



**REMEMBERING  
HIROSHIMA:  
The Smithsonian Controversy**

• RESOURCE PACKET •

Fellowship of Reconciliation • Box 271 • Nyack, NY 10960 • (914) 358-4601

CONTENTS:

Background: The Exhibit and the Controversy (P.2)

The Key Issues (P.6)

The Script (P.9)

- Summary of Changes: January 1994-October 1994
- Visual Images in the Exhibition

Perspectives from Historians (P.12)

- Excerpts, Hiroshima Scholars Press Conference (P.14)
- Historians' Letter to the Smithsonian (P.20)

Action Suggestions

Contacts

Selected Articles

- "The Enola Gay: A Nation's, and a Museum's, Dilemma,"  
Martin Harwit, *Washington Post*
- "The Curators Cave In," Kai Bird, *New York Times*
- Letters, Jo Becker, Greg Mitchell and Robert Jay Lifton,  
*New York Times*
- "Beyond the Smithsonian Flap: Historians' New Consensus,"  
Gar Alperovitz, *Washington Post*
- "A Chronology of the Smithsonian's "Last Act"," John R. Dichtl,  
*Organization of American Historians Newsletter*
- "No Peace for Enola Gay," Eugene Meyer, *Washington Post*
- "A-Bomb Exhibit Takes Another Hit." Eugene Meyer, *Washington Post*
- "Enola Gay Moves as Debate Goes On," *New York Times*
- "Hiroshima, Rewritten," Barton Bernstein, *New York Times*

NOT INCLUDED

First produced by Jo Becker, November 1994  
Revised February 1995

# BACKGROUND

Beginning in May of 1995, the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum will mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and the atomic bombing of Japan with an exhibition of the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The restoration of the plane is the largest such project in the museum's history, costing the museum nearly \$1 million, and requiring more than 35,000 hours of labor since the restoration began in 1984.

The original script for the exhibition, dated January 1994, made clear that there has been a controversy from the beginning over the decision to drop the bomb. Through artifacts, photos and testimony of survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it sought to accurately present the devastation caused by the use of the bomb. The original script concluded with a description of the "legacy" of the bombing, including acknowledgment of the nuclear arms race, nuclear weapons testing and human radiation experiments, and official arms control initiatives.

This first script was reviewed by an advisory committee of respected scholars and historians. Although some modifications were indicated, in general, the committee approved of the planned exhibition.

**THE CONTROVERSY:** A national controversy began to emerge after the Air Force Association printed a harsh critique of the exhibition in its magazine, *Air Force*. Presenting the exhibition as "anti-American" and overly sympathetic to the Japanese, the article prompted protests by veterans who deluged the museum and Congress with letters and phone calls condemning the plans. Subsequent pressure came from the American Legion and conservative members of Congress, who passed resolutions criticizing the Smithsonian for a "revisionist, unbalanced and offensive" exhibit.

Under this pressure, the museum undertook massive revisions of the exhibition. Museum officials met over 40 times with veterans groups, including marathon sessions to conduct a line-by-line review of the script. Revised scripts released in August and October of 1994 indicated plans for the exhibit that were vastly different from the original.

The size of the exhibit was doubled with a new segment entitled "The War in the Pacific: An American Perspective", which emphasized Japanese atrocities and expansionism. The bombing was presented as justifiable and unquestioned. The segment on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was cut significantly, and the "legacy of the bomb" almost entirely eliminated.

Based on the changes, Japanese institutions indicated that they might withdraw their cooperation with the exhibit by refusing to lend photos and artifacts. Several groups have protested the revisions, including the Nagasaki A-Bomb

Testimony Committee, which wrote to the Museum stating, "The survivors and citizens in Hiroshima and Nagasaki feel anger and sorrow concerning the US affirmation of the dropping of the A-bomb." In a letter to Vice President Gore, Major Takashi Hiraoka of Hiroshima wrote that, "We think it is significant to discuss how to eliminate wars in this nuclear age instead of the justification of wars in the past."

In November, the Fellowship of Reconciliation organized a delegation of leading historians and scholars to meet with Smithsonian officials regarding the exhibition. The delegation challenged the script for historical imbalance, inaccuracies, and failing to acknowledge the extent of the controversy over the decision to drop the bomb. The group presented a dozen recommendations for revisions to the script, particularly urging that photos and artifacts depicting the full extent of the human suffering in Hiroshima and Nagasaki be restored; that the significant opposition to the bombing from military, political, and religious leaders of the time be adequately represented; and that the exhibition acknowledge that Japan was already near defeat when the bomb was dropped and that even without the bombing, a US invasion of Japan was unlikely.

In mid-December, a delegation of peace representatives met with museum officials. The meeting was requested by a group of eighteen peace organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee, Church of the Brethren, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Greenpeace, National Association of Radiation Survivors, Pax Christi, Peace Action, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Union of Concerned Scientists, and others.

In January of 1995, the Smithsonian announced that it was revising the script's estimates of US casualties resulting from a possible invasion of Japan. While the previous script cited the possibility of a quarter-million deaths, historians could not find evidence supporting numbers higher than 69,000. After the Smithsonian announced it would use the lower number, the American Legion began to call for complete cancellation of the exhibition. Soon after, 80 Congressmembers signed a letter addressed to the Smithsonian Secretary, calling for the resignation of Air and Space Director Martin Harwit.

