

**Air Force Association
Special Report**

The Activists and the *Enola Gay*

August 21, 1995

**The Air Force Association
1501 Lee Highway, Arlington VA 22209**

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A shorter version of this report, without footnotes, appears in the September 1995 issue of *Air Force Magazine*, the monthly journal of the Air Force Association.

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**The Smithsonian has cleaned up its act, but the cause lives
on with those who claim we bamboozled the press,
the Congress, and the public.**

Every morning, a long line forms at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., to see the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima fifty years ago. The exhibit opened June 28, and by the end of July, 97,525 people had gone through it.¹ More than ninety percent of the comment cards turned in by visitors expressed favorable reaction.²

This program — as all the world must know by now — is not the one the curators originally had in mind. The previous exhibit, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," was canceled when it became an intolerable political and financial liability for the Smithsonian Institution, of which the Air and Space Museum is a part.

In March and April 1994, the Air Force Association exposed the museum's plan to use the *Enola Gay* as a prop in a politically rigged program about the atomic bomb.³ Other veterans' groups, Congress, and the news media picked up the issue and scrutiny became intense. More than 30,000 letters poured in to the Smithsonian, and patrons and subscribers quit in droves.

The Smithsonian canceled the ill-fated exhibit last January in favor of a straightforward exhibit that would display the *Enola Gay* without political trappings. The fire never really went out, though, and Dr. Martin Harwit, director of the museum, resigned May 2, saying that nothing less would satisfy the critics.

Veterans' organizations have praised the *Enola Gay* exhibition now running at the Air and Space Museum, but those who backed the original exhibit plan are now up in arms.

¹ National Air and Space Museum, Aug. 4, 1995.

² Smithsonian Institution, July 31, 1995.

³ "The Smithsonian and the Enola Gay," Air Force Association Special Report, March 15, 1994; John Correll, "War Stories at Air and Space," Air Force Magazine, April 1994.

The Activists' Counterattack

Revisionist scholars, peace activists, writers, and others are pressing their counterattack in books, journals, and statements to news media as well as through various public programs and platforms.

- **Gar Alperovitz** is a founding father of revisionist theory about the atomic bomb. In 1965, he said the evidence "strongly suggests" that "the bombs were used primarily to demonstrate to the Russians the enormous power America would have in its possession during subsequent negotiations."⁴ He is a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland and the author of *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, published in July 1995.

- **Kai Bird** is a former journalist who now describes himself as a historian. He is co-chairman of the Historians' Committee for Open Debate on Hiroshima and the author of *The Chairman: John J. McCloy, The Making of the American Establishment* (1992). He says the Smithsonian caved in to veterans and politicians and put on an exhibit that "dishonors the very principles of free speech and free inquiry."⁵

- **Martin J. Sherwin** is a professor of history at Dartmouth and Tufts and co-chairman of the Historians' Committee for Open Debate on Hiroshima. He is the author of *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (1976). In February 1994, in his capacity as an advisor to the Air and Space Museum on the *Enola Gay* exhibit, he complained that the crew had shown "no remorse" for the mission.

- **Barton Bernstein** is a professor of history at Stanford University. The author note with one of his recently published essays identifies him as "a leading revisionist scholar." He is less absolute than his colleagues on some issues. He now holds, for example, that use of the atomic bomb was "probably unnecessary."⁶ (Others in the revisionist lineup say it was absolutely unnecessary.) His major theme is that US casualty estimates for an invasion of Japan in 1945 were grossly exaggerated. In fact, it was Professor Bernstein who — on the basis of his

⁴ Gar Alperovitz. *Atomic Diplomacy: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation With Soviet Power*. Simon and Schuster, 1965.

⁵ See, for example, "The Curators Cave In," *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1994, and "Enola Gay: 'Patriotically Correct,'" *Washington Post*, July 7, 1995.

⁶ Barton J. Bernstein, "The Struggle Over History," in Philip Nobile ed. *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, Marlowe & Company, 1995.

reinterpretation of a June 18, 1945, entry in the diary of Adm. William D. Leahy, the President's Chief of Staff — persuaded Air and Space Museum Director Harwit to mark the US casualty estimate down to 63,000. That led to Congressional and public outrage and eventually to Dr. Harwit's resignation.⁷

- **Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell** are the authors of *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*,⁸ which the publisher describes as "not just historical analysis" but also "a landmark psychological study." According to them, "after ordering the use of two atomic bombs, Truman spent the rest of his life in the throes of unrealized guilt." He also "called forth his 'decisiveness' to block out remorseful reflection of any kind, in that way suppressing conscious feelings of self condemnation." Dr. Lifton is a former Air Force psychiatrist. Mr. Mitchell formerly served as executive director of the Center on Violence and Human Survival.

