”

Hobson continued to think that the long-considered Lambeth Palace site was “a good possibility and a prestigious site, in an area which should not suffer too much from vandalism.” Similarly he “quite” liked “the idea of Green Park”, where there were two possible sites which would however require consultation with the Palace. Meanwhile in Hyde Park there was a possible site in the south-east corner of the Park, “in the triangle

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<sup>27</sup> PREM 19/841, Paul Lever to Michael Pattison, 18th August 1980

<sup>28</sup> WORK 17/795, John Hobson to Walters, Mendoza and Kaye, 23rd September 1980

formed by Rotten Row and South Carriage Drive where the two join”, and also a site near the Albert Memorial where there had already been some discussion (now apparently dormant) of a statue of the Churchills. There was also now a possibility of securing space in Eaton Square, probably on land owned by the Duke of Westminster’s Grosvenor Estate, which would allow “enough space for a reasonably expansive memorial”.

Hobson’s draft also raised the possibility of the Board of Deputies combining their Holocaust memorial idea with the GLC’s proposal for a new park at Mile End in the East End of London, “on land which suffered from bombing during the Second World War”. He recognised that it would be sensible to discuss the alternatives with Janner before approaching any local authority such as the GLC, given the risk of leakage.

Kaye replied with an additional possibility<sup>29</sup>: “a site in front of the proposed new Government Conference Centre”. (This is what became the Queen Elizabeth II Centre, which began construction in 1981 and was opened in 1986.) There would be several interested parties to consult, including the Foreign Office and Westminster City Council, but it seemed to Kaye that “if one is to come away from Whitehall, this site by Broad Sanctuary is probably as prestigious as one might find.” Some weeks later Kaye’s fellow government architect Peter Morte passed on some further details<sup>30</sup> about this site, but pointed out his “recollection from press comment that the new building at the bottom of Victoria Street may well be used for the Iranian Embassy” – in which case there would be obvious potential problems. (The Iranian Embassy in South Kensington had been severely damaged during the notorious terrorist attack and subsequent siege five months earlier, so a temporary embassy site would be needed while the building was restored – a process that was not completed until 1993.)

Hobson incorporated Kaye’s suggestion into his eventual memo to Heseltine’s private office<sup>31</sup>. He argued against Hyde Park, on the grounds that it already had “more than its fair share of statues and memorials”, and was more in favour of Green Park, tending to favour a “garden or remembrance” rather than a stone memorial. While passing on the Mile End idea, Hobson recorded the view of his departmental colleague Michael Mendoza: “who passed his boyhood in Stepney, [and] thinks that a site in the old East End would not be considered suitable by the Jewish community; although some Jews have nostalgic emotions about Whitechapel and Mile End most were glad to escape from there at the first opportunity.” Though recognising that the Board of Deputies would be

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<sup>29</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to John Hobson, 25th September 1980

<sup>30</sup> WORK 17/795, Peter Morte to John Kaye, 1st October 1980

<sup>31</sup> WORK 17/795, John Hobson to Private Secretary, 30th September 1980

unlikely to accept any non-London site, Hobson also floated the idea of a memorial in a city that had suffered bomb damage during the War, such as Coventry or Plymouth.

Armed with Thatcher's clever argument about security access and police objections to the Richmond Terrace site, Heseltine had further discussions with the Board of Deputies. On 24<sup>th</sup> November Greville Janner wrote<sup>32</sup> that he and his colleagues now "fully understand the impossibility of the proposed site – hence we are discussing the other possibilities. The suggestion of a Garden of Remembrance for the six million Jews killed in the holocaust met with immediate favour – provided that my recollection was correct that you said this might well be sited in one of the royal parks. I wonder whether you could let me know as soon as possible whether, in principle, such a site might be available in St James's Park? Like you, we would have in mind a small and modest area, perhaps with a plaque or small stone memorial, maybe with a flame of remembrance."

This was now moving (as Pattison put it to Thatcher on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1981) "in a sensible direction". Heseltine drafted a reply to Janner, rejecting the idea of St James's Park but proposing two alternative locations in Green Park or Hyde Park for a "garden of remembrance". Jeff Jacobs circulated this draft<sup>33</sup> to the Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence, and Downing Street.

Thatcher herself added handwritten corrections to the draft, which she considered "a little insensitive in parts". In particular she struck out a sentence where Heseltine, after rejecting St James's Park as "a relatively small area, which ought historically to contain relatively few flower areas", had added: "It is also intimately connected with Buckingham Palace." Thatcher wrote: "I think I should leave out that sentence. It could be construed that the Palace is not interested in such a garden. Such a construction would be most unfortunate."

In fact Heseltine's arguments had reflected a draft prepared by John Hobson<sup>34</sup>, who had written: "I do not favour Mr Janner's suggestion of a site in St James's Park. This is too small and too formal to contain further flowers; and I would regard it as too much an integral part of Buckingham Palace and its surrounds to contain what could well be a controversial element."

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<sup>32</sup> PREM 19/841, Greville Janner to Michael Heseltine, 24th November 1981

<sup>33</sup> PREM 19/841, Jeff Jacobs to Stephen Boys Smith, 13th January 1981

<sup>34</sup> WORK 17/795, John Hobson to Michael Mendoza and Private Secretary, 4th December 1980

It was at this stage (in January 1981) that Victoria Tower Gardens came into the inter-departmental discussions, at first indirectly. Heseltine's draft letter to Janner suggested<sup>35</sup>:

"Although you have mentioned Royal Parks sites specifically, there is one other site which you might consider, namely on the river frontage of Lambeth Palace, facing towards Victoria Gardens and the Palace of Westminster. This is not a site within my direct gift, and I would have to talk to the GLC if you were interested in it. But I thought I would float along with the other two."

The Prime Minister also added: "I thought the design of the previously proposed memorial was rather lovely. Is it possible for it to be placed in the alternative river front site or in Victoria Gardens?" Mike Pattison passed on this idea to the various departments concerned.<sup>36</sup>

Although some compromise now seemed in the offing, Lord Carrington now stepped in to reiterate his own objections, even after seeing Janner's letter to Heseltine, Heseltine's draft reply, and Thatcher's proposed amendments. His assistant private secretary Francis Richards wrote on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1981<sup>37</sup>, referring back to the earlier Foreign Office reservations expressed on 9<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> August 1980:

"The removal of the memorial from Richmond Terrace to one of the London parks, and its transformation from a monument into a Garden of Remembrance, do not remove his doubts. It is by no means self-evident that Crown land in London should be used for a memorial to events which did not take place on British territory or involve a large part of the British population. In addition, a long time has passed since the events which the proposed Garden would seek to commemorate.

"Furthermore, as Paul Lever pointed out in his letter of 18<sup>th</sup> August 1980, the main target of the criticism implied in the memorial would be Germany and the Federal Republic might wonder why HMG needed to be party to the construction of a memorial that would generally be taken as condemning a country which is now one of our closest allies and would sharpen memories of tragic events which many Germans have since the war themselves been foremost in condemning.

"The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would therefore greatly prefer it if the Jewish community could be encouraged to buy or lease their own site in London to erect a memorial there or to create a park or playing field (which he would consider far more appropriate) according to their own wishes. Lord Carrington is well aware of the various conflicting elements involved in deciding on this proposal; he would be happy to have a word with the Prime Minister and Mr Heseltine if that were a way of resolving the issue without further correspondence."

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Jeff Jacobs, 20th January 1981

<sup>37</sup> PREM 19/841, Francis Richards to Jeff Jacobs, 26th January 1981

This letter from Francis Richards (who like his father was a high-level diplomat holding several important positions in the British intelligence community<sup>38</sup>) was based not on some personal prejudice of Carrington's but on discussion at senior levels within the Foreign Office. A confidential minute was circulated by Julian Bullard<sup>39</sup>, the Deputy Under-Secretary for European Affairs and Political Director at the Foreign Office. (He was knighted the following year and served as British Ambassador to West Germany from 1984 to 1988.)