On January 30, in a widely publicized press conference, the Smithsonian announced that it was drastically scaling back the exhibition. The 600-page script from the exhibit was being dropped, and the Enola Gay would be displayed with only a minimal text, and a video of the bombing crew.

**THE F.O.R.'s RESPONSE:** The FOR has consistently opposed recent scripts as historically inaccurate, unbalanced, and a glorification of the bombing. In response to the announced scaling back, the FOR released a statement saying: "It would be unconscionable to proceed with the latest revision, which fails to acknowledge the 50-year controversy over the decision to drop the bomb, and omits key historical documents that raise questions about the bombing."

5

Given this imbalance, cutting back the exhibit is preferable to continuing with the most recent script. However, it is unfortunate that the American public will be denied a full range of information and interpretation about the bombing, one of the most significant acts of this century. Simply exhibiting the plane itself will ignore the human cost of the bombing, the 50-year legacy of the bomb, and the historical and moral controversies over its use. We believe these issues are central to any commemoration of the end of W.W. II."

**THE SIGNIFICANCE:** A full exhibit on the atomic bomb would have great potential to educate Americans about the violent devastation of the bomb, and bring us face to face with its victims and consequences. 200,000 human beings were killed immediately by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings; tens of thousands more died in the decades following from radiation poisoning. The bomb dropped by the *Enola Gay* also marked the beginning of the atomic age, which continues today. The US, as the only country to use the bomb, has a special responsibility to recognize the significance of that act, to take the lead in ensuring that it never happens again, and to realize that the future of civilization is threatened by our continued possession and development of nuclear weapons.

Prior to the massive revisions of the exhibit, Martin Harwit, director of the Air and Space Museum, acknowledged the responsibility of the Museum to help visitors apply the lessons from the past to the future. He wrote, "The Museum wants to ensure that the history represented in the exhibit is true to the documented facts. But 50 years may not be enough time to prepare the nation to confront such a history. How we resolve this fundamental issue will determine what we choose to remember about World War II in this exhibit and in our collective memory as a nation. George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." It's a crisp, astute admonishment, but one that we may not fully comprehend. If we want to avoid the fate Santayana warned us about, we cannot afford to remember selectively..... if we are unable to draw wisdom from the war's conclusion, we will have marked its anniversary with a deplorable failure."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, as the controversy has unfolded, and with its final result, that failure is certain.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Air and Space*, August/September 1994

## THE KEY ISSUES

Many news accounts have given attention to the American Legion's characterization of the Enola Gay exhibit scripts as "anti-American and pro-Japanese." Recent reports have misrepresented the exhibition by focusing on excerpts and criticisms of the earliest (January 1994) script. These reports fail to acknowledge the extensive revisions that were made in mid- and late-1994. Following is an overview of some of the key issues involved, and the changes made under American Legion pressure:

**THE CONTROVERSY OVER DROPPING THE BOMB:** The initial exhibition script acknowledged in its opening paragraphs that "To this day, controversy has raged over whether dropping this weapon on Japan was necessary to end the war quickly." Among those who challenged the use of the bomb were two 5-star generals of the US military, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Admiral William Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Criticism of the bombing shortly after the fact also came from prominent individuals and organizations, including Albert Einstein, John Foster Dulles, the Vatican, Protestant church leaders, and the Federal Council of Churches.

The last script, released in October of 1994, did not recognize any controversy, and left the visitor with the impression that there has been no significant debate or criticism regarding use of the bomb.

**A U.S. INVASION OF JAPAN:** Many Americans believe that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki prevented a bloody US invasion of Japan that could have resulted in up to a million US casualties, and figures five times higher for the Japanese.

However, there were many indications that Japan was already close to surrender at the time of the bombing. A 1946 Strategic Bombing Survey conducted by the US military concluded that Japan would have surrendered by the end of 1945, even without the use of the atomic bomb, or a US invasion. Scholars who have studied military planning documents are also unable to find any worst-case scenarios citing more than 46,000 US deaths, even if an invasion had occurred.

The last script revision presented an invasion as an inevitability without the use of the bomb, gave little indication of the weakness of Japan's position, and portrayed the Japanese as fanatical and unwilling to consider surrender.

**WHY THE BOMB WAS DROPPED:** The last script presented the rationale for the bombing as simply to save lives by ending the war quickly. Other factors that may have influenced the decision were not acknowledged, including the desire to demonstrate US military superiority to the Soviets (and the world) and the momentum and cost (\$2 billion) of the Manhattan Project.

**PRESENTATION OF GROUND ZERO:** The text of the section of the exhibit was reduced by 25% from the original, and numerous photos and artifacts (deemed "too emotionally charged" by the American Legion) were removed. The final script called for 55 photos in this section, most of rubble and objects. Only six showed injured people, and only one depicted any dead victims. This presentation utterly failed to represent the extent of human suffering from the bombings.

The final script did not mention that the victims closest to Ground Zero were vaporized, and their bodies never recovered. It also inadequately represented the physical and psychological suffering of the *hibakusha*, the radiation victims.

**THE COST OF THE WAR, PRE-HIROSHIMA:** Prior to the atomic bombings, the US Air Force carried out a five-month incendiary bombing campaign against Japan. The March 9-10 raid against Tokyo to this day remains the single most destructive non-nuclear attack in human history. The five-month campaign also took more civilian lives than the half-million killed during Allied bombing of Germany. The indiscriminate nature of the bombing, and massive loss of life was not acknowledged by the final script, even though US losses in the Pacific war, and Japanese atrocities, were covered in detail.