- **Stanley Goldberg** is a "historian of science." He resigned in protest from the *Enola Gay* exhibit advisory board because "the museum administration had exposed the curators to the direct pressure of organizations such as the Air Force Association and the American Legion." He punctuates his argument with epithets like "thought control" and "McCarthyism."⁹

ABC Chimes In

There are some differences of position among the revisionists, but the central ideas of the movement are that (1) Japan was on the verge of surrender; (2) the war would have been over soon without the atomic bomb; (3) the US prolonged the war by insisting on unconditional surrender; (4) the US dropped the bomb mainly to impress the Russians; (5) the decision was driven by domestic political considerations; and (6) even if we had to invade Japan, the casualties would not have been that severe.

The revisionists — who had generally fared poorly in news media comment on the *Enola Gay* controversy — gained some prime time support July 27 with a Peter Jennings special,

⁷ Martin Harwit, Letter to Hubert R. Dagley, American Legion, Jan. 9, 1995; Eugene L. Meyer, "Smithsonian Stands Firm on A-Bomb Exhibit," Washington Post, Jan. 19, 1995; Letter to Secretary I. Michael Heyman from Rep. Sam Johnson, Rep. Peter Blute, and 79 others, Jan. 24, 1995.

⁸ G.P. Putnam's Sons, July 1995.

⁹ Stanley Goldberg, "Smithsonian Suffers Legionnaires' Disease," The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May/June 1995.

"Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped," on ABC Television. It was a set piece of the revisionist line.

As the *Washington Post* review said, Mr. Jennings was led along by "a largely stacked deck of revisionist historians" to the assessment of President Harry Truman "as an intellectual and moral dwarf, propelled by ambitious militarists and politicians to a nuclear slaughter of the innocents."¹⁰

Mr. Jennings said it was "unfortunate" that veterans' groups had "bullied" the curators of the original *Enola Gay* exhibit. He declined to use the material furnished to him and his producers by the Air Force Association. According to Gar Alperovitz's publisher, Knopf, his new book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, was the basis for the Jennings special.¹¹

Targeting AFA

With the decision past on how the Air and Space Museum will exhibit the *Enola Gay*, the activists, scholars, and others turned their attention to the record of how the controversy arose and unfolded. Attention soon centered on the Air Force Association, which was the first organization to tackle the museum's original exhibit plan and which produced the widely cited content analyses of the exhibition scripts. The Air Force Association was also the source of a collection of documents that virtually all participants in the controversy, including the revisionists, draw upon.

In *American Journalism Review*, Tony Capaccio and Uday Mohan say that it was "an aggressive public relations campaign by the Air Force Association" that "doomed the museum's plans for a full-fledged exhibit on the atomic bomb."¹²

In "Blown Away" in *Washingtonian* Magazine, Tom Allen and Norman Polmar say that the editor of *Air Force Magazine* was "Martin Harwit's chief nemesis in the *Enola Gay* battle." Dr. Harwit told them that "The Air Force Association must have had an incredibly well-oiled public relations machine."¹³

¹⁰ Ken Ringle, "History Though a Mushroom Cloud," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1995.

¹¹ *Publisher's Weekly* advertisement, April 24, 1995.

¹² Tony Capaccio and Uday Mohan, "Missing the Target," *American Journalism Review*, July-August 1995.

¹³ Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, "Blown Away," *Washingtonian*, August 1995.

In *Museum News*, Professor Mike Wallace of John Jay College of Criminal Justice says the Air and Space Museum "never quite realized who and what it was up against" in the Air Force Association, which Professor Wallace depicts as incredibly powerful and oppressive.¹⁴ Professor Martin J. Sherwin told reporters that the attack on the exhibition was "orchestrated" by *Air Force Magazine* and that "The Air Force Association's agenda, in my view, was not simply to tweak an exhibit into getting the story straight. It was a blatant and ultimately successful attempt at getting Martin Harwit fired and regain [*sic*] control of Air and Space for Air Force-friendly, non-critical mis-exhibits."¹⁵

The Allegedly Bamboozled

The notion that AFA somehow managed to bamboozle the press, the Congress, and the American public is hardly credible. It is even less credible that, as suggested by some, we gulled the liberally-inclined *Washington Post*. As museum officials knew — and as bamboozle theorists ought to know — the *Post* got some documents and analysis from AFA, but its reporters acquired more materials on their own and spent months digging into the issue.