Bullard's minute was circulated to the West European Department and to senior colleagues including Sir John Graham (Deputy Under-Secretary for the Middle East); Bullard's number two Ewen Fergusson (Assistant Under-Secretary for Europe); and John Moberly<sup>40</sup> (Assistant Under-Secretary for the Middle East, and former Director of the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies, Mecas, at Shemlan).

Bullard noted:

"The removal of the memorial from Richmond Terrace to Green or Hyde Park, and its transformation from a monument into a Garden of Remembrance, do not entirely remove my doubts. I continue to see no particular reason why Crown land in London should be used for a memorial to events which did not take place on British territory or involve a large part of the British population. The lapse of time (now 35 years) prompts the question why, if a memorial in Britain was desirable, it was not organised at the time, when the memory was greener.

"I continue to suspect that at least some of the sponsors of the project are hoping that, if realised, it would strengthen the idea that Britain has some sort of special responsibility towards Israel on account of the events of 1933 to 1945, and that these events are or should be still a factor in British policy in the Middle East. A perhaps even more unworthy thought is that some of the sponsors may be deliberately throwing down a

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<sup>38</sup> At the start of 1981 Francis Richards had succeeded Paul Lever as Carrington's assistant private secretary. He was the son of Sir Brooks Richards, a senior SOE veteran who was Secretary to the JIC from 1965 to 1969 and held several diplomatic appointments before serving as security and intelligence co-ordinator at the Cabinet Office from 1978 to 1980. Like his father, (Sir) Francis Richards eventually became KCMG. After being invalided out of the Army in the late 1960s he spent a year working with IRD c.1970, before joining the Foreign Office where his first posting was to Moscow in 1971. He was director of GCHQ from 1998 to 2003; Governor of Gibraltar from 2003 to 2006; Chairman of the Bletchley Park Trust from 2006 to January 2012; and Chairman of the Imperial War Museum from January 2012 to 2016.

<sup>39</sup> FCO 33/4845, Julian Bullard to WED, 16th January 1981

<sup>40</sup> John Moberly should not be confused with his cousin Patrick Moberly, who was British Ambassador to Israel, 1981-84.

challenge to anti-semitic elements in this country: I recall the Israeli-instigated move by the Danish Foreign Minister to get the Foreign Ministers of the Nine to adopt a resolution on this subject shortly before Christmas.”

Bullard’s suggestion that the Holocaust Memorial project was connected to Israeli foreign policy objectives, and was part of a broader attempt to embarrass the British establishment over ‘Holocaust’-related matters, is supported by some contemporaneous records. For example we now know (thanks to a document in the Israeli State Archives quoted by Jewish historian Azriel Bermant) that a fortnight after Thatcher took office – and at almost exactly the same time as Greville Janner and Michael Heseltine were having their first discussions about a ‘Holocaust’ memorial – Israel’s Prime Minister tried to use the ‘Holocaust’ as a diplomatic weapon in a private meeting with Thatcher and Carrington.

Menachem Begin had been the leader of the terrorist Irgun, responsible for many murderous attacks on British servicemen during 1945-48. In his meeting at Downing Street with Thatcher and Carrington, he asserted Israel’s right to ignore international opinion because Jews could only rely on themselves to survive – quoting the failure of Britain and the US “to bomb the railway lines leading to the death camps” during the Second World War.

According to Lord Carrington’s memoirs, Begin had “turned to Margaret Thatcher: ‘You are responsible for the death of two million Jews at Auschwitz!’ Margaret looked somewhat astonished. I suppose she had been aged about thirteen at the time in question. ‘You are responsible! Because you didn’t bomb the railway line!’”<sup>41</sup>

Thatcher had replied: “I must tell you that if I had then been prime minister, I am not certain what decision would have been made. The supreme goal then was to mobilise the total war effort in order to destroy as quickly as possible Hitler’s war machine. I would not, I think, have agreed to any diversion from that supreme goal.”<sup>42</sup>

Begin’s government made numerous attacks on Lord Carrington and the British Foreign Office during 1980-81. Begin’s Foreign Minister (and fellow anti-British 1940s terrorist leader) Yitzhak Shamir, told an interviewer in July 1980: “Much to my regret, Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Minister, still lives in the dreams of the British Foreign Office of the days before the Second World War, which maintained that by deserting Zionism, the British could win the affection of the Arab countries.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Lord Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past* (London: Fontana edition, 1989), p. 346

<sup>42</sup> Azriel Bermant, *Margaret Thatcher and the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) p. 26

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 14th July 1980, p. 5

In June 1981 Prime Minister Begin hinted that Carrington's deputy Sir Ian Gilmour was an anti-semite: "He is not only an anti-Zionist, he has negative feelings which go much deeper – I don't want to use other words."<sup>44</sup>

By March 1982, according to a report from Israel's Ambassador in London, Shlomo Argov: "relations between Britain and Israel had reached their lowest point arguably since the days of Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin." Arguments over forty-year old history were highly relevant to this relationship – and contrary to popular opinion, Margaret Thatcher herself was not an uncritical friend of Israel. Sir Michael Palliser, Head of the Diplomatic Service, had told Ambassador Argov privately: "It is not Carrington who has never missed an opportunity to mention the two sergeants [i.e. Clifford Martin and Mervyn Paice, murdered by Begin's Irgun in an especially horrific fashion in July 1947]. It is the prime minister. Carrington, like me, saw other people being hanged in Europe, and we therefore have a better understanding of the terrible suffering of the Jewish people during those years."<sup>45</sup>

Bullard's minute concluded:

"Having said all this, I concede that the project in its revised form is open to much less objection, provided (a) there is no question of an eternal flame, which would surely be quite inappropriate when there is no flame at the Cenotaph, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier or War Memorials generally in this country; (b) the wording of the inscription on the tablet is approved by HMG.

"This is a tricky subject and the draft reply to Mr Heseltine's Office will need care."

Ewen Fergusson minuted that Peter Blaker, a Foreign Officer minister "who takes a keen interest in Soviet action against Jews" might see the draft reply to Heseltine's department once it was submitted.

Sir John Graham minuted<sup>46</sup> (in terms which found their way into Lord Carrington's eventual arguments at ministerial level):

"I fully share Mr Bullard's doubts. Why should not the Jewish Community buy a site and erect a memorial if they wish? Would we permit a monument to Deir Yassin in a Royal Park? And yet our responsibility for that massacre was as close (or as distant) as for the massacre of the Jews by Hitler." [Note that Sir John initially wrote "holocaust" then crossed it out and substituted "massacre of the Jews by Hitler".]

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<sup>44</sup> *The Times*, 26th June 1981, p. 1

<sup>45</sup> Ambassador Shlomo Argov to Yohanan Meroz, Deputy Director-General of Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10th March 1982; quoted in Azriel Bermant, *Margaret Thatcher and the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) pp. 81-82

<sup>46</sup> FCO 33/4845, handwritten minute by Sir John Graham, 16th January 1981

A copy of Pattison's letter from Downing St on 20<sup>th</sup> January, outlining Thatcher's views on redrafting of Heseltine's letter to Janner, was circulated around senior Foreign Office staff after it was sent first to assistant private secretary Francis Richards. The Foreign Secretary himself minuted: "The whole idea is preposterous."<sup>47</sup>

In the light of these strong views expressed by some of the most senior figures at the FCO, including Carrington himself, a proposed course of action was drawn up by Peter Vereker<sup>48</sup>, assistant head of the West European Department. He pointed out that:

"When the proposal was first put forward last May, FCO officials had strong reservations about it. But there was some doubt whether the project would come to fruition, and advice to ministers was therefore couched in relatively moderate terms. Nonetheless, Lord Carrington expressed his doubts in his minute of 9 May 1980 to Mr Heseltine, and Mr Lever recorded his further views on 18 August."