**PORTRAYAL OF THE JAPANESE:** Rather than acknowledging that the vast majority of Japanese killed during the war were civilian, the exhibit portrayed all Japanese as mobilized for the war effort, suggesting that they were justifiable targets.

Also, while Japanese racism and atrocities against Americans are emphasized, American racism against the Japanese was eliminated from the script. The internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans in camps from 1942-1945 is not even mentioned.

**THE 50-YEAR LEGACY:** The "legacy" of the bomb was reduced to one page. There was no discussion of the post-war nuclear arms race, five decades of nuclear weapons production and testing, radiation effects on both military personnel and civilians, and its consequent environmental destruction. The exhibition also did not depict the US and international disarmament movements, the post-war peace movement in Japan, and international commitments to the abolition of nuclear weapons, including the first resolution of the US General Assembly, and Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

**CELEBRATION OF THE BOMB:** The added emphasis on Japanese atrocities and elimination of any indication of criticism or doubts about the bomb served to create a celebration of the *Enola Gay* and the atomic bombing. Physically, the *Enola Gay* will dominate the display, in a museum where all other air and space craft are presented as tributes to human achievement. The added impact of life-

size, smiling cut-outs of the crew in front of the plane, and a closing selection of letters from veterans praising the use of the bomb, would have helped to cast a positive light on the bombing.

**THE PROCESS:** Aside from the critical questions of content, questions must also be raised about the way in which the Air Force Association and American Legion were able to use political pressure to bully the Smithsonian into making changes that run contrary to documented history. Although the first version of the script was submitted to a scholarly advisory board for review, the board has not been reconvened following the most recent revisions. In developing the final script, the Smithsonian gave political interest groups more influence over the final product than historical scholarship, and chose to be "patriotically correct" rather than historically balanced.

13



# THE EXHIBITION SCRIPT

First released in January of 1994, the script for the exhibition was revised several times before being scrapped in January of 1995. The last script, released in late October, 1994, was the fourth version. Most people involved in the controversy consider the January version to best reflect the original intentions of the exhibit's curators. Comparisons of the October script to the original reveal fundamental changes in the plans for the exhibit.

Following is a brief summary of the changes made between January and October, compiled by Greg Mitchell, based on careful comparisons of the two texts. A fuller analysis of changes made in the script between January and October can be requested from the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

## WHAT WAS DELETED:

- any mention that there has been scholarly debate or public controversy over Hiroshima
- all quotes by officials or military leaders who opposed or criticized the decision to use the bombs (such as Under Secretary of the Navy Ralph Bard, Admiral William D. Leahy, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Secretary of War John J. McCloy, etc.)
- the role "sending a signal to the Soviets" or any other factor may have played in using the bomb
- all references to Japan being close to collapse when the bomb was used
- recognition that the Japanese surrender was not "unconditional"
- a suggestion that the \$2 billion spent on the bomb was a factor in using it
- all references to the bomb being used "without warning"
- all photos of dead Japanese victims of the bomb (except one)
- most of the photos of injured survivors (leaving six)
- many quotes by survivors of the bombing
- recognition of US racism against the Japanese
- all references to the Japanese-American internment camps
- Truman's quote upon hearing about the use of the bomb: "This is the greatest thing in history."
- a reference to Truman having some qualms, afterwards, about using the bomb
- a reference to the bombing of Tokyo as being the most destructive ever
- a quote by Marshall calling for air attacks on civilians
- US complicity in some of the firebombings in Europe
- a statistic that bomb survivors had five times the chance of getting leukemia than others
- numerous artifacts related to children who died in the bombings
- a reference to some people questioning the use of the bomb against Nagasaki
- the entire "legacy" section on the arms race, nuclear testing, radiation experiments, anti-nuclear activities, etc.

**THE SCRIPT WAS REVISED TO SHOW THAT:**

- Truman used the bomb ONLY to save lives, not partly for other reasons (this point made multiple times)
- the bomb and the bomb alone ended the war
- Soviet entry alone could not have ended the war and did not contribute to surrender
- an invasion was inevitable without the use of the bomb (this point made several times)
- Japan was not close to collapse but eager to fight on (this point also made many times)
- Japanese peace feelers were not at all serious or worth pursuing
- US invasion might have led to one million casualties (not tens of thousands); the war might have gone on into "late 1946" or later
- Hiroshima and Nagasaki were legitimate military targets
- American scientists and military didn't know much about radiation effects when we used the bomb
- "people" were killed by the bomb, not "civilians"

**WHAT WAS ADDED TO THE SCRIPT:**

- a lengthy new display about the Pacific war
- expansion of the existing section on the war
- a new film on the bombing group that dropped the bomb
- many details on (and photos of) Japanese atrocities in the Pacific and the plight of US prisoners
- many quotes by veterans saying the atomic bomb saved their lives
- many references to (and photos of) students, women and other Japanese civilians being involved in the war effort (therefore all civilians were "soldiers")
- reference to all of Japan being made a "war zone"
- US incendiary attacks were the ONLY way to destroy Japan's industry
- many statistics on percentage of Japanese industry allegedly knocked out by city bombings
- incorrect reference to US dropping warning leaflets on Nagasaki before the bombing
- quotes by Japanese Emperor Hirohito and others on how the bomb allegedly caused the end of the war
- reference to Enrico Fermi opposing scientists who protested the bombing
- the label "Hindsight" attached to any questioning of the inevitability of an invasion
- a statement that Japan would have used the bomb against us if it had the chance.