What rankled the revisionists is that the *Post* said in a January 1995 editorial that early drafts of the *Enola Gay* script were "incredibly propagandistic and intellectually shabby" and had "a tendentiously anti-nuclear and anti-American tone." The *Post* also said the curators had repeatedly made things worse by their "misplaced condescension and refusal to see the criticisms of bias as anything but the carping of the insufficiently sophisticated."¹⁶

In February, another *Post* editorial added: "It is important to be clear about what happened at the Smithsonian. It is not, as some have it, that benighted advocates of a special-interest or right-wing point of view brought political power to bear to crush and distort the historical truth. Quite the contrary. Narrow-minded representatives of a special-interest and revisionist point of view attempted to use their inside track to appropriate and hollow out a

¹⁴ Mike Wallace, "The Battle of the Enola Gay," *Museum News*, July-August 1995.

¹⁵ Charles J. Lewis, "Feud Continues to Rage on 'Enola Gay' Exhibit," *Albany, N.Y. Times Union*, June 27, 1995.

¹⁶ "The Enola Gay Explosion," *Washington Post* editorial, Jan. 20, 1995.

historical event that large numbers of Americans alive at that time and engaged in the war had witnessed and understood in a very different — and authentic — way."¹⁷

In similar fashion, one Congressman's statement contains an answer to whether he bought a pig in a poke. In September 1994, Rep. Tom Lewis (R-Fla.) said he learned of the controversy when a constituent wrote to complain. "I obtained a copy of the exhibit's script to judge it for myself," Rep. Lewis said. "I did not think it could be as slanted as the letter described. I was wrong."¹⁸

In *Hiroshima in America*, Lifton and Mitchell say that "reporters rarely took the trouble to examine one of the widely available scripts to determine if the veterans complaints were valid. Instead, they accepted at face value the Air Force Association's interpretation — including such false assertions that the script did not mention Japanese brutality."

That account contains several curiosities. The source from which the script was "widely available" was the Air Force Association, which distributed hundreds of copies, many of them to reporters, whose follow-up questions indicated that they had, indeed, read the scripts they received.

The "false assertion" line does not square with the facts. As *Air Force Magazine's* first report said, the exhibit script "acknowledges Japan's 'naked aggression and extreme brutality' that began in the 1930s."¹⁹ Those references, however, were slight. Subsequently, even after museum officials had admitted among themselves that their exhibit was imbalanced and "that much of the criticism that has been levied against us is understandable,"²⁰ the exhibition plan said little about the events leading up to the mission of the *Enola Gay*. A revised script allocated less than one page of text — out of 295 total text pages — and only eight visual images (out of hundreds) to any coverage of Japanese military activity prior to 1945.²¹

¹⁷ "The Smithsonian Changes Course," Washington Post editorial, Feb. 1, 1995.

¹⁸ Rep. Tom Lewis, "Defending America From Scholars," Air Force Times, Sept. 12, 1994.

¹⁹ John Correll, "War Stories at Air and Space," Air Force Magazine, April 1994.

²⁰ Martin Harwit, "Comments on Crossroads," internal memo, National Air and Space Museum, April 16, 1994.

²¹ John Correll, "'The Last Act' at Air and Space," Air Force Magazine, September 1994.

"History versus Nostalgia"

At the press conference before the official opening of the *Enola Gay* exhibit, Smithsonian Secretary I. Dr. Michael Heyman said, "I have concluded that we made a basic error in attempting to couple a historical treatment of the use of atomic bombs with the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the end of the war."²² He had said the same thing months earlier when he canceled the "Last Act" exhibit.