Foreign Office objections had hitherto been expressed in mild terms, only because they expected the Holocaust memorial project might never happen in any case, so there was no point making a fuss. Since the proposal still had not lost momentum, and the FCO still had reservations, Vereker incorporated some of Bullard's objections into a draft letter to be sent to Heseltine's office.

Fergusson replied: "Ministers are even better aware than officials of the cross-currents involved in this continuing exchange. Granted the Prime Minister's personal concern, it may require the Secretary of State to intervene personally, but a firm letter would be a first step on which to base a subsequent [illegible, possibly trek?]"

Vereker's draft did indeed produce the firm letter from Francis Richards to Jeff Jacobs quoted above, dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 1981.

Since one of the FCO's concerns was the proposed memorial's impact on relations with West Germany, Stuart Laing of the Western European Department wrote to Boyd McCleary<sup>49</sup>, Head of Chancery at the British Embassy in Bonn. He gave McCleary a precis of the story so far and included copies of the relevant correspondence.

Laing added: "I hope you will agree that the correspondence speaks for itself. We shall keep you informed of any further developments."

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<sup>47</sup> FCO 33/4845, Mike Pattison to Jeff Jacobs, 20th January 1981; handwritten note by Lord Carrington

<sup>48</sup> FCO 33/4845, Peter Vereker to Ewen Fergusson, 22nd January 1981; and Fergusson's reply, 23rd January 1981

<sup>49</sup> FCO 33/4845, Stuart Laing to Boyd McCleary, 28th January 1981

A further brief meeting was arranged<sup>50</sup> post-Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1981 to resolve this disagreement, attended by Heseltine, Carrington, Whitelaw, and John Nott (who had succeeded Pym as Defence Secretary the previous month). This was later rearranged for 30<sup>th</sup> April, then rearranged again for 14<sup>th</sup> May, then rearranged yet again for 25<sup>th</sup> June.

In the meantime Whitelaw's private secretary Stephen Boys Smith had conveyed the Home Secretary's view<sup>51</sup>, based partly on consultation with the Metropolitan Police. The Met and the Home Office had no principled objection to a memorial in a Royal Park, but recognised that:

“any such memorial could attract the hostility of extremist vandalism and, indeed, hostile demonstrations as well as peaceful gatherings.”

They therefore preferred the Hyde Park location to Green Park, as the latter was close to congested Hyde Park Corner and near to Buckingham Palace. The police were not keen on the riverside Lambeth Palace site for reasons of traffic and crowd control, “and they are also worried that a site in Victoria Gardens might create difficulties for them in view of their responsibilities under the Sessional Order to ensure free passage to the Houses of Parliament. In this light, the Home Secretary hopes that your Secretary of State would be prepared to consider giving a bit more of a steer towards Hyde Park, and away from Green Park, but recognises that he will want to offer the Board of Deputies some options.”

After seeing this Home Office letter, Sir John Graham contacted senior FCO colleagues<sup>52</sup> asking Carrington's private office “to remember the strong interest on the Middle Eastern side in this proposal”. Sir John said he “should be grateful if you could let me see the submission which went to the Secretary of State with a view to deciding whether we should return to the charge in some way. It may already be too late since I only saw Mr Boys Smith's letter this morning.”

Having been brought up to date by Stuart Laing, Sir John replied<sup>53</sup>: “Many thanks. I should like to be kept informed. If and when the proposal becomes public, our Arab posts will need guidance.”

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<sup>50</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Caroline Stephens, 28th January 1981

<sup>51</sup> PREM 19/841, Stephen Boys Smith to Jeff Jacobs, 5th February 1981

<sup>52</sup> FCO 33/4845, Sir John Graham to WED, 10th February 1981

<sup>53</sup> FCO 33/4845, Sir John Graham to Stuart Laing, 12th February 1981

In advance of a proposed ministerial meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1981 (which ended up being repeatedly postponed and was not in fact held until November), the Foreign Office prepared a brief for Carrington. It was circulated by David Gladstone<sup>54</sup>, head of the Western European Department, with the agreement of Middle East Department and Near East & North Africa Department (headed by David Miers and Oliver Miles respectively). Gladstone noted that these two departments “do not believe that it would be wise to make too much of the possible Arab reaction but think that Sir John Graham may wish to comment.”

Sir John agreed with MED and NENAD but added:

“The possible followers of the precedent include the Armenians (Turkish massacres), the PLO (Deir Yassin), the supporters of Allende and so on. Of course it is a free country and people may erect monuments, subject to planning permission, but they ought to do it on their own land and at their own expense.”

Pattison briefed Thatcher again on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1981<sup>55</sup>, using language that might have reflected some hostility between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office:

“You agreed some time ago to have another brief meeting about the Holocaust Memorial, because Lord Carrington is still trying to kill the whole project. This is really not a subject which justifies two meetings at Prime Ministerial level, but the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is unlikely to stop sniping on the subject until he has had a chance to put his views direct to you.”

After further postponements, Stuart Laing of the Western European Department minuted<sup>56</sup> on 24<sup>th</sup> April that the brief should be updated in three weeks time, adding:

“If by then no further meeting is planned WED may wish to recommend that the Private Secretary should write to Department of Environment restating our reservations and enquiring about progress (i.e. hoping there is none – we do not want to be bounced by a fait accompli).”

An updated brief by Gladstone on 13<sup>th</sup> May<sup>57</sup> was almost unchanged, save for adding that embarrassment to the Germans might be greater “in the light of the recent exchanges between Chancellor Schmidt and Mr Begin.”

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<sup>54</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Sir John Graham and Julian Bullard, 16th March 1981; and Sir John’s reply, 17th March 1981

<sup>55</sup> PREM 19/841, Michael Pattison to Prime Minister, 8th April 1981

<sup>56</sup> FCO 33/4845, Stuart Laing to Private Secretary, 7th April 1981; + minute by Laing, 24th April 1981

<sup>57</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Private Secretary, 13th May 1981

Gladstone is referring here to an outspoken attack by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. At an election campaign rally in Israel on 3rd May 1981, Begin had criticised French and German arms deals with Arab countries, saying: “But then he (Schmidt) does not care if Israel goes under. He saw this almost happen to our people in Europe not so long ago. He served in the armies that encircled the cities, until the work was finished by the *Einsatzgruppen*.”<sup>58</sup>

Begin’s outspoken attack was endorsed by the Hebrew newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*, which admitted that the speech “was not, it is true, phrased in diplomatic language, but it was entirely true... Schmidt, formerly an officer in Hitler’s army who later found himself in the Socialist Party, apparently brought with him from his previous milieu feelings about the Jewish people which have not completely disappeared.”

The morning after his controversial speech, Begin explicitly invoked the ‘Holocaust’ in repeating his attack on Chancellor Schmidt: “One third of the Jewish people, six million of them, were destroyed by his German brothers... Yet he does not mention an obligation to them. There was never such a scandal in history.”<sup>59</sup>

Yet another update by Gladstone on 24<sup>th</sup> June<sup>60</sup> further played up the Israeli angle:

“Mr Begin and other members of his government refer frequently to the Holocaust to justify their current security policies and to demonstrate, in the absence of convincing rational argument, why Europe is necessarily disqualified from any role in peace efforts and is not entitled to challenge Israel’s own view of her security needs. The Israeli Ambassador in London has taken a similar line in two recent speeches here, in which he has also suggested more or less explicitly that the motives for our policy are purely commercial. A memorial in London on government land might prove an irresistible stick with which to go on beating HMG from time to time.”

A summary for Carrington of “points to make”<sup>61</sup> at any eventual ministerial meeting on the topic included the question:

“Why a memorial to Holocaust after 35 years? Is real motive political? Concerned at use made of Holocaust by present Israeli government to justify unacceptable policies and pillory European peace efforts unjustifiably.”