# VISUAL IMAGES IN THE EXHIBITION

## GROUND ZERO SECTION:

Pages of script	49	(reduced by 25% from the original)
Total photographs:	55	
Objects (including artifacts)	15	
Rubble/landscape	12	
Mushroom clouds	7	
Aerial photos and maps	7	
Badly injured victims	6	
Shadow effects (from objects)	4	
Sadako and statue	2	
US Research Center	2	
Dead victims	1	

Photos of dead or injured deleted from the original script: 15

## ENOLA GAY SECTION:

Pages of script:	83
Total photographs:	120
A "film" on the bombing group	
Life-size cut-out of the crew	
Models of two atomic bombs	
The massive and striking <i>Enola Gay</i> itself	

• • •

Photos of crew on Hiroshima mission: 15  
Photos of injured atomic bomb victims: 6

Photos of B-29s *not* involved in atomic bomb mission: 12  
Photos of dead atomic bomb victims: 1

Photos of US research center studying radiation effects: 2  
Photos of victims suffering from radiation effects: 1

Number of letters in comment section at the end of the exhibit  
from veterans supporting the use of the bomb: 4  
Number of letters questioning the use of the bomb: 1

- compiled by Greg Mitchell

# PERSPECTIVES FROM HISTORIANS

Following the release of the August 1994 revision of the *Enola Gay* script, historians began to speak out, criticizing the Smithsonian for the exhibition's lack of historical balance, disregard of important historical scholarship, and for allowing political forces to censor the content of the exhibition.

On October 22, the Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians passed a resolution that condemned threats by members of Congress to pull funding from the Smithsonian because of the exhibition's perceived lack of patriotism. The resolution also criticized the Air and Space Museum for removing historical documents from the exhibition, and abandoning established professional procedures and criteria for revising the exhibit.

In November, the Fellowship of Reconciliation organized a delegation of nine respected historians and scholars who have conducted significant research into the history of the bombings and their aftermath. After reviewing the October 1994 script, the delegation met for two hours with Martin Harwit, director of the National Air and Space Museum, and other museum officials, in order to discuss the exhibition.

The delegation made twelve recommendations to Dr. Harwit, agreeing that *at a minimum*, the exhibition should:

- 1) Clearly acknowledge the 50-year controversy regarding the use of the bomb and whether it was necessary to end World War II.
- 2) Recognize evidence that Japan was near defeat before the bomb was dropped.
- 3) Include key statements from historical figures reflecting reservations about the use of the bomb.
- 4) Include an accurate assessment of the destruction caused by incendiary attacks against Japan.
- 5) Revise the impression that Hiroshima and its civilian inhabitants constituted a legitimate and primarily military target.
- 6) Revise the text related to expected American casualties in the event of a US invasion of Japan to conform to historical documents.
- 7) Acknowledge the Japanese-American internment camps.
- 8) Restore deleted sections to the "Ground Zero" section of the exhibit, depicting the full effects of the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- 9) Provide a fuller treatment of *hibakusha*, and what was known about radiation effects at the time of the bombing.
- 10) Include historical documentation of contemporaneous religious, moral, and political protest over the dropping of the bomb.

- 11) Include an adequate treatment of the legacy of the bombing, including nuclear weapons production, testing, the arms race, disarmament movement, etc.
- 12) Submit the current script to the Museum's original advisory committee for professional peer review.

Dr. Harwit's response to the recommendations was that they would be taken under advisement, but that there was little likelihood of any substantial changes to the current script.

Following the meeting, the delegation held a press conference to discuss its recommendations and meeting. It also released a letter signed by over 50 historians and scholars, strongly criticizing the exhibition as it now stands, and urging substantial revisions. The press conference was covered by national and international media, including ABC Nightly News, Good Morning America, Tokyo Broadcasting System, UPI Radio, and over a dozen newspapers in the United States and Japan. Excerpts of statements made by the delegation at the press conference follow.

The historian's letter (also following) was drafted by Kai Bird, an independent historian, and Martin Sherwin, a historian at Dartmouth and a member of the Smithsonian's original advisory board for the exhibition. The letter is notable for unifying scholars with vastly different views about the necessity of the bombing. However, it's signatories are agreed that "certain irrevocable facts cannot be omitted without so corrupting the exhibit that it is reduced to mere propaganda....It is unconscionable...that as a result of pressures from outside the museum, the exhibit will no longer attempt to present a balanced range of the historical scholarship on this issue." The letter also accuses the Smithsonian of a "transparent attempt at historical cleansing".

In January of 1995, Martin Harwit announced changes regarding casualty figures from a possible US invasion of Japan, accepting one of the delegation's recommendations (#6). Although many members of the delegation considered it the least significant of the recommendations, the American Legion responded by calling for the complete cancellation of the exhibition.

## EXCERPTS: HIROSHIMA SCHOLARS PRESS CONFERENCE

**BARTON BERNSTEIN:** The present script comes very close to being, if not constituting, a celebration of the atomic bombing, and not a thoughtful, nuanced analysis of the historical events of 1945. In many ways, the present script has betrayed the museum's own original statement of their purposes, which included that they would offer a thoughtful, balanced presentation of the use of the atomic bomb, its preceding events and its significance. In many ways, the script is deeply flawed, and basically, unsatisfactory.

We feel that it is incumbent upon the museum to educate Americans, and to omit and in fact to have deleted that there has been a long-run debate among historians and others on why the bomb was used, and whether it was necessary and justifiable, is to impoverish the viewers attending the exhibit.

