

To: Martin Harwit

From: Bob Adams

Sec of SI

July 17, 1993

I've read your planning document with interest, and find much of it compelling. There could be an exhibit here that would do the Smithsonian credit. On the other hand, there are some, fairly fundamental aspects of it with which I am no more in agreement now than when we have discussed them on previous occasions:

1.) Title. Crossroads or Turning-point is a fairly trivial matter, but the order that follows is not. I think it has to be "The End of World War II and the Atomic Bomb." This is, in fact, the underlying question of the overall stance of the exhibit that pervades all my other difficulties.

2.) With my ordering of the title, there is clearly a missing section in the document after the first paragraph. In a document of this length and degree of detail, you cannot turn to the atomic bomb so quickly and abruptly. I assume you would want to treat the contrastive endings of war in the European and Pacific theatres more fully, with in all likelihood a discussion of the psychology here on the home-front as people impatiently and fearfully awaited the war's winding-down.

3.) The third paragraph, beginning near the top of page 2, is similarly affected. The exhibit will indeed get to the atomic bomb, and I have no significant problem with your proposed treatment of it, but I cannot accept the wording that this will be "an exhibit about the wartime development of the atomic bomb, the decision to use it against Japan and the aftermath of the bombings." This should be an exhibit commemorating the end of World War II, taking appropriate note of the atom bomb's central role in one theater, and seeing that decision-point as a decisive determinant of decades of strategic and political thinking and action that followed. The shift of stance is, from my perspective, subtle but vital.

4.) The same paragraph needs another form of modification. You speak appropriately of the suffering of the bomb victims, but make no mention of in this introductory section of the issue of prospective American losses if there were to be an invasion. I trust you have seen Barber Conable's letter, reflecting the strong feelings of one who was slated to participate in that invasion. He would rightly feel that the present discussion at this point lacks "balance."

5.) Continuing along exactly the same line, I do not think it is appropriate that "Upon entering the exhibit.... The central image will be of a mushroom cloud..." (p. 3). The different ordering of the title has the clear implication that the initial

set of images should concern the ending of the war in first one theater and then another -- the return of some troops, at least a passing view of the discovery of the full horror of the Holocaust, etc. That then indeed sets the stage for decision to drop the bomb on Japan, and for the appearance of the mushroom cloud as a commanding image further into the exhibit.

6.) If I begin the planning document at page 4, with what is called Unit 1, I find that most of what is noted in the first five points above is well attended to. But your ordering of the title means that this follows rather than precedes the introduction of the atom bomb as the central subject. It is precisely my point that such an ordering greatly -- and I think unacceptably -- increases the risk to SI. By beginning with Unit 1 instead of your present Introduction we can reply to critics concerned about the atom bomb as the subject of an exhibit from any direction that this is essentially an exhibit commemorating the end of World War II and naturally also examining its sequela.

7.) I continue to uneasy that later sections of the planning document (roughly pp. 5-12) treat fully and sympathetically the horrors of the bombing -- the fire-bombing as well as the atom bomb -- but do not present in adequate depth what were perceived as the horrors experienced by the Americans during all of the island invasions culminating with Okinawa. This is the Cenable point, of course, and I urge you to treat it more fully and seriously. But this is more a change of emphasis and what will be perceived by some as "balance." Basically, I think the planning document from Unit 1 on is in very good shape.

I do hope you find these remarks helpful.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'B. G.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

cc: Connie Newman, Tom Freudenheim