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<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 5th May 1981, p. 1

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Private Secretary, 24th June 1981, ‘Proposed London Memorial to Nazi Victims: essential facts

<sup>61</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Private Secretary, 8th July 1981, ‘Brief for Secretary of State: Prime Minister’s Meeting on Proposed London Memorial to Nazi Victims’

The text of one of Ambassador Shlomo Argov's speeches (to the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers Association of Britain on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1981) entitled 'The Choice Before Europe', was submitted to Gladstone by Sir John Graham on 21<sup>st</sup> June<sup>62</sup> and marked 'Important and Urgent' with the request:

"Please include in the Secretary of State's brief for the meeting on the Holocaust Memorial project a reference to the Israeli Ambassador's recent speeches (this one and an earlier one at Leeds) as supporting the belief that Israel seeks to keep alive the memory of Jewish sufferings in Europe in order to reinforce their argument that Europe has and will continue to have a moral debt to the State of Israel (including the obligation to endorse its policies). NENAD will surely agree."

In this speech Argov had said:

"...Europe today is conceived by Israel as pursuing a biased policy that is insensitive to Israel's needs as it is to Israel's sensitivities. It is seen as pursuing its own fleeting economic interests at the expense of Israel's existential ones.

"...If many Israelis today are driven to believe that friendlessness is an essential element of the Jewish condition and that they can trust none but themselves then the responsibility for this unhappy state of affairs lies neither with Israel nor with its enemies but rather with many of Israel's European friends for having failed to lend their support and encouragement to a people's genuine and well-intentioned attempt to seek a way out of its enormous problems and predicaments, precisely when this support and encouragement was most needed and just as equally deserved."

Specifically referring to the 'Holocaust' legacy, Argov had said:

"...paradoxical as it may sound Israel is hardly oblivious of Europe. Rejecting as it does Europe's presumptions to determine for it the conditions and parameters for its future, Israel is a nation traumatized by its European past and therefore deeply sensitive to Europe."

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1981 Willie Rickett (who had been a Downing St private secretary normally responsible for parliamentary questions since earlier that year) wrote a memo for Thatcher summarising the story so far<sup>63</sup>:

"Prime Minister – You will remember that we have made about half a dozen attempts to set up a meeting about the Holocaust Memorial.

"The issue is as follows. In April of last year, Michael Heseltine held discussions with the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He virtually committed himself to offering a site in front of Richmond Terrace. Both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for

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<sup>62</sup> FCO 33/4845, Sir John Graham to David Gladstone, including Shlomo Argov, 'The Choice Before Europe'

<sup>63</sup> PREM 19/841, Willy Rickett to Prime Minister, 12th June 1981

defence objected. You held a meeting and killed the idea on grounds of security. Mr Heseltine was asked to look for alternative sites that he could put to the Board of Deputies, consulting the Home Office. This he did. The Home Secretary's letter of 3 February summarises the results. It essentially offers two sites in Hyde Park.

"At this point Lord Carrington intervened. He felt that Crown land in London should not be used for a memorial to events which did not take place on British territory or involve a large part of the British population. He also felt that a memorial on Crown land would be offensive to the Federal Republic of Germany. He suggested instead that the Jewish community should be encouraged to buy or lease their own site in London and either to erect a memorial there or preferably to create a park or playing field.

"Because of the Foreign Secretary's concern, a meeting was suggested. However, his concern is not about whether a memorial should be erected. It is about whether the Government should offer a site on Crown land. Given the difficulties that have attended the setting up of a meeting and the time that has elapsed, would you consider settling this in correspondence by giving your view on this point of principle? If you feel that it would be considered too abrupt to settle this issue without having a meeting it might be worth while asking Mr Heseltine what objections he sees to pursuing the Foreign Secretary's proposal. He does not appear to have given the Foreign Secretary any answer on this as yet."

Thatcher replied:

"We shall have to have a brief meeting. I am concerned that we are giving a site that could be desecrated very easily. I feel that we should consider 'public' land that is protected."

Almost three months later the matter remained unresolved. Rickett wrote again to Thatcher<sup>64</sup> on 4<sup>th</sup> September pointing out that having been "unsuccessful in setting up a meeting to discuss this before the Recess", it would probably now be the second half of October at the earliest.

"Would you consider agreeing that I should write to departments in an attempt to resolve this issue?

"If so I attach at Flag A a draft letter with two alternative endings. The first plays down the foreign relations objections that Lord Carrington has raised to any association between HMG and the Memorial. The second asks Mr Heseltine whether he could live with Lord Carrington's suggested course of action.

"If you agree that I should write, which version would you prefer?"

Thatcher preferred the first alternative – i.e. the one that disagreed with Carrington's line. Indeed she went further and repeated her concern that Heseltine's draft letter to

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<sup>64</sup> PREM 19/841, Willy Rickett to Prime Minister, 4th September 1981

Janner “needs a lot of redrafting. I don’t think we can impose on them merely a plaque among flower beds.”

The draft letter to be addressed from Downing St to the FCO said that Thatcher was “not convinced that the Government will face criticism at home or overseas simply for making Crown land available”, and stressed that Crown land was most likely to answer the need to find a site “which can easily be protected from desecration.”

However the PM minuted: “We must clear it with Lord C first.”

Consequently a week later another of Thatcher’s private secretaries, Tim Lankester, wrote to Francis Richards at the Foreign Office<sup>65</sup> conveying Thatcher’s decision in favour of a memorial on Crown land.

This letter summarised the arguments that had last been stated in letters from the various departments in January and February (some seven or eight months earlier). Lankester wrote:

“The issue is not whether there should be a holocaust memorial in the UK. None of the Ministers concerned has objected to a memorial in principle. The issue is where the memorial should be, and whether it should be on Crown land.”

From the options suggested by Heseltine, Whitelaw had preferred the Hyde Park site due to it being easier to protect from vandalism. Carrington however had: “raised a point of principle. He considers that Crown land in London should not be used for a memorial to events which did not take place on British territory, or involve a large part of the British population; and that such a memorial could well be offensive to the FRG. He has suggested that the Jewish community should be encouraged to buy or lease their own site in London and either to erect a memorial, or preferably create a park or playing field.”

As in the draft, Thatcher came down effectively on Heseltine’s side, also siding with Whitelaw’s preference for the Hyde Park site.

“She therefore hopes that Lord Carrington will be able to agree that Mr Heseltine should write to Mr Greville Janner, MP on the lines of the draft letter attached to Stephen Boys-Smith’s letter of 5 February to Jeff Jacobs.

“The Prime Minister feels, however, that this draft needs some redrafting: for example, she does not think it is correct to say that St James’s Park contains “relatively few flower areas”. There is also a point of substance in the draft which she is not altogether happy with: she does not think we can insist on merely a plaque among flower beds, and she feels that the original drawing for the memorial was very appropriate.”

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<sup>65</sup> PREM 19/841, Tim Lankester to Francis Richards, 11th September 1981

If Downing St thought this letter would resolve the matter, they were to be disappointed. The Foreign Office response to Thatcher's line began with a memo by David Gladstone to Bullard<sup>66</sup> summarising the position to date and asking: "How should we proceed?" This was copied to the other senior officials closely involved in formulating Carrington's response: Sir John Graham; Ewen Fergusson; and the heads of the Near East & North African Department and Middle East Department.

Gladstone recommended that the FCO should "consult the Germans informally about the likely FRG reaction to this proposal. This could be done either in London, with the German Ambassador, or in Bonn, with the Federal Chancellor's Office."

A draft was submitted<sup>67</sup> by Bullard (after discussion with Moberly) the following day and this time (based on the draft) Carrington got his principal private secretary Brian Fall to reply to Lankester – in itself a subtle signal of his emphatic view. (Fall was a Foreign Office high-flyer close to Carrington. He ended his career as Ambassador to Russia from 1992-95. His daughter Kate Fall was a senior aide to Prime Minister David Cameron.)