Secondly, we think it is very important that those who attend the exhibit know that many doubts and questions have been raised about the bombing. We think it is very important that Americans of the W.W.II generation, and succeeding generations know that among those that challenged the use of the atomic bomb were two of the roughly six five-star generals of the US military - General Dwight D. Eisenhower in his memoirs raised issues, as did Admiral William Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and special advisor to the president.

Our recommendations included urging Dr. Harwit that he reconvene the advisory committee, submit the present script to them, and ask for and be greatly informed by that committee's advice.

*Dr. Barton Bernstein, Professor of History and Director of International Relations at Stanford University is a member of the Exhibition Advisory Board for the Enola Gay exhibit. He is author of numerous scholarly works related to the bombing, including The Atomic Bomb (1976).*

**GREG MITCHELL:** In our meeting today, besides raising our opposition to many of the things which we had read and heard about the exhibit, we also expressed support for the original goals of the exhibit, their intent, and indeed the plans that were made for the exhibit, as well as large elements of the original script. We were there also partly not to criticize, but to express support for the original vision and intentions of the curators and the director of the museum. The original intent as stated in the final planning document was to tell the full story of the atomic attack on Japan, based on full scholarship, evidence that has come out in the last fifty years, as well as the present day historical analysis, and expressing a wide range of views.

I would like to read three or four sentences from the original planning document. It promised a "nuanced picture of the decision-making that went beyond the dogmatic belief in the official explanation that dropping the bomb prevented a bloody invasion. The primary goal was to encourage visitors to undertake a thoughtful and balanced reexamination of the bombings. While there will be undoubtedly other commemorations in connection with the 50th anniversary, this exhibit will provide a crucial public service

(5)

by reexamining these issues in the light of the most recent scholarship. The museum hopes that the proposed exhibit will contribute to a more profound discussion of the atomic bombings among the general public. Visitors will thus leave, we hope, thinking and debating these most crucial historical events of the century." We do not believe that visitors to this exhibit as it is presently constructed, will leave with very much to talk about, and certainly even less to debate.

*Greg Mitchell is author of numerous books, including The Campaign of the Century, winner of the 1992 Goldsmith Book Prize from Harvard University. He is co-author (with Robert Jay Lifton) of Hiroshima and America, to be published next year by G. P. Putnam.*

**ROBERT JAY LIFTON:** In addition to being a teacher and writer about matters psychiatric and psychological, I am also a Air Force veteran. I served in Korea and Japan in 1952 and 1953, the time of the Korean war. Over the years, I've worked closely with veterans from W.W.II, the Korean war, and the Vietnam war. I therefore consider myself to be sensitive to the needs and psychological experiences of veterans of all of these wars, and I am deeply sympathetic to W.W.II veterans, recognizing the risks they went through, and the courage with which they fought, and the necessity of winning a war on behalf of maintaining human freedoms. But that doesn't make the Air Force personnel historians, and I think that in their name, a great deal of misleading and false history has been put forward.

I also lived in Hiroshima for six months in 1962, where I did a psychological study of the effects of the atomic bombing. The people of Hiroshima cooperated with me once they understood that my goal was to understand all the human effects of the bomb, what the bomb did to human beings, and that still seems to me, the central issue. I learned quickly in Hiroshima that from a split second of exposure to that weapon, if one did survive, one underwent a lifelong immersion in death, first the sea of death that one saw around one, to stages of fear or actual experience of radiation effects, acute or delayed. Fears of radiation effects, of being struck down, extended throughout one's life, and into subsequent generations.

The exhibition as its now constituted precisely fails to make clear these human effects. They should be a central theme, and they should be much more forcefully put forward. The fiftieth anniversary commemoration is a unique opportunity, especially in the Smithsonian, to make clear to Americans what happened in Hiroshima and afterwards. And that really means laying out all of the evidence surrounding the decision to use the bomb, the effects of the bomb, and the significance of the bomb for the future. It is in all of these areas that the exhibition fails, and we want to make a strong plea for maximum knowledge and insight. Those are essential for any kind of historical inquiry, or any psychological work. They are also crucial as a basis for humane future policies.

*Dr. Robert Jay Lifton is Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the City University of New York. He is the author of Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima, which won a National Book Award (1969), as well as many other books about nuclear threat.*

**JOSEPH GERSON:** In the course of my work, I've been to Hiroshima and Nagasaki five or six times, and have worked closely with the *hibakusha*, the survivors of the atomic bombings. A major part of my work has been a study of US atomic diplomacy, and the more than twenty occasions on which the US has threatened to use nuclear weapons in the midst of war, replaying the Hiroshima and Nagasaki models.

As we understand and has been said, the exhibit is functionally, maybe not intentionally, but functionally, a celebration of the development and the use of nuclear weapons against the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It marginalizes almost to the point of ignoring the central reality of those bombings: the mass and instantaneous death, the long-term suffering of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the majority of whom were innocent civilians. There is international law which relates to this.

My sense, and here I speak for myself, is that the exhibit has come to reflect that "banality of evil", the institutionalization of death. Its purpose in showing what it claims to be the legitimate use of nuclear weapons, legitimizes their use for the future. Knowing what many *hibakusha* would think and say, I want to address my remarks briefly in two directions. One, to the people and institutions of Japan. Dr. Harwit told us that it is not now certain whether Japanese institutions would provide either artifacts or testimony of the atomic bombings. This exhibit serves to legitimate an unnecessary and brutal bombing. I would strongly encourage Japanese individuals and Japanese institutions not to cooperate in any way with this exhibit until major reforms are made, until it goes back to its original board, and until integrity and balance are restored.

