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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 August 1980

Ran Jeff

Your Secretary of State had a word with the Prime Minister after Cabinet yesterday about the Holocaust Memorial. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence were also present.

Mr. Heseltine explained how 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.

Mr. Heseltine also showed the Prime Minister a sketch of the proposed Memorial. He explained that he would have complete control over the wording, and that he could ensure that references to Dresden and Hiroshima could be removed.

The Secretary of State for Defence reiterated the objections from the point of view of his Department of a Memorial covering allied actions. 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.

The Prime Minister commented that the proposed Memorial appeared tasteful, and might well enhance the site. There was, however, one additional problem: there were already security restrictions on access to the south side of the Ministry of Defence building, and there was presumably some possibility that access might become more restricted over time. Jewish memorials around the world tended to attract large numbers of people, often in groups, and she wondered whether there could be any guarantee of free access to a Holocaust Memorial on the Richmond Terrace site. She asked the Secretary of State for Environment to go back to the sponsors of the Memorial, to make it clear that the Government would be unable to guarantee free access to the site in the longer term. There might also be some police objections to the traffic generated by a memorial

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on this site, and, if Mr. Heseltine wished to take account of this, the Home Secretary would first discuss the matter with the Commissioner of Police.

In the light of this conversation, your Secretary of State agreed to reopen with the sponsors of the Memorial the question of finding an alternative site. If he wishes to consider the police angle, you will no doubt be in touch with the Home Office before he has further discussions about the site. I should be grateful if you could ensure that we are kept informed of developments.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Halliday (Home Office), David Omand (Ministry of Defence) and Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Yours ever

Mike Paterson

Jeff Jacobs, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.