



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



19 April 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR LT GEN CLAUDE M. KICKLIGHTER

FROM: AF/HO
170 Luke Ave Suite 400
Bolling AFB DC 20332-5113

SUBJECT: Enola Gay Exhibit

I wish to express to you my deep concern over the question of funding the National Air and Space Museum's Enola Gay exhibit.

As you are aware, we, in the Air Force history program, had an opportunity to review both early concept scripts and later drafts. While the NASM staff made significant improvements over their first efforts, we still left the museum in February with a critique of suggested changes (see attachment). To date, there has been no effort to accommodate these. Further, our colleagues -- professional military historians from all the services -- have reviewed the NASM's script. They, too, unanimously consider it a poor script, lacking balance and context. The script gives the impression that President Truman, in making his decision to drop the bomb, did it to impress the Soviet Union rather than to save American lives in any potential invasion of Japan. The script also conveys the idea that Truman was motivated by racism and that dropping the bomb was unjustified. Fact: the exhibit includes 49 photos of Japanese casualties and 3 photos of American casualties. There are many additional problems with the script, including that it does not sufficiently emphasize Japan's military aggression during 1931-1945. When these were brought up with the two Smithsonian curators involved in this exhibit, the issues were cavalierly blown off.

Given the curator's unwillingness to consider DOD's viewpoints, I feel deeply that it would be entirely inappropriate for the Department of Defense to, in any way, help fund this exhibit, unless extraordinary changes to the exhibit script are undertaken.

RICHARD P. HALLION, SES
Air Force Historian

Attachment:
Critique

cc: Dr. Allard
BG Simmons
BG Nelson
RG Armstrong

OFFICE OF AIR FORCE HISTORY
POSITION. JULY 12, 1994.

**Comments on "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb
and the End of World War II"**

The National Air and Space Museum's, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," is not the kind of exhibit that the Air Force would have done for the Enola Gay. The Air Force would have chosen a context emphasizing B-29 organization, development, production, training, command, and the evolution of bombing policy and strategy. The National Air and Space Museum's approach raises substantive issues of context and balance that cannot, in our view, be resolved by revisions. Consequently, the Air Force does not in any way endorse this exhibit. However, this revised script contains additions, deletions, and changes that make it an improvement over the previous script.

Nonetheless, this latest script still falls considerably short as far as balance and context are concerned. It is an issue of preponderance. There is mention in the script of Japanese atrocities, brutality to subject peoples, and the decade of Japanese aggression that led to December 1941. Unfortunately, in our view, compared to the relatively few pages covering these subjects there is a plethora of pages and references for example, to the brutal nature of American strategic bombing, and to Japanese casualties and suffering.

The overall impression is that this script has a point of view. Granted, President Truman's concern about mounting casualties is mentioned in several places. However, preponderantly the reader has the definite impression that the National Air and Space

Museum and the curators have a point of view, namely, that the bomb should not have been dropped; and that it was dropped primarily to impress the Soviet Union.

There are some curious omissions. For example, although President Franklin D. Roosevelt is mentioned on several occasions, his role as Commander-in-Chief of America's armed forces never comes into play. The fact is that although FDR in pre-1941 criticized the bombing of civilians, during 1942-1945 he was a strong and impatient advocate of strategic bombing. He put enormous pressure on Marshall and Arnold to bomb Japanese cities "heavily and relentlessly" (see statements from the Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt). There is no question that strategic bombing policy flowed clearly and directly from the Commander-in-Chief. This is fundamental and most important -- nowhere does FDR's intense desire to bomb appear in "The Last Act."

Although the script mentions Truman's concern with casualties, it would be well to make clear just how worried he was about mounting casualties by inserting his remark: we "want to prevent an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other."

There are other problems, too numerous to mention. Here are a few examples:

(EG 100, p2) "From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese empire was constantly at war." -- constantly made war.

(EG 100, p30) "Although Germany, Italy, and Japan had been widely condemned in the 1930s for attacks on civilian populations, during WWII all sides engaged in it." Equally?

In what way? Context? Aggressors?

(EG 100, p35) Gen LeMay did not "propose" a radical change to Arnold or anyone else; he was under intense pressure from Arnold and Norstad to mount an incendiary campaign.

(EG 500, pp13-28) Section on "The Nuclear Arms Race" is somewhat disjointed, and seems like a somewhat sophomoric treatment of "the nuclear dilemma." Recommend it be entirely deleted.