Fall wrote that Carrington<sup>68</sup>: "hopes there is no misunderstanding about his own position, which is based on general public policy rather than foreign policy positions. He finds it entirely fitting and right that memorials to the Holocaust should have been erected after the war in Germany, in other continental countries from which the victims came and of course in Israel. But he notes that no such memorial was put up in Britain at the time or since, and he considers that it is for the sponsors to show why such a memorial is appropriate now, rather than for him or others to show why it is not.

"He is distinctly uneasy at the suggestion for a substantial memorial in one of the Royal Parks or elsewhere on Crown land in the heart of London. It raises questions of general policy which should be considered with a due sense of responsibility towards both the past and the future. Lord Carrington is therefore unwilling to regard the matter as settled without the meeting of Ministers which has been so often postponed. So far as he is aware, the matter is not one of particular urgency. He therefore hopes that a suitable time can be found for the matter to be fully discussed between the Ministers concerned, and that meanwhile it can continue to be handled without publicity."

Fall's letter was copied to the private secretaries at Environment (David Edmonds); Defence (David Omand); and the Home Office (John Halliday).

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<sup>66</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Julian Bullard, 15th September 1981

<sup>67</sup> FCO 33/4845, Julian Bullard to Private Secretary, 16th September 1981

<sup>68</sup> PREM 19/841, Brian Fall to Tim Lankester, 16th September 1981

The Foreign Office copy<sup>69</sup> was has a note added by Andrew Burns<sup>70</sup>, Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretary, on 21<sup>st</sup> September: “The PUS strongly endorses this.”

These five words are highly significant. They indicate that fundamental, principled opposition to the ‘Holocaust’ memorial project was held not only by Carrington and not only by ‘Arabists’ in the Foreign Office, but by Sir Michael Palliser (1922-2012), Head of the Diplomatic Service and Permanent Under-Secretary (‘PUS’) at the Foreign Office. Sir Michael was better informed than most about all these matters. Not only was he considered one of the outstanding British diplomats of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his father-in-law was Paul-Henri Spaak, perhaps the most important Belgian statesman of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and one of the founders of postwar European unity. Spaak was Belgian Foreign Minister for a total of eighteen years between 1939 and 1966; Prime Minister from 1947 to 1949; and Secretary-General of NATO from 1957 to 1961. During 1946-47 Spaak was President of the UN General Assembly.

In consequence Lankester wrote to the PM: “It looks as if we will have to have a meeting after all. I will fix up for end-October.” Eventually a meeting was arranged<sup>71</sup> for 10 a.m. on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1981, and in fact began half an hour earlier.

Meanwhile Helen Ghosh at the Department of the Environment had also replied<sup>72</sup> to the Downing St letter of 11<sup>th</sup> September, addressing Mrs Thatcher’s ideas about flowerbeds in St James’s Park, and also the notion of whether a larger memorial would be appropriate. (For some reason Mrs Ghosh addressed her reply to private secretary Michael Scholar rather than to Tim Lankester.)

Mrs Ghosh maintained that in the DoE’s view, “St James’s Park is ...essentially a historical landscape park”, and that apart from very limited areas of flowerbeds, “there is

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<sup>69</sup> FCO 33/4845, Brian Fall to Tim Lankester, 16th September 1981, note by R.A. Burns to David Gladstone, 21st September 1981

<sup>70</sup> (Sir) Andrew Burns (1943- ) was Palliser’s private secretary from 1979 to 1982. This position effectively in charge of PUSD traditionally involved liaison between the Foreign Office and the intelligence services, an implication confirmed by Burns’ later posting after a year as a Harvard visiting fellow – Counsellor (Information) at the British Embassy in Washington DC and Head of British Information Services in New York, from 1983 to 1986. After senior positions back in London, Burns was British Ambassador to Israel from 1992 to 1995, and ended his career as High Commissioner to Canada from 2000 to 2003. From 2005 to 2010 Burns was a BBC Governor, taking the position of ‘International Governor’ previously held by Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, former Chairman of the JIC.

<sup>71</sup> PREM 19/841, Tim Lankester to Caroline Stephens, + reply, 18th September 1981

<sup>72</sup> PREM 19/841, Helen Ghosh to Michael Scholar, 6th October 1981

little colour generally in the Park. Historically there should not be further flower areas and indeed we have recently removed a number of flowerbeds by the lake edge. In any case this particular memorial would surely be inappropriate so close to Buckingham Palace.”

She added that with respect to the idea of a larger memorial:

“The original drawing which the Prime Minister has seen was very appropriate for a memorial in front of a building; it would in our view look odd in the middle of an open space. It would no doubt be possible to produce a garden effect, with public access, while retaining some of the features of the earlier design.”

With the “long-postponed Memorial meeting” now fixed for 12<sup>th</sup> November, Bullard wrote to Gladstone<sup>73</sup> on 25<sup>th</sup> September requesting “answers to the following questions, on which I have an idea that it might be useful for the Secretary of State to be forearmed:–

a) Whether there are such memorials in, e.g. Paris, Bonn and Rome?

b) What monuments already stand on Crown land in central London, whether inside or outside the Royal parks?”

Urgent enquires were set in train, including letters to the chanceries in Paris, Bonn and Rome. Roger Tomkys at the British Embassy in Rome replied<sup>74</sup>:

“We have made discreet enquiries here and can confirm that no such memorial exists in Rome.”

Similarly Anthony Millington at the British Embassy in Paris replied<sup>75</sup>:

“There are, of course, throughout the length and breadth of France, many memorials to those who died during the last war. But there is no monument in Paris (or anywhere else in France so far as this Embassy is aware) exactly analagous to that proposed for erection in London. The nearest equivalent is the Monument to the Memory of the french Martyrs of the Deportation which stands on the tip of the Ile de la Cité behind Notre-Dame. As its name implies, it is dedicated to French victims of the Nazi Holocaust, albeit of all faiths, rather than to the victims of the Holocaust in general. The inscription on the monument is quite explicit: ‘To the 200,000 French martyrs who died in the deportation camps’.

“Permission to erect the monument was given by Government decree in June 1958. It appears that the land on which it is erected belongs to the City of Paris. The monument was financed by national public subscription but the Ministry of War Veterans appears to be responsible for its administration.

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<sup>73</sup> FCO 33/4845, Julian Bullard to David Gladstone, 25th September 1981

<sup>74</sup> FCO 33/4845, Roger Tomkys to Boyd McCleary, 15th October 1981

<sup>75</sup> FCO 33/4845, Anthony Millington to Boyd McCleary, 15th October 1981

“The only other comparable monument in Paris is the Memorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr. This memorial and the adjacent museum are located in the Jewish quarter in the Fourth Arrondissement. They stand on private land and are administered by the Jewish community.”

Nigel Dickerson from the British Embassy in Bonn replied<sup>76</sup>:

“We felt that the Israeli Embassy in Bonn would be the best source of information on this. The AMA therefore spoke to his opposite number at the Israeli Embassy who was unaware of any memorial in Bonn to victims of the Holocaust.”

Dickerson added that the only information he had of “any such memorial in Berlin” came from a general guidebook to the city. This mentioned a “memorial stone” in Steinplatz, Charlottenburg, to the victims of National Socialism and the victims of Stalinism. There was a memorial in the courtyard of the rebuilt Fasanenstrasse synagogue, listing the names of concentration camps; and a memorial panel with a similar list on the south side of Wittenbergplatz.

A few days later the Bonn Embassy sent a telegram to McCleary<sup>77</sup> updating Dickerson’s letter. They had “just heard of a plaque-laying ceremony to be held in Bonn on 8 November in memory of 474 Jewish citizens of Bonn and the surrounding district who were imprisoned in concentration camps during the last war. Only seven are supposed to have survived. Ceremony will take place at Benedictine monastery in Bonn which was used as collection point in this connection during 1941-42.”

