**Application by Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for a Holocaust Memorial at Victoria Tower Gardens, Millbank, London.**

I am Sir Richard Evans. I am Regius Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Cambridge and I have written and taught for many years on the history of Nazi Germany. Among my best known publications is a three-volume history published by Penguin Books and translated into 15 languages including German, Chinese and Russian: *The Coming of the Third Reich*, *The Third Reich in Power*, and *The Third Reich at War*. I am Deputy Chair of the Spoliation Advisory Panel, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on applications for the restitution of Nazi-looted artworks, a committee whose work is widely recognized in Europe as a pioneer and model in the field. I was the principal expert witness in the unsuccessful libel action brought before the High Court in 2000 by David Irving over accusations of Holocaust Denial. I advised the Imperial War Museum on its Holocaust Exhibition Wing and attended by invitation the formal opening by Her Majesty the Queen in 2000, and, also by invitation, I have submitted a lengthy ‘research briefing’ to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as part of its preparations for a redesign of its permanent exhibition. Finally, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, my tutor for modern history was Sir Martin Gilbert, subsequently author of a number of major works on the Holocaust, as well as the official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill.

The Imperial War Museum’s Holocaust Exhibition attracts some 600,000 visitors in a normal year, and is linked to the Museum’s significant archival collections, which make it an important centre of research on World War II and the Holocaust. The proposed exhibition and research centre in Westminster would be an unnecessary duplication of the Museum’s offerings. It would be on a much smaller scale, and so less comprehensive and less effective, but it would at the same time divert attention from the Imperial War Museum’s larger and more important collections and displays. A significant expansion of the Museum’s Holocaust exhibition is under way, supported by HRH the Duke of Cambridge on his visit to the Museum on 27 September 2017, and will soon be opened. It is my view that the Imperial War Museum, located less than a mile away from the Palace of Westminster, is already the national Holocaust memorial centre and it remains the appropriate location for a comprehensive, scholarly and professional coverage in the UK of this most tragic episode in human history.

The arguments politicians of all parties have put forward – that the Holocaust must be remembered and publicly commemorated, that future generations need to learn about it, that a memorial is necessary as a signal that the UK is determined to fight racism, antisemitism and prejudice of all kinds – are of course unobjectionable. But we already commemorate and research the Holocaust not only at the Imperial War Museum but also at other sites across the country, notably in Hyde Park (London), at the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire, at the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre in Huddersfield, and at the Wiener Library (London) for the Study of Holocaust and Genocide. The last three named have been the recipients of substantial public funds in the last few years. As a research centre on the Holocaust, the proposed new Westminster memorial will not be able to compete with the substantial and long-established archival collections of the Wiener Library.

The implication that the Westminster centre is needed because more research on the Holocaust is needed is misleading. Britain, with its universities and its research institutions, is already, along with Germany, the United States and Israel, the world’s leading country for Holocaust research. One excellent example is the Holocaust Research Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, where staff members such as Professor Peter Longerich Professor Dan Stone and the late Professor David Cesarani have produced world-leading general accounts of the Holocaust, and there is a widely respected Master’s degree in Holocaust history. To suggest that the recent and current Holocaust-related research and learning effort in the UK is inadequate or even non-existent does British scholarship and teaching in the field a grave disservice. Along with the world-famous British contribution to the history of the Nazi period more generally – one need only name Sir Ian Kershaw’s standard biography of Hitler here – this is something Britain should be justly proud of, rather than suggest that the Holocaust will no longer be remembered or understood when the last remaining survivors are no longer with us.

The location of the proposed memorial in Westminster has been justified on the grounds that it symbolizes the importance of ‘British values’ and parliamentary democracy as a bulwark against genocide. As an historian, I find this argument dangerously misleading. To begin with, the democratic and humanitarian values that underlie hostility to racial and other kinds of discrimination, mass murder and genocide, are not ‘British’, they are universal. To suggest otherwise is to encourage complacency and self-satisfaction about the British response to the Holocaust, which I understand is to be the focus of the exhibition and presented in a positive light.

An objective historical appraisal of the British response would need to be far more nuanced, however. Britain placed many obstacles in the way of Jews who tried to escape from Nazi Germany, imposing strict immigration quotas on the British Mandate of Palestine and turning back Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany whose arrival would breach them. The British government’s acceptance of the *Anschluss* of Austria and its brokering of the Munich Agreement in 1938 in the name of appeasing Hitler turned a blind eye to the fact that these actions brought hundreds of thousands of Jews under Nazi rule, with terrible consequences for them all. Antisemitism was widespread in the higher ranks of the British Civil Service, a disturbing fact brought to public attention by my former tutor Sir Martin Gilbert’s book *Auschwitz and the Allies*, which found that antisemitic sentiment played a significant part in dissuading the Allies from taking action against the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

If public funds are to be allocated to a new memorial, finally, then, given the fact that there are already several major publicly funded Holocaust memorials and research and learning centres in the country, pre-eminently at the Imperial War Museum, what is really needed are memorials of this kind dedicated to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, in which Britain was a leading participant from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth.

The public benefit and the benefit to historians accruing from the proposed new Holocaust memorial and underground exhibition and research centre are in my view insufficient to justify the partial destruction of an important and much-loved green space in what has justly been designated a World Heritage Site. I conclude therefore that the application should be rejected because there is no public benefit that could outweigh the damage done to the park.

Richard J Evans

4.11.2020.