I also want to address a number of staff people at the Smithsonian, with whom we met today. Some of them are very good people. Some of them are people with jobs and mortgages. Some of them know the political powers that have been exercised in the last months. It is my belief that some of them are at the limits of what their consciences will permit. I urge them to act within their consciences. Thank you.

*Joseph Gerson is author of the upcoming With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion and Moral Imagination, has worked closely with hibakusha (Japanese radiation survivors), and published previous books in both the United States and Japan.*

**LAWRENCE WITTNER:** As history, the Smithsonian exhibit is seriously unbalanced, for it brushes aside all historical evidence that might raise doubts about dropping the atomic bomb. One way to remedy this, and thus let viewers draw their own conclusions is to include statements by some of the critics of the bombing. Consequently, today we have presented to Smithsonian officials a stack of documents and other material that will assist them in developing a more balanced exhibit, if indeed that is what they want. These include criticisms of plans for the atomic bombing before it occurred, by Leo Szilard, the scientist who began the Manhattan Project, Dwight Eisenhower, a group of distinguished scientists at the Chicago labs, John McCloy, assistant secretary of war, Ralph Bard, Undersecretary of the Navy, and 67 scientists that signed a petition at the Oak Ridge labs. They also include condemnations of the bombings after it occurred by Edward Teller, Albert Einstein, John Foster Dulles, a group of 35 Protestant church leaders, and the Federal Council of Churches. One of these critics of the bombing became president of the United States, yet another became Secretary of State, and two became chairs of the Atomic Energy Commission. We think that their views of the atomic bombing deserve recognition, as do criticisms of the bombing from the Vatican, General Douglas MacArthur, and a broad range of people.

*Dr. Lawrence S. Wittner is Professor of History at the State University of New York at Albany. The most recent of his many scholarly books and articles on international issues is One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953 (Stanford University Press, 1993).*



**CAROLE GALLAGHER:** I'm author of *American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War*, which documented the effects of nuclear testing in Nevada on people living down-wind, on test site workers, and on atomic veterans, our own American *hibakusha*. In the script for the proposed Smithsonian exhibition, much will be made about what events or beliefs led to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One would hope that the suffering of the twentieth century *hibakusha* as phenomena specific to the nuclear age, would be represented, for there are *hibakusha* throughout the world, as a result of nuclear weapons tests. Some were American soldiers, prisoners of war, located in and near Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the bombs were detonated.

A second group of servicemen were exposed to the radiation of atomic weapons when the second and fifth Marine divisions came to Hiroshima and Nagasaki as part of the American occupation of Japan. Living in and breathing and ingesting the radioactive detritus of these pulverized cities for many months, they were never warned of the danger to themselves, or the health of their children or grandchildren.

Finally, there is a third set of *hibakusha*, the undecorated casualties of our secret nuclear war, the weapons plant workers, the down-winders, the atomic veterans who are victims of the largest human nuclear experiment in history. These were a result of our nuclear tests in Nevada and elsewhere. This exhibit should not ignore those damaged by more than 1000 nuclear bombs subsequently detonated after Hiroshima and Nagasaki on American soil and elsewhere. For these patriotic Americans, soldiers and civilians, have suffered greatly and stand in respectful solidarity with the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They have made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives for their country, and deserve to have their place in the history of the nuclear age, such as this exhibition alleges to be.

The legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is with us still, and the lives and the deaths of all victims of nuclear weapons. They should not be ignored just because their existence makes us uncomfortable about our ethics.

*Carole Gallagher is a documentarian and author of American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War (Random House, 1994). Her photographs and articles concerning the nuclear weapons complex have been published in The New York Times, Newsweek, New York Newsday, The Times of London, Der Spiegel and many other national and international publications.*

**STANLEY GOLDBERG:** Anyone who studies the conditions around the use of the atomic bomb in detail realizes that there are many reasons why the bomb was used. With complex organizations such as the Manhattan Project, under the control of another complex organization such as the government of the United States of America, one can imagine that those who were responsible for making the decision had a wide range of motives for using the bomb. It is rather startling then, to see the Air Force Association and the American Legion successfully convince the Smithsonian that the only reason that the bomb was used was to shorten the war and to result in the net saving of lives.

I was a member of the advisory committee to the Smithsonian Institution for this exhibit. I should tell you that at the time that the advisory board met, although each of us had some very particular criticisms of individual labels in the exhibit, there was unanimous agreement that this was a good exhibit. It needed fixing, but when one sees those labels taken out of context and put in the press, one realizes how easy it is to distort the actual situation. Now when I say that there was unanimous agreement that this was a powerful and good exhibit, that would include the judgment at the time of Air Force historian

Richard Hallion. He was at that meeting, and very supportive of the exhibit and the curators of the exhibit. He seems to have only changed his mind after he left the meeting and began talking to other people.

Once I realized that the officials of the museum were exposing the curators to the direct pressure of Congress and the Air Force Association and the American Legion, and in fact allowed the Air Force Association and the American Legion to censure the exhibit, and that's the only term I think one can use, I saw no other option, but was forced to resign from the advisory committee.