Gladstone summarised these points in a reply to Bullard<sup>78</sup>, and the latter emphasised certain useful items of evidence which he asked to have included in Carrington’s brief for the forthcoming meeting. For example Bullard highlighted the point that the Ile de la Cité memorial was specifically to French victims; and that the Memorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr was on private land in the Jewish quarter of Paris’s Fourth Arrondissement. Even the new Bonn memorial was specifically related to Jewish deportees from that city and the surrounding district, while there appeared to be no such memorial at all in Rome.

Correspondence with the DoE had ascertained that there were 222 outdoor statues in London, of which 72 stood on Crown land. Bullard commented: “not one foreign cause so far as I can see”, but someone – presumably Gladstone – added a correction pointing out the Burghers of Calais memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens.

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<sup>76</sup> FCO 33/4845, Nigel Dickerson to Boyd McCleary, 27th October 1981

<sup>77</sup> FCO 33/4845, Bonn to FCO, 30th October 1981

<sup>78</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Julian Bullard, 6th November 1981, and Bullard’s note in reply, same date.

The day before the proposed meeting, Gladstone submitted a proposed draft<sup>79</sup>, agreed by his Western European Department and his colleagues at NENAD, to which Bullard added the following note:

“This incorporates my views, which have strengthened with the passage of time. It cannot be wise to contemplate authorising the proposed memorial at a time when Arab-Israeli problems, and Britain’s attitude to them, is constantly on the front pages. But the Secretary of State will want to be sure that his colleagues support him, given the likelihood of press stories.”

The summary of points for Carrington to make included:

“1. Memorials on Crown land should be to British national events. Holocaust did not take place on British territory or involve a large part of the British population.

“2. Why a memorial to Holocaust after 35 years? Is real motive political? Concerned at use made of Holocaust by present Israeli government to justify unacceptable policies and pillory European peace efforts unjustifiably.

“3. If Jewish community insist on a memorial, nothing to stop them providing their own site. Of the 72 outdoor statues on Crown Land in London only one (‘The Burghers of Calais’) commemorates a foreign cause. But why not something useful, e.g. A park or playing field?

“4. No exactly analogous monument in Paris; memorial on the Ile de la Cité is dedicated to French martyrs and permission for it was given as early as 1958. No comparable memorial in Rome.

“5. International implications also, though not overriding. Memorial on Crown Land would permanently embarrass the Germans. Need not complicate political relations with Middle East as matters stand at present, but it would of course constitute a precedent.”

The “Essential Facts” accompanying the brief included the usual arguments, such as the MoD’s concerns about possible “unfavourable reactions from potential Arab customers for British defence equipment” and “the effect on our relations with a principal ally, the FRG. Mr Pym [then Defence Secretary] also pointed out that existing memorials in this part of London relate closely to British national victories and sorrows.”

Referring again to the diplomatic and political context, the “Essential Facts” continued:

“Mr Begin and other members of his government now re-elected for a further term in office, refer frequently to the Holocaust to justify their current security policies and to demonstrate, in the absence of convincing rational argument, why Europe is necessarily

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<sup>79</sup> FCO 33/4845, David Gladstone to Julian Bullard and Private secretary, 11th November 1981, and Bullard’s reply, same date

disqualified from any role in peace efforts and is not entitled to challenge Israel's own view of her security needs. The Israeli Ambassador in London frequently takes a similar line. A memorial in London on government land might prove an irresistible stick with which to go on beating HMG from time to time."

Despite having earlier detached themselves from the debate on the grounds that the site for the proposed memorial was no longer adjacent to their ministry, the MoD was after all represented at the 12<sup>th</sup> November meeting. Ministers present were Mrs Thatcher herself; Home Secretary William Whitelaw; Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington; Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine; and Defence Secretary John Nott.

Heseltine opened the meeting by saying<sup>80</sup> that the Board of Deputies had since the previous November "waited calmly and quietly for the next move by the Government", and that he had hoped by now to have discussed with them potential Royal Parks sites, "but he was aware that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had raised a point of principle about the use of Crown Land for a foreign memorial."

According to Downing St's summary, Carrington made the following points familiar from his earlier correspondence:

"The Memorial had nothing to do with Britain. That we should allow this memorial to be constructed on Crown Land 35 years after the Second World War could well be offensive to the Federal Republic of Germany. He would much prefer the Board of Deputies to buy or lease their own site in London and either to erect a Memorial or preferably to create something useful like a park or playing field. However, Lord Carrington recognised that discussions with the Board of Deputies might have already gone too far for the Government to refuse an offer of Crown Land. He hoped that if Crown Land were to be offered to the Board of Deputies it would not be seen as a precedent for the establishment of foreign memorials on Crown Land, although he acknowledged that the Yalta Memorial might be said to have already established this precedent.

"The Prime Minister said that her main concern was that a site in a public park would be open to desecration. If Mr Heseltine was to open discussions with the Board of Deputies about the siting of the Memorial in a public park, he should make quite clear the Government's concern about the possibility of vandalism. The Home Secretary confirmed that he could not guarantee the security of a site in a public park, and acknowledged that such a site might well be more open to desecration than a private memorial, but pointed out that no site, private or public, could be protected from vandalism. The National Front would have a particular interest in desecrating a Holocaust

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<sup>80</sup> PREM 19/841, Willie Rickett to Helen Ghosh, 12th November 1981

Memorial. If the Memorial were to be sited in a public park, the Metropolitan Police would favour a site in Hyde Park close to the police station.

“In discussion, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary suggested that the Memorial might be sited in the gardens of one of the many squares in West London, and could be protected from vandalism by being placed within a building. However, Mr Heseltine pointed out that this proposal would almost certainly arouse opposition from the local residents, who would be worried that the Memorial would attract vandals to their area. It would also create traffic problems in the area. These objections applied to many other private sites.

“In conclusion, it was agreed that the Secretary of State for the Environment would explain to the Board of Deputies of British Jews that the Government was sympathetic to their proposal for a site in a public park. He should say that the Government had not ruled out the possibility of siting the Memorial in Hyde Park. But he should make clear the Government’s concern that such a public site would be more exposed to desecration. He should encourage the Board of Deputies to consider whether they wished to take the risk of having a site that could be difficult to protect from vandalism. He might suggest some alternative sites in the Urban Development Corporation in the East end of London, which would not be such an obvious target for anti-semitic feeling.”

It’s not quite clear from the record why the Downing St showdown was so long delayed, or precisely why Carrington was defeated – but one relevant factor is surely that by this time he had lost his staunchly anti-Zionist deputy Sir Ian Gilmour, who was sacked in September 1981 and replaced by a pliable Thatcher loyalist, Humphrey Atkins.

Jeff Jacobs from the DoE replied on 30<sup>th</sup> November<sup>81</sup>, informing Rickett that Heseltine had met with Greville Janner to raise the matters requested in the ministerial meeting.

“Mr Heseltine put to him the possibility of a docklands site. Mr Janner was strongly against this. First, he pointed out that Jews no longer live in the East End, so that such a memorial would be dead rather than alive. Secondly, he is anxious that those paying their respects at the Cenotaph should be able without undue effort to move on and similarly pay their respects in memory of the Holocaust. This would require a site not too far distant from Whitehall, which effectively rules out the East End.

“My Secretary of State indicated that Hyde Park was not ruled out, and Mr Janner was enthusiastic about this possibility. When asked about the danger of desecration, he gave his view that the likelihood of this was no greater and no less than with any synagogue; provided there was not too much publicity about happenings, then the situation was containable. He would not want the site to be too secluded, and agreed that there would need to be a reasonable level of security.

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<sup>81</sup> PREM 19/841, Jeff Jacobs to Willie Rickett, 30th November 1981

“Mr Janner raised again the possibility of St James’s Park, but my Secretary of State indicated that this was for various reasons too sensitive a site.”

The process would continue, with Janner meeting DoE officials in Hyde Park to look at a short list of possibilities, and the Metropolitan Police being consulted.