AFA has repeatedly said this "history vs. nostalgia" theory is wrong. As AFA National President R. E. Smith said at a Senate hearing in May, "The problem was not the coupling of history with commemoration. It was that the history had been given a countercultural spin. The problem was not that the exhibition was analytical. The problem was that the analysis was distorted."²³

Revisionists take the imputed history versus nostalgia split even further and say that the traditional or "commemorative" version — that use of the atomic bomb was a military action, taken to end the war and save lives — is wrong. Gar Alperovitz, for example, argues that a "new consensus" has developed among historians and that it supports the Air and Space Museum's initial approach, which Dr. Alperovitz describes as "balanced."²⁴

The existence of any such "new consensus," however, is disputed by other scholars, notably Professor Robert P. Newman of the University of Iowa, author of *Truman and the Hiroshima Cult*.²⁵ Professor Newman says, "The intellectual idea to which Hiroshima cultists are devoted is that since Japan was about to surrender when the bombs were dropped, the slaughter of innocents at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not motivated by military reasons. It was instead motivated primarily by the desire to intimidate the Russians (so-called atomic diplomacy), by racism (we did not drop the bomb on Germany), by the desire of Robert Oppenheimer and company to experiment with a new toy, by the fear of Secretary of War Henry Stimson and

²² I. Michael Heyman, "Enola Gay — Media Preview, Opening Statement of the Smithsonian Secretary," June 27, 1995.

²³ R. E. Smith, National President of the Air Force Association, Testimony on the Enola Gay Controversy, Senate Committee on Rules & Administration, May 11, 1995.

²⁴ Gar Alperovitz, "Beyond the Smithsonian Flap: Historian's New Consensus," Washington Post, October 16, 1994; "Enola Gay: A New Consensus. . .," Washington Post, Feb. 4, 1995.

²⁵ Michigan State University Press, 1995.

others that Congress would investigate if their \$2 billion expenditure was found not useful, or by the sheer unthinking momentum of a bureaucratic juggernaut (Manhattan project)." Professor Newman's book summarizes mainstream scholarly evidence and shoots down the articles of revisionist faith, one by one, with well-documented rebuttal.

Also in disagreement with the revisionists is Robert James Maddox, professor of American history at Pennsylvania State University and author of *Weapons for Victory* (University of Missouri Press, 1995) and "Why We Had to Drop the Atomic Bomb" in the May-June 1995 issue of *American Heritage*. He was one of the few nonrevisionists interviewed for the Peter Jennings special, but he says ABC misrepresented his views and ignored information he supplied. He called the show "the worst piece of garbage I've seen."²⁶

Others whose recent books, articles, and statements run contrary to the "new consensus" that Gar Alperovitz imagines are Stanley Weintraub (*The Last Great Victory*, Dutton, 1995), Bruce Lee (*Marching Orders: The Untold Story of World War II*, Crown, 1995), Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar (*Code Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb*, Simon and Schuster, 1995), Wilcomb E. Washburn, director since 1965 of the American Studies program at the Smithsonian Institution,²⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, biographer of Dwight D. Eisenhower,²⁸ and William Craig, author of *The Fall of Japan* (Dial, 1967).²⁹

The Peace Activists Enter

Peace groups first entered the exhibition fray in the fall of 1994 when the original plan was rapidly coming unstuck. At his installation on September 19, I. Michael Heyman, new secretary of the Smithsonian, acknowledged that the *Enola Gay* exhibit plan had been "deficient"

²⁶ Laurence Jarvik, "Vets, Historians Rip ABC Atomic Report," *Washington Times*, July 29, 1995.

²⁷ Wilcomb E. Washburn, "The Smithsonian and the Enola Gay," *The National Interest*, Summer 1995.

²⁸ Stephen E. Ambrose, "The Bomb: It Was Death or More Death," *New York Times*, Aug. 5, 1995.

²⁹ William Craig, "Smithsonian A-Bomb Display Distorts History," letter, *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1994.

and "out of balance."³⁰ The Senate unanimously passed a resolution Sept. 23 calling on the National Air and Space Museum to modify its "revisionist and offensive" exhibition plan.³¹

According to Philip Nobile in *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, a book sympathetic to the curators,³² Dr. Tom D. Crouch, chairman of the museum's Aeronautics Department and a principal in the *Enola Gay* controversy, sought support from Father John Dear, a "peace Jesuit" who had hammered an F-15 fighter in a disarmament demonstration at a base in North Carolina. "You have no idea of the forces opposing this exhibit, not in your wildest dreams — jobs are at stake, the Smithsonian is at stake," Dr. Crouch said.