*Dr. Stanley Goldberg is a historian of science, a consultant to the Smithsonian Institution for the last fourteen years, and is currently writing a biography of Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project.*

**ROBERT MUSIL:** I want to reiterate what many other people have said. I was shocked by the process of direct intervention of the American Legion and outside groups into this process and the production process of this display. Such procedure would have been unheard of and out of line when I produced documentary series for the National Endowment for the Humanities, which were carefully balanced, peer-reviewed and involved respected scholars. I think that's the first thing we need to keep in mind and that's why as a group, we have requested that the script go back to professional peer review by historians and we get this debate out of the political context and back into history.

Most Americans are ignorant of the fact that there was an official conclusion that we didn't really need to drop the bomb. We could have done without an invasion; Japan would have surrendered. That can be argued about, but it needs to be seen, it needs to be displayed prominently in ways that a plain old museum visitor can make sense of. I asked Dr. Harwit, given the fact that he wanted a simple message, what did he see that message as. He essentially said that he wanted people to understand the war in the Pacific, and that our leaders were not one-dimensional, but three-dimensional. Essentially, what I would say that what Dr. Harwit and his staff have now created is a simple narrative that goes like this: that the Japanese were vicious, fanatical, would never surrender, that the president had to drop the bomb to save lives, that there was no significant protest, and there were no long-range consequences in doing that. That is essentially a mythic and heroic narrative in American legend that we are here to challenge.

*Dr. Robert K. Musil is former project director for the National Endowment for the Humanities 13-part radio documentary series, Shadows of the Nuclear Age: American Culture and the Bomb. He is a former Army Captain and former director of the Military Affairs Project of the Center for National Security Studies, Washington DC.*

**KAI BIRD:** A couple of weeks ago, out of enormous frustration, I and Martin Sherwin at Dartmouth, began drafting a letter to circulate to our fellow scholars on this issue. With great difficulty, historians being highly individualistic and attached to their nuances, we have come up with a letter which is quite remarkable, because in a matter of a few days, we have garnered 53 signatures. I should say that everyone here on the panel has also signed the letter, although that may not be reflected in the copy that you have. We are getting dozens more added on every day.

I want to read to you one paragraph from the letter: "It is most unfortunate that the Smithsonian is becoming associated with a transparent attempt at historical cleansing. That archival documents and artifacts have been removed from the planned exhibit under political pressure is an intellectual corruption. The Smithsonian is taking fastidious care to make sure that each bolt, each gauge and detail of the Enola Gay is a perfect reflection of the true artifact. This stands in extraordinary contrast to the disregard of historical documents and the scholarly literature on the atomic bombings."

Now this is very strong language for historians to all agree upon, and I also want to emphasize that the signatories range from historians who disagree violently with each other. There are historians who have signed this letter who believe that the bombing was necessary to end the war, and there are those who believe that the bomb was completely irrelevant, that Truman's only motivation was wrapped up in atomic diplomacy. This represents a wide range of scholars who may argue amongst themselves over what they find in the archives, but they are enormously outraged and upset that the Smithsonian should attempt to put on an exhibit that ignores the fact that this is a contentious issue and filled with debate.

*Kai Bird is author of The Chairman: John J. McCloy and the Making of the American Establishment, a Guggenheim Fellow and a contributing editor to The Nation magazine.*

November 17, 1994  
National Press Club, Washington DC

November 16, 1994

Dr. Ira Michael Heyman  
Secretary - Room 205  
The Smithsonian Museum  
1000 Jefferson Drive  
Washington, D.C. 20560

Dear Dr. Heyman,

As historians and scholars who share a concern for the honest portrayal of important historical events, we are writing to raise certain questions occasioned by the controversy surrounding the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum's planned exhibit on the Enola Gay and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The United States Senate recently adopted a resolution sponsored by Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum which reminded the Smithsonian of its "obligation under Federal law to portray history in the proper context of the times." The resolution went on to state that it was the "sense of the Senate that any exhibit displayed by the National Air and Space Museum with respect to the Enola Gay should reflect appropriate sensitivity toward the men and women who faithfully and selflessly served the United States during World War II and should avoid impugning the memory of those who gave their lives for freedom." We support this sentiment, and indeed, we yield to no one in our desire to honor the American soldiers who risked their lives during World War II to defeat Japanese militarism.

The problem now is that the current (fifth) script of the Enola Gay exhibit utterly fails to "portray history in the proper context of the times." Notwithstanding that some additions to the script do add to the historical context, certain irrevocable facts cannot be omitted without so corrupting the exhibit that it is reduced to mere propaganda, thus becoming an affront to "those who gave their lives for freedom."

One of these facts--the observation that there has been a debate from the very beginning over whether the atomic bombings were necessary to bring about an early end to the Pacific war without an invasion of Japan--was accurately reflected in the first few drafts of the exhibit's script. The existence of that debate is an historical fact, and the statement of that fact was removed from the planned exhibit in response to political pressure.

Historical documents essential to an understanding of the historical debate over the atomic bombings likewise have been removed from the exhibit. We refer here to such documents as the June 27th, 1945 memo from Under Secretary of the Navy Ralph Bard reporting his "feeling that before the bomb is actually used against Japan that Japan should have some preliminary warning...The position of the United States as a great humanitarian nation and the fair play attitude of our people generally is responsible in the main for this feeling." In addition, the statements by General

Dwi  
the  
ins  
the  
Nor  
see  
of  
ren  
  
ass  
The  
pla  
con  
the  
re:  
col  
lit  
  
fro  
pro  
is:  
the  
the  
ch.  
  