One of the few remaining departmental issues was the MoD’s continuing insistence<sup>82</sup> that any memorial should not include the words Dresden and Hiroshima, despite the fact that there was now now question of the memorial being adjacent to the ministry:

“Not only are such references totally irrelevant to the Nazi holocaust of the Jews; they would in my Secretary of State’s view provide gratuitous ammunition for the anti-nuclear campaign which is already considerably more active than it was when Mr Pym wrote last year.”

Helen Ghosh confirmed to Downing St<sup>83</sup> in mid-January 1982 that discussions between the DoE and Janner were now under way, with a view to finding an agreed site in Hyde Park, and that Heseltine would then have to approve any design:

“We would have complete control over what can be placed in a Royal Park, and this would cover both general design and any specific details such as wordings.”

On 9<sup>th</sup> February John Hobson from the DoE met in Hyde Park<sup>84</sup> with Janner and two of his colleagues from the Board of Deputies “Mr Sabitt and Mr Lucas”. This probably refers to Martin Savitt (1921-2002), then Vice-President of the Board and formerly Chairman of its Defence Committee; and Victor Lucas (1916-1997), a former British Army Major who became President of the United Synagogue in 1984.

Hobson reported that Janner “seemed pleased with the site” but “seemed very concerned about cost. He said that they were allowing about £10,000 for the initial preparation of the garden, and had hoped that the Department would maintain it thereafter as part of the Park”. While avoiding comment on Janner’s estimate, Hobson had added “that I thought it would be proper for us to look to the Board of Deputies for assistance with maintenance, possibly in the form of a capital sum whose on-going interest would cover our costs in perpetuity. Rather to my surprise, Mr Janner and his colleagues looked distinctly glum at that thought.”

Janner had then taken Hobson aside for a few private words, “to express great concern

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<sup>82</sup> PREM 19/841, Nick Evans to Willie Rickett, 4th January 1982; and Rickett to David Edmonds, 5th January 1982

<sup>83</sup> PREM 19/841, Helen Ghosh (pp Jeff Jacobs) to Willie Rickett, 13th January 1982

<sup>84</sup> WORK 17/795, John Hobson to Private Secretary, 10th February 1982

about Mr Freeson's initiative and the activities of the Holocaust Foundation. He explained that in his judgement there was unanimity in the Jewish community, apart from Mr Freeson, in support of the Board of Deputies' garden of remembrance proposal. He would not wish the Secretary of State to be in any doubt about that. I suggested that he might want to consider some way of assuring the Secretary of State of that formally, in case we needed to be able to point to evidence if there were a subsequent controversy. I further explained that it was essential for the Secretary of State to avoid a controversy of the kind that seemed possible in the context of a Royal Park. Mr Janner entirely took the point. I think the Secretary of State may be getting a letter from him indicating the views of the community as a whole."

"Clearly," Hobson continued, "I cannot judge whether what Mr Janner says about Mr Freeson is the case. It seems to me a little surprising that, as Mr Janner alleges, Mr Freeson is indulging in almost a personal vendetta. But we can only see how things develop.

"Although Mr Janner is pressing for urgency, we explained that no planting could take place until the autumn. There is also the matter of securing stones, where Mr Janner seems to have in mind getting stones from hills near Jerusalem (e.g. Mount Zion). That would obviously take time, and I made clear that he would have to organise such an exercise. Although it would further delay matters, I think I shall probably recommend the Secretary of State to show our sketch proposals to Ministerial colleagues before we send them to the Board of Deputies; both the Police and the Foreign Office ought to be aware of what is suggested, particularly as it is becoming increasingly clear that the garden of remembrance will cover quite a large area and could well give rise to comments."

Apparent divisions within the Jewish community were referred to in further memoranda a few days later.

On 16th February 1982 Jeff Jacobs, private secretary to then Secretary of State for the Environment Michael Heseltine, wrote to his equivalent at 10 Downing St, Willy Rickett, private secretary to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. This letter was copied to the private secretaries to Home Secretary William Whitelaw, Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, and Defence Secretary John Nott.

Jacobs wrote that DoE officials had obtained agreement from Greville Janner (President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) and from the Metropolitan Police for a Holocaust garden of remembrance in Hyde Park, close to the Dell.

Jacobs explained:

"The Board of Deputies are pressing hard to get on quickly with that site and we are about to begin detailed discussions with them on design.

"While this is not the preferred site of either officials here or the Metropolitan Police, we think we can live with it subject to possible vandalism, and are content to proceed with planning."

Jacobs added that a young civil servant in his department, Helen Ghosh (now Dame Helen Ghosh, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, since 2018) had recently contacted Rickett about the division of opinion within Anglo-Jewry.

“Helen Ghosh mentioned to you several days ago that there are some signs of opposition to this proposal from within the Jewish community, and particularly from Mr Reg Freeson MP and the so called Holocaust Foundation which favours a site near the Cenotaph. Mr Janner thinks that if we get on quickly and quietly it will be possible to get the Board of Deputies’ proposal implemented without difficulty, and we shall be proceeding on that basis. But you should be aware that there does appear to be some Parliamentary interest in the whole matter, and that it is just possible that it might become controversial.”

Drawing Jacobs’ letter to Mrs Thatcher’s attention, Willy Rickett highlighted the above paragraph and added in a handwritten marginal note:

“Prime Minister: To note, particularly X. There are strong objections to a site near the Cenotaph, especially from an FCO and MoD point of view.”

Concerns about changes to the monument’s design became stronger within the Department of the Environment during spring 1982.<sup>85</sup> Though the project was still being referred to as a “Garden of Remembrance”, Janner was now asking for “about 37 stones incorporated, with names of the various concentration camps on them; and that there should be a central area where meetings could take place”. On 7<sup>th</sup> April 1982 Janner had another meeting with Heseltine, and the Secretary of State expressed his concern “that the kind of design now being suggested by the Board was becoming rather too elaborate”. Heseltine suggested something “simple and not too obtrusive. He would not want the memorial to become a rallying place or a source of tension”. Janner had seemed to accept Heseltine’s point, and said he would “commission a designer to work on a simple plan for the memorial, perhaps involving only half a dozen stones”.

However by June 1982 when design sketches by Arnold Morris were submitted to the Royal Parks Superintendent on behalf of the Board, these designs did seem “quite elaborate”. A Mr Strong from the DoE wrote: “I do not see how any of them could be called a ‘Garden of Remembrance’.” Mr Strong suggested that officials would “need to look closely ...at the visual impact any of these designs would have on the Park.”

Financial questions also loomed. While the Board had allowed £10,000 for initial preparation, they had seemed not too keen on the idea that they might have to pay for maintenance. Mr Strong’s memo suggested the cost of the suggested designs would be much greater than £10,000, and there would be inevitable ongoing maintenance

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<sup>85</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to A.J. Kaye, 28th June 1982

expenses. He suggested further assessments were needed before a report to Heseltine.

Strong expanded on his objections in a further letter to Departmental colleagues on 6<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>86</sup> He pointed out that the six sketches submitted by Morris “all involve the same basic layout – a paved circular area about 40 ft across, with a raised central area of about half that diameter. As far as one can tell from the drawings, the central area appears to be some kind of polished stone, probably granite; surrounded by an inner ring of granite sets, an area of paving (perhaps York stone) and an outer ring of granite sets. The whole area is then surrounded by trees. The only difference in the different designs arises from the ‘monument’ in the centre.

“The concept envisaged in all the sketches is quite different from the “garden of remembrance” previously envisaged. It would bring an air of ‘civic planning’ to a green area of the park, to which it seems quite inappropriate. It would also involve felling four silver birches about 25 years old, which would appear to be on the site of the paved area; and planting new trees around, which would take about 25 years to reach the heights shown in the drawings.”