To summarize: The overall impression gained from "The Last Act" is that the Japanese, despite years of aggression and wanton atrocities and brutality, remain the victims. The culprits in this version of history are the American strategic bombing campaign (against civilians) and those who directed and implemented it.



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
THE CENTER FOR MILITARY HISTORY
WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3402



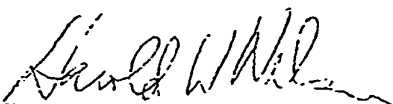
DAMH-RA

19 April 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR Executive Director 50th Anniversary of World
War II Commemoration Committee (LTG Claude M.
Kicklighter, Retired)

SUBJECT: Enola Gay Exhibit

1. I have serious reservations about the National Air and Space Museum's proposed exhibit, "The Crossroads." As you know, the theme of this exhibit is the use and effect of the atomic bombs against Japan in 1945.
2. The subject of the atomic bomb is a legitimate historiographical controversy. The Smithsonian's story line and exhibit, however, offer a revisionist diplomatic historical interpretation of the weapon's employment. In other words, the military dimension of the decision and use of the bomb is neglected.
3. Furthermore the exhibit lacks balance. Its so-called "emotional center" depicts graphically Japanese civilian atomic bomb casualties. Yet the Japanese government, which after all launched the war in China and in the Pacific, is portrayed as a helpless bystander unable to influence the course of events. Such an interpretation presents President Truman's decision to use the bomb in terms of intimidating the Soviet Union, not in ending the war against Japan.
4. Given these deficiencies, I do not want the good name of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, much less that of the U.S. Army, associated with the display.
5. I will be glad to discuss my concerns with you in greater detail.


HAROLD W. NELSON
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20330

16 August 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

FROM: HQ USAF/HO
170 Luke Ave Suite 400
Bolling AFB DC 20332-5113

SUBJECT: Conversation with Martin Harwit on 16 Aug 94

This morning at 0910-0920, I had a conversation with Martin Harwit of the NASM on the proposed Enola Gay exhibition. He had called my office, and I returned his call.

Harwit stated that, upon reflecting on our earlier conversation last Friday, he agreed that if I did any photo exhibition in support of the exhibit, it would look like the museum was "caving in" to the AF. He then asked me if, in my capacity as a member of the advisory board, I could suggest photographic images for them to use. He also stated that he now agreed that the exhibit had to go back beyond VE day and cover more of the war. My feeling was that he wished to coopt our office into support of his exhibit, and this was another way of doing so.

I replied that we could bring this up this afternoon with Gen Moorman, but that I thought that the flaws in the exhibit were far more integral to it, and that they required much greater revision. I suggested that he broaden the exhibit to include the air war in the Pacific as a whole, and then do another exhibit on the nuclear age. He replied that the NASM already had plans for such a nuclear age exhibit, in conjunction with the former USSR, under the curatorship of Gregg Herken, and that he didn't have the resources to change the current exhibit as I had suggested.

I also told him that the adjunct exhibit (which he plans to have in the special exhibit area in the west end of the museum) would have to be configured in such a way that the visitor would have to go through it before going into the exhibit area for the main exhibit.

He agreed, and stated that Nadia Makovenyi (his exhibits chief) "is very good at doing things like this." He stated that this would address the fears of the veterans that not many people remembered WW-2. I told him that setting aside the

area was certainly a good idea, but that I still feared that the exhibit would look disjointed and that there had to be greater attention paid to integrating the changes into the entire exhibit, and that add-ons wouldn't cure the malady. He said "Oh, of course. We know that." But he was not more specific than this.

My overall impression is that Martin Harwit is trying to find some way to have his cake and eat it too: to do his exhibit as it is currently structured, with minimal changes, and then to have a cosmetic patch on the front end that pays some sort of lip-service to the previous war. I think he is doing this because he has to report to his critics--particularly the Congress--that he is addressing the concerns of the critics. It would be very nice for him if he could say "And we have the Air Force Historian working with us on these fixes."

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Richard P. Hallion".

RICHARD P. HALLION, SES
Air Force Historian

OFFICE OF THE AIR FORCE HISTORIAN
COMMENTS ON
NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM'S
REVISED ENOLA GAY EXHIBIT SCRIPT

I have closely reviewed the National Air and Space Museum's revised Enola Gay exhibit script. Significant revisions and improvements have been made. There is more evidence of Japanese atrocities. The idea that the atomic bombs were dropped to impress the Soviet Union has been downgraded. In my view, additional revisions would, beyond doubt, result in a more balanced and accurate script with a more clear context. Basically, the remaining flaws in this script are structural.