Ex  
Oc  
co  
In  
an  
Hi  
re  
pr  
ar  
  
ex  
th  
in  
re  
fu  
by  
th  
Sm  
re  
no  
hi  
cc

Dwight D. Eisenhower and Admiral William D. Leahy which reflected their opinion that the bombings were unnecessary should also be re-inserted. One cannot understand the nature of the debate without the inclusion of such statements from prominent U.S. authorities. Nor can visitors understand the context of the debate without seeing at least some of the bombing artifacts--such as the remnants of the personal belongings of civilians killed--which have been removed from the exhibit.

It is most unfortunate that the Smithsonian is becoming associated with a transparent attempt at historical cleansing. That archival documents and artifacts have been removed from the planned exhibit under political pressure is an intellectual corruption. The Smithsonian is taking fastidious care to make sure that each bolt, each gauge and detail of the Enola Gay is a perfect reflection of the true artifact. This stands in extraordinary contrast to the disregard of historical documents and the scholarly literature on the atomic bombings.

It is unconscionable, first, that as a result of pressures from outside the museum, the exhibit will no longer attempt to present a balanced range of the historical scholarship on this issue; second, that a large body of important archival evidence on the Hiroshima decision will not even be mentioned; and third, that the exhibit will contain assertions of fact which have long been challenged by careful historical scholarship.

We wish to draw your attention to a resolution passed by the Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians on October 22, 1994: "The Organization of American Historians condemns threats by members of Congress to penalize the Smithsonian Institution because of the controversial exhibition on World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb. The Organization of American Historians further deplors the removal of historical documents and revisions of interpretations of history for reasons outside the professional procedures and criteria by which museum exhibitions are created."

As historians and scholars, we urge you to reconsider the exhibit script that has been negotiated with the representatives of the Air Force Association, the American Legion and other special interest groups. We further urge you to restore archival documents removed from earlier exhibit scripts and restore to the exhibit the full range of the historical debate over the atomic bombings. Only by resisting pressures from political sources ill-informed about the relevant historical scholarship can you hope to defend the Smithsonian's credibility as a public institution that faithfully reflects the broad range of debate over our nation's history--and not just what is perceived at the moment as patriotically correct history.

Sincerely,

cc: Dr. Martin Harwit  
Director  
National Air & Space Museum

Martin Sherwin, Professor of History, Dartmouth College, and author of A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance

Kai Bird, Author of The Chairman: John J. McCloy / The Making of the American Establishment

John Lewis Gaddis, Professor of History at Ohio University.

Douglas Brinkley, Director of the Eisenhower Center, University of New Orleans

Walter LaFeber, Noll Professor of History, Cornell University.

Alan Brinkley, Professor of History, Columbia University.

Warren Kimball, Robert Treat Professor History, Rutgers University.

Marilyn B. Young, Chair, Department of History, New York University.

Stanley Goldberg, Historian and author of a forthcoming biography of General Leslie Groves.

Gar Alperovitz, President of the National Center for Economic Alternatives, and author of Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima & Potsdam.

Greg Mitchell, author of The Campaign of the Century and co-author of the forthcoming Hiroshima and America.

Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the City University of New York, and co-author of the forthcoming Hiroshima and America.

James Hershberg, Author of James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age

Richard Barnet, Senior Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies.

Gaddis Smith, Learned Professor of History, Yale University.

Priscilla Johnson McMillan, Author and Fellow of the Russian Research Center, Harvard University.

Michael Hogan, Professor of History, Ohio State University.

John Dower, Professor of History at MIT and author of War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War

Thomas Paterson, Professor of History, University of Connecticut.

Charles Weiner, Professor of Science, Technology & Society, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Robert L. Messer, Professor of History, University of Illinois at Chicago, and author of The End of An Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War.

Martin Walker, author of The Cold War: A History.

Todd Gitlin, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkley.

Michael Kazin, Professor of History, American University.

Peter Kuznick, Professor of History, American University.

Emily F. Rosenberg, Professor of History, Macalester College.

Norman L. Rosenberg, Professor of History, Macalester College.

Leo Ribuffo, Professor of History, George Washington University.

Irene Gendzier, Professor of Political Science, Boston University.

Carolyn Eisenberg, Department of History, Hofstra University, and author of the forthcoming Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-49.

Daniel B. Schirmer, Phd. History.

Joseph C. Gerson, Lecturer, Regis College and author of the forthcoming With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion and Moral Imagination.

Eric Alterman, Fellow, World Policy Institute.

Lawrence S. Wittner, Professor of History, State University of New York at Albany.

Fraser Harbutt, Professor of History, Emory University.

Robert K. Musil, Phd., is Project Director of Shadows of the Nuclear Age: American Culture and the Bomb, a 13-part N.E.H radio documentary series, and executive producer of Mushrooms: Nuclear War and the Imagination, a six part Pennsylvania Humanities Council documentary series.

Christopher Simpson, School of Communications, American University.

Anna Nelson, History Department, American University.

Michael Schaller, Professor of History, University of Arizona.

Nelson Lichtenstein, Professor of History, University of Virginia.

G.J. Barker-Benfield, History Department, State University of New York.

Robert McMahon, Professor of History, University of Florida.

Gerald Zahavi, Professor of History, State University of New York at Albany.

Noam Chomsky, University Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Howard Fredrick, Professor of Communications, Emerson College.

Robert Beisner, Professor of History, American University.

Norman Birnbaum, Professor of Law, Georgetown University.

Thomas Ferguson, Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts, Boston.

\* The institutional affiliations listed here are for purposes of identification only.