Father Dear says that "Crouch urged me to organize the media and get to Harwit, who he felt was being manipulated." Father Dear and "some colleagues from the peace community" met with Dr. Harwit September 20. He quotes Dr. Harwit as saying, "Where have you been? You're too late."³³ In October, representatives of seventeen peace organizations — with Father Dear acting as spokesman — called on the Smithsonian to renew the focus of the exhibition on the suffering caused by the bombs.³⁴

On November 16, 1994, a group of forty-eight "historians and scholars" delivered a letter of protest to Smithsonian Secretary Heyman demanding that the imbalances and biases be restored. The scholars charged that by giving in to change demanded by "special interest groups," the Smithsonian had subjected the exhibition to "historical cleansing."³⁵

Among those signing was Noam Chomsky, a professor of linguistics at MIT. In subsequent discourse, Professor Chomsky dismissed the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines in December 1941 as no more than "bombing military bases in two US colonies that had been stolen from their inhabitants." He said that these and other offenses by Japan "rank

³⁰ John Correll, "The Three Doctors and the Enola Gay," *Air Force Magazine*, November 1994.

³¹ Senate Prods Museum on Enola Gay Exhibit," Associated Press dispatch, *Washington Times*, Sept. 24, 1994.

³² Philip Nobile, ed. *Judgment at the Smithsonian*. Marlowe and Company, 1995.

³³ Nobile, *Judgment at the Smithsonian*.

³⁴ Eugene L. Meyer, "No Peace for Enola Gay: Exhibit Now Has Anti-War Groups Up in Arms," *Washington Post*, Oct. 21, 1994.

³⁵ Letter to I. Michael Heyman from Martin Sherwin, Kai Bird, et. al., Nov. 16, 1994.

so low in the scale of those that we have regularly committed, before and since, that no honest person could take them very seriously as a justification for invasion [of Japan in 1945]."³⁶

According to press accounts, a group of "peace and anti-nuclear activists" had a "cordial but ultimately disappointing two-hour meeting" with Air and Space Museum officials December 15.³⁷ After January, when the Smithsonian canceled "The Last Act," the activists moved to a different strategy.

The Open Debate

By March 1995, the group of forty-eight "historians and scholars" who delivered their protest letter to the Smithsonian in November had reconstituted itself as the "Historians' Committee for Open Debate on Hiroshima" with Martin Sherwin and Kai Bird as co-chairmen.³⁸

The members called upon "our colleagues at colleges and universities across the country to participate in a 'National Teach-In on Hiroshima,' both to protest the Smithsonian's surrender to political censorship and to educate Americans on the full range of scholarly debate regarding the atomic bombings on Japan fifty years ago." Among the most ambitious programs was staged at American University in Washington, D.C., which displayed, in cooperation with the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, some of the artifacts originally planned for the *Enola Gay* exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum.³⁹

The American University program, "Constructing a Peaceful World: Beyond Hiroshima and Nagasaki," concentrated on events after the bomb was dropped and looked ahead to the nuclear arms race. The exhibit, which ran for most of July, was held in conjunction with a course that included a two-week study tour of Japan. The Japanese contributed more than half of the \$15,000 tour scholarship fund.⁴⁰ The exhibit had 27 artifacts from the Hiroshima Museum.

³⁶ Chomsky, letter to W. Burr Bennett, Committee for the Restoration and Display of the Enola Gay, Dec. 12, 1994.

³⁷ Eugene L. Meyer, "More Turbulence for Enola Gay," Washington Post, Dec. 16, 1994.

³⁸ Laura C. Yamhure, Executive Director, Historians' Committee for Open Debate on Hiroshima, "Dear Colleague" form letter, March 21, 1995.

³⁹ Eugene L. Meyer, "AU May Exhibit Artifacts From Hiroshima Bomb," Washington Post, April 6, 1995.

⁴⁰ Eugene L. Meyer, "2 Exhibits to Mark A-Bombings," Washington Post, June 21, 1995; Phillip P. Pan, "AU Offers a View of A-Bombs' Horrors," Washington Post, July 9, 1995.

Among them was a schoolchild's lunch box with charred remains of rice, barley, soy beans, and strips of radish. Between July 8 and July 20, just over 1,000 persons went through the exhibit.⁴¹

The academic director of the program was Dr. Peter Kuznick, an associate professor of history and one of the forty-eight signatories to the "historians and scholars" petition last year. Professor Kuznick told the Washington Post that the program dealt only with the aftermath of the bomb because "space precluded" the inclusion of material about Japanese aggression and atrocities and the reasons why the United States used the bomb.⁴² In fact, when AFA Communications Director Steve Aubin and I saw the program on July 21, there was an abundance of unused space in the exhibit area.