The NASM curators have added an introductory exhibition titled "The War in the Pacific: An American Perspective." This new section is incomplete and includes only a sampling of photos (from a total of fifty). Although an assessment of "An American Perspective" is not possible from this sample, this effort seems praiseworthy. My own view is that this add-on section would be more effective and contextual if it were integrated into the main "Last Act" exhibit.

In the main exhibit, the curators emphasize that the Allies had forced unconditional surrender on Nazi Germany and "had won total victory in a just cause" (EG-100, p. 2). No such statement is made in reference to the Pacific War. Is there a distinction as to "just cause" to be made between the war against the Nazis and the war against the Japanese? Time and again, this script indicates that Americans somehow prosecuted a different kind of war against Japan. Was the war with Japan any more so "a fight to the finish" (EG-100, p. 2) than the war with Nazi Germany?

The issue of casualties in the two-pronged potential invasion of Japan (OLYMPIC and CORONET) still needs to be clearly confronted. Based on the US forces to be committed to the planned Kyushu and Honshu invasions, and based on the thirty-five percent casualty rate at Okinawa, which figure President Truman had on his desk on 18 June 1945, estimated US casualties on Kyushu were 268,000 and on Honshu approximately 500,000.

Throughout the script, there is a disturbing tendency to emphasize that most of what was accomplished by the B-29 campaign (prior to dropping

the atomic bombs) was the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians: "The five-month incendiary campaign may have taken more civilian lives than the half-million killed during the five years of allied bombing of Germany" (EG-100, p. 47). As to context and balance, what effect was the strategic bombing campaign (and the naval blockade) having on Japan's ability to continue the war? Nowhere in the script is it mentioned that the bombing campaign against Japan's productive capacity had resulted in lowering output as follows: power generation by 50%; overall industrial output, 60%; oil, 85%; aluminum, 91%; and nitric acid, 83%.

There are numerous examples of a disturbing lack of precision and accuracy in the script. For example: "Starting in June 1945, American aircraft dropped millions of leaflets over dozens of Japanese cities, including Hiroshima, warning people to leave cities that were to be bombed. The leaflets were intended to counter Japanese accusations of 'indiscriminate bombing of civilians'" (EG-100, p. 48). Was dropping of leaflets "intended to counter Japanese accusations" or intended to warn the people? In two places, Maj Gen Curtis E. LeMay is described as "under pressure from Washington to produce results" (EG-100, p. 45; EG-300, p. 27). It would be more accurate to state that LeMay was under pressure from Washington to initiate an incendiary campaign.

Another example of what I would call "presentism," or the view from today, is the following: "For many Americans, combat in the Pacific remained a series of distant events reported through a veil of censorship . . ." (EG-100, p. 50). I was fourteen years old in 1945 and the designated reporter in social studies class on the Pacific war. Neither in the classroom nor in our middle class neighborhood in Springfield, Massachusetts was this war "a series of distant events." It hit home on a daily basis! Also, it is speculated in the script that the huge amount of money spent on the Manhattan Project drove the use of the atomic bomb against Japan: This "expenditure would have to be justified after the war" (EG-200, p. 13).


The changes that NASM has made in this script are indeed welcome, but still incomplete. A close review indicates that the script continues to imply that the strategic bombing and the employment of the atomic bomb were unnecessary and/or unethical (EG-200, p. 42; EG-200, p. 52; EG-500; p. 16a). The addition of "The American Perspective," while welcome, is sort of a cosmetic patch, and implies some sort of moral relevancy between the American perspective and the Japanese perspective. In actuality, the 60-foot front section of the fuselage of the Enola Gay is basically a prop in the overall exhibit. The largest part of the exhibit remains ground zero at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There remains no statement in the script that the Allies were waging a just war against Japan (as is stated in respect to Nazi Germany). Also, there is no statement in the script that the Japanese military retained a strong confidence, that should an invasion come, they could inflict such staggering losses, that the Allies would be forced to seek a negotiated peace.

The script should end on page EG 500-16; the last sixteen pages of the script smack of an add-on, detract from the main thrust of the exhibit, and should be eliminated.

The flaws in "The Last Act" basically are structural and throughout the exhibit. This script is still not up to the standard that the American public has come to expect from the Smithsonian Institution.

Bottom Line: Although a clear improvement and a significant step in the proper direction, the script still needs to be revised and refined to be acceptable as a reliable historical presentation.


HERMAN S. WOLK
Senior Historian
8 September 1994