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PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY • 3

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December 15, 1994

TO: Dr. Martin Harwit
FR: The *Enola Gay* Working Group
RE: "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II."

As representatives of 17 national organizations long concerned with public education concerning nuclear weapons, we now have had the opportunity to review carefully the most recent script of the *Enola Gay* exhibit that you shared with us after our letter of October 19. We have compared that script to the original script of January, 1994 -- prepared by professional curators and museum staff in collaboration with professional historians -- and with an interim script of August 1994 provided to us by others. We have also consulted with the nation's leading historians who are familiar with the script and who expressed their concerns to you in person and at a November 17 news conference.

We are agreed that the *Enola Gay* exhibition and the script as it now stands is unbalanced and historically inaccurate in matters of fact and omission, of emphasis and interpretation. As it now stands, the display takes a one-sided, dehumanized, and somewhat celebratory tone unsuited to the National Air and Space Museum. The current script will make it impossible for viewers to understand why the bombings still remain so controversial in the United States and around the world. Similarly, visitors to the National Air and Space Museum, if the display remains unchanged, will be unable to grasp the serious post-war consequences of the decision to build, test and use atomic weapons. These were covered in the original script and should be restored. The *Enola Gay* not only helped end the war in Japan, but also unleashed a weapon whose destructiveness, power and after-effects have been widely condemned.

We particularly object to the main message and tone of the display as currently conceived: That the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was necessary to end the war in the Pacific speedily; no serious alternatives existed or were considered; no dissent or protests were put forward before the use of the Bomb or immediately after its use; all civilians in Hiroshima, many of them women and children, were legitimate targets and could properly be punished for the heinous Japanese crimes outlined in the initial section of the exhibit; and that the use of the Bomb had no serious consequences for the post-war world in which we live -- including a nuclear arms race, the continuing threat of proliferation, and serious human health and environmental problems from nuclear weapons production and testing.

There were alternatives to the atomic bombings in order to end the war promptly; indeed, they might have brought surrender even earlier than the bombs were available and before the Soviets had entered the war. Chief among these was the recommendation to assure the Japanese

publicly that they would be allowed to keep the Emperor. This was strongly urged by Grew, Forrestal, Stimson, Leahy, Bard, McCloy and the JCS, among others. We still live with the consequences today of failing to test this and other advice.

Our immediate and specific recommendations are:

1. Indicate in the exhibit in a prominent and unmistakable way that why the Bomb was dropped and whether it was necessary to end the war are matters of vigorous scholarly and public debate on which Americans do legitimately disagree. We believe that the exhibit should be true to the goals of the original NASM planning document, which called for an exhibit that "is nuanced and causes the public to debate the dropping of the bomb, especially in light of recent scholarship." The opening of the original script "To this day, controversy has raged about whether dropping this weapon on Japan was necessary to end the war quickly" should be restored. There should also be a panel that reflects what the most recent review of the historical literature describes correctly as "the consensus of scholars" that "the bomb was not needed to avoid an invasion of Japan and to end the war within a relatively short time. It is clear that alternatives to the bomb existed and that Truman and his advisors knew it." (J. Samuel Walker in Diplomatic History, Winter 1990).

The NASM should also restore and expand a panel from the third script quoting Admiral Leahy and President Eisenhower that said "After the war, it was not considered unpatriotic to question the use of the atomic bomb and a few senior U.S. military leaders were among those who did so." (EG:511-L1, August 31, 1994, p. 16a.) The conclusion of the current exhibit featuring letters from World War II veterans praising the bomb's use since they believe it saved their lives should be balanced with other contrasting personal views, or the section should be replaced with a section or series of panels featuring the historical and moral debate that surrounded the first use of atomic bombs.

2. Restore and emphasize material from two separate deleted sections labelled EG 500 from scripts one and three (January and August 1994) on the post-war arms race and opposition to the bomb, especially three panels on "A Different View", "Nuclear Waste and Human Experiments", and "Ban the Bomb". A display that shows the creation and use of atomic weapons without revealing the American victims of nuclear production and testing, the environmental and radioactive hazards left at production sites and the rapid increase of proliferation of such weapons is incomplete and morally numb. NASM visitors must understand that the United States today still lives with a dangerous legacy from nuclear weapons. Additional materials about American concern over the bombings and the post-war arms race including many of the organizations represented today is essential. We will be glad to provide documentary, archival, photographic and other materials for such a section, including the effects on over 250,000 American GI's and over 600,000 nuclear weapons production workers.

3. A section on the immediate and contemporaneous religious, moral and political protest and concern over the bombings must be added. Americans were neither united nor unanimous in their reaction to the bombings. Indeed, opposition to the bomb grew rapidly throughout 1945 and 1946. Include documentation of the editorials of Norman Cousins and Dorothy Day, the denunciation of the bombings by the Federal Council of Churches along with

Truman's reply, the moral concern expressed by the Vatican. Radio broadcast descriptions of the bomb's destructive power by Dr. Philip Morrison of the Manhattan Project, which highlighted public concern over the bomb, are also available from archival sources. Dr. Morrison continues to this day to be concerned about the effects of nuclear weapons proliferation and nuclear weapons effects. Similarly, recordings and texts of John Hersey's Hiroshima are available. These were part of an immediate post-war wave of concern that led directly to Henry Stimson's 1947 Harper's Magazine article justifying the bombings.

4. Change the treatment of Japanese killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to reflect clearly their individuality and primarily non-combatant status. (some 95% of the deaths at Hiroshima were civilian non-combatants). Photographs and text about individual Japanese victims of the bombing should be restored, especially the historic Yamahata photos showing a mother and child, and a small boy in Nagasaki the morning after the bomb. The removal of these two photos alone is clear indication of a pattern of editing and censorship that removed individual human suffering. Similarly, the deleted section of the script that stated that the bodies of those closest to Ground Zero were never recovered but were vaporized must be restored.

5. Return the current script to the original advisory board for peer review and discussion at a face to face meeting of the NASM Advisory Board. We object to the politicization of history and believe that public review or comment on the exhibit, including our own, should be judged on the merits by curators and historians. All Americans should abhor censorship and one-sided review.

Even if these changes are made to the current exhibit, additional efforts to fairly present the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in full context must be carried out.

1. The NASM must make a formal commitment to mount an exhibit on the post-war nuclear arms race, its environmental and health consequences, and opposition to it that has led to various attempts to control, limit and now reduce nuclear arms.

2. The NASM must plan public programming during the Enola Gay exhibition focused on those areas poorly presented or deleted from the exhibit such as the historical controversy over the dropping of the bomb, the human consequences, radiation effects and suffering involved, including fuller treatment of the "hibakusha", the moral and political protest over the Bomb both before, immediately after and continuing since its use. In addition to lectures, debates and panels, the NASM should consider film showings or festivals, additional printed materials such as a catalogue or study guide for the exhibit that contains a fuller, more nuanced treatment, and so on.