“In addition to the suitability of the proposals,” Strong went on, “there would also appear to be considerable problems of cost. When Mr Janner saw Mr Hobson in February, he mentioned that the Board of Deputies were allowing about £10,000 for the ‘initial preparation of the garden’. Mr Morris’ concept would involve a substantial construction cost to lay out the stone area, possibly of the order of £50,000. Mr Hobson also mentioned that we would look to the Board of Deputies for a capital sum to cover maintenance costs in perpetuity, at which ‘Mr Janner and his colleagues looked distinctly glum’. Mr Morris’ design, which would bring people to the site and involve litter clearance etc., would involve a larger commuted maintenance sum than a garden, where it would be more proper for the department to bear costs involved in more normal park maintenance work.”

Given these developments, Strong suggested either that the plans should be returned to Mr Morris “as unacceptable and ask him to prepare new proposals which are consistent with the Secretary of State’s discussion with Mr Janner on 7 April”; or that if Ministers were prepared to accept these designs that included a paved central area, there should be further discussions to find out what costs the Board of Deputies were prepared to bear.

A week later Heseltine took the decision<sup>87</sup> “that the plans should be returned to the designer as unacceptable, with a request to prepare new proposals in line with the original agreement for a simple and unobtrusive design.” Heseltine also agreed “that no bushes or trees should be removed for the Memorial.”

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<sup>86</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to P.W. Rumble et al., 6th July 1982

<sup>87</sup> WORK 17/795, R. Bright (Assistant Private Secretary to Secretary of State) to P.W. Rumble et. al., 13th July 1982

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1982 Mr Strong from the DoE spoke to the Board's designer Mr Morris<sup>88</sup>, who expressed surprise that there had been objections to his ideas. Strong "pointed out that he was proposing a 'suburban piazza', rather than a garden of remembrance which was consistent with the surrounding wooded area. I suggested he reverted to the original concept of 'a few stones' in the grass – i.e. the area must continue to look green."

Eventually Strong got his point across, and Morris agreed that his architect should discuss the issues with the Department's architect John Kaye.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, Strong and Kaye met representatives of the Board's architects<sup>89</sup>, Richard Seifert & Partners, on site at the Dell in Hyde Park. The civil servants repeated their insistence that there should be no trees removed and that the design should be in line with Janner's initial agreement with Heseltine for a garden of remembrance with a few simple stones.

The firm were to come back with further proposals for planting "shrubs and possibly trees; with one or more stones of a fairly natural kind, rather than obviously sculpted."

These revised sketches were submitted on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. John Kaye considered<sup>90</sup> "this a great improvement on the earlier effort and if it were well executed would be not unattractive."

After further consideration with colleagues, Strong passed on the view<sup>91</sup> that while indeed the new plans were a great improvement, it involved too many new trees, and the architects should be asked to reduce these. Aside from that point, it seemed possible to move on to final agreement – but "this will need to include agreement with the Board of Deputies on the payment of a capital sum to cover the Department's maintenance costs in perpetuity."

While these relatively minor details were being cleared up, a Cabinet reshuffle meant that a new Secretary of State took ultimate charge of the project. Heseltine became Defence Secretary and was replaced at Environment in January 1983 by Tom King. As things turned out, King only lasted five months in the job before another reshuffle after

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<sup>88</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to P.E. Butler, 9th August 1982

<sup>89</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to E. Carter, 28th September 1982

<sup>90</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to B. Strong, 26th October 1982

<sup>91</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to Private Secretary, 26th November 1982

the June 1983 General Election, when the third Environment Secretary of the Thatcher era, Patrick Jenkin, took over. It was thus Jenkin who as Environment Secretary officially inaugurated the garden of remembrance<sup>92</sup> on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1983.

In the meantime there had been further last minute disagreements after a revised design submitted by Seifert's office. John Kaye was concerned<sup>93</sup> that "whereas the original scheme provided for the memorial stones to be located in an informal grove like setting, in developing the proposal they have now formalised the site by the introduction of a hard surfaced area complete with brick edging and gravel. This approach whilst possibly appropriate to the punctilio of a new town, is in my view totally out of keeping with the careful informality of the Royal Parks."

This objection was downplayed after consultation with colleagues, partly because the gravel etc. would reduce maintenance issues. In fact in a circular to colleagues in March 1983<sup>94</sup>, Strong indicated that because natural stone (which would not require cleaning) was being used, and the horticultural features would not require maintenance, the Department was not going to make an issue of the relatively minor issue of additional litter and leaf clearance entailed, so the Board would not be asked for any capital sum.

Patrick Jenkin's involvement in the dedication of the Memorial Garden on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1983 caused high level concern within his Department. Senior DoE civil servant Peter Butler suggested<sup>95</sup> that the Secretary of State should say just a very few words at the dedication ceremony, and should not make a speech at the Guildhall luncheon afterwards (though eventually Jenkin did agree to speak).

According to Butler:

"...the Secretary of State will be entering a very sensitive area and you [Strong] concurred with me that the least that could decently be said the better."

Butler then gave a summary of the entire saga of the memorial proposals during the previous four years, pointing out that when he initially agreed on the Richmond Terrace site in 1979, Heseltine "had not taken Cabinet colleagues entirely along with him. The Foreign Secretary of the day and the then Secretary of State for Defence in particular opposed the site as likely to offend German and Arab colleagues and on the principle that such a site should be reserved for purely British memorials".

Butler continued:

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<sup>92</sup> *The Guardian*, 28th June 1983, p. 3

<sup>93</sup> WORK 17/795, A.J. Kaye to B. Strong, 24th February 1983

<sup>94</sup> WORK 17/795, B. Strong to Private Secretary, 3rd March 1983

<sup>95</sup> WORK 17/795, P.E. Butler to B. Strong et al., 23rd June 1983

“In spite of a general consensus in principle within Government now the memorial remains a delicate addition to a Royal Park. On our advice the design has been centred on a natural grove with equally natural stones and a low-key, unobtrusive dedication inscription. Its existence will nonetheless be a sensitive matter for many people and it would be unwise to dwell on it and its provenance at the opening ceremony. I understand that Mr Janner is expecting the Secretary of State also to make a 5-minute speech at the subsequent luncheon. You have agreed with me that this would not be appropriate and you are seeking to dissuade the Secretary of State from accepting this offer. I do not believe that we could provide from within the Department anything for the Secretary of State usefully to say if he did agree to speak. We might have to get advice from other Departments. I doubt if there is time.”

(Eventually the DoE obtained Foreign Office advice for Jenkin’s speech at the Guildhall lunch.)

During the summer and autumn of 1983 the memorial stone was twice vandalised by being daubed with paint, and the cost of rectifying this damage had to be met by the Department<sup>96</sup>. As a result there were discussions with the Board as to whether the stone could be treated with some form of sealant to make future attacks less damaging.

The last entries in the file<sup>97</sup> suggest that no practical way of sealing granite was found, and the records imply that Jenkin made an open-ended commitment for the Government to continue footing the bill for repairing any subsequent vandalism.

There is no official record as to how often such clean-ups proved necessary, though there were reports of another daubing<sup>98</sup> in April 1987.

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<sup>96</sup> WORK 17/795, P.E. Butler to A.J. Kaye et al., 12th December 1983

<sup>97</sup> WORK 17/795, Richard Seifert to Greville Janner, 5th December 1983; Greville Janner to Patrick Jenkin, 12th December 1983; P.E. Butler to B. Strong et al., 22nd December 1983

<sup>98</sup> *The Guardian*, 27th April 1987, p. 2

## CONCLUSION

The archival record analysed in detail above shows that serious, principled objections were raised to the erection of a 'Holocaust' memorial in Central London.

It should be clear from any objective reading of these records that in early 1980s London there would have been absolutely no possibility of a monstrous and highly obtrusive project such as the one presently proposed even being considered.

Westminster City Council should consider whether anything material to their deliberations has changed in the intervening decades, other than the power of the lobby group concerned.

What would it say about planning procedures in our capital city if this lobbying power were to override all other considerations?

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