Myths About What We Said

Judging from their published comments, few of the scholars throwing brickbats at AFA and *Air Force Magazine* bothered to read what we actually said. A number of myths are therefore taking root as assumptions pass from one scholar to the next in the course of their research.

■ *The sudden ambush.* It is said, for example, that we jumped prematurely on a raw, first draft of the *Enola Gay* exhibition plan and that the curators would have fixed it themselves if we had let them alone. The fact is that the script we exposed was the fourth formal planning document, not the first. It flowed directly from three concept papers that went before and picked up the worst features of those earlier plans. AFA representatives had tried for months to reason with museum officials, but they showed no inclination to change. As the documentary record shows, they continued to resist change after publication of the AFA reports.⁴³

■ *"Historical cleansing."* It seems important for some revisionists to believe that AFA and military veterans insist on an expurgated version of history. None of them has yet explained how it is that my first report on the atomic bomb controversy, "The Decision That Launched the *Enola Gay*," in *Air Force Magazine* for April 1994 discussed at length the very issues that we are accused of "cleansing away" — ambiguity about the casualty estimates and the belief by Army

⁴¹ Visit to American University exhibition, July 21, 1995.

⁴² Meyer, "2 Exhibits to Mark A-Bombings."

⁴³ For a summary of these events, see John Correll, "'The Last Act' at Air and Space," *Air Force Magazine*, September 1994, and "The Three Doctors and the *Enola Gay*," *Air Force Magazine*, November 1994. The Air Force Association also has copies of the four planning documents and other papers to substantiate these points.

Air Forces Gens. H. H. Arnold and Curtis E. LeMay that the war could be won by conventional bombing (albeit with horrendous casualties). Many of the "historical cleansing" theorists acknowledge having in their possession a longer, fully annotated version of that report which documents even earlier *Air Force Magazine* coverage of this information.⁴⁴

■ *"Taken out of context."* This is the same complaint that Dr. Harwit made, early in the controversy, in a letter to the *Washington Times* in March 1994. He said that AFA's assessment of balance in the exhibit had been inaccurate because "the exhibition describes the 'naked brutality' of Japanese forces in concrete terms, calling attention to the rape of Nanking, the treatment of POWs, the use of Chinese and Koreans as slave laborers, and the conduct of biological and chemical experiments on human victims."⁴⁵

It was that letter that led AFA on April 4, 1994, to deliver a copy of the 559-page script to the newspaper with an invitation to "judge for yourself." All of the vaunted context cited by Dr. Harwit was contained on just three of the 302 text pages in the initial script, compared to seventy-nine text pages on Japanese casualties and suffering.⁴⁶

The Air Force Association thereafter provided copies of that script to other reporters and interested organizations — and would have copied and circulated subsequent *Enola Gay* script revisions had not the Air and Space Museum copyrighted these products to keep us from doing so. For AFA and *Air Force Magazine*, the critical issues were balance and context, and the heart of our "conspiracy" was to make the full record open to all who wanted to examine it.

The Standards of Scholarship

Where academic integrity is concerned, scholars certainly talk a good game. Disparaging the "politicians, lobbying groups, and, alas, editorial writers" who subverted the Smithsonian's plan for the *Enola Gay*, John H. Coatsworth of Harvard University, president of the American Historical Association, asks, "Why hire professional historians and curators to do an honest, thoughtful job when you really want propaganda?"

⁴⁴ The Smithsonian and the *Enola Gay*," Air Force Association Special Report, March 15, 1994.

⁴⁵ "Naked Brutality" in John McCaslin, "Inside the Beltway," *Washington Times*, March 31, 1994.

⁴⁶ Air Force Association analysis of *Enola Gay* exhibition script, prepared at the request of a Congressional subcommittee, April 7, 1994.

Mr. Coatsworth depicts historians as committed to standards of accuracy far beyond anything the rest of us observe. "We historians," he says, "are interested in checking and rechecking our sources, getting the facts straight, subjecting competing interpretations to rigorous tests of logic and evidence, using new tools and new sources to check the validity of conclusions."⁴⁷

Reality, however, does not always live up to Mr. Coatsworth's vision.

In one of his newspaper commentaries, Kai Bird, co-chairman of the Historians' Committee for Open Debate on Hiroshima, asserted that "official Japanese records calculate a figure of more than 300,000 deaths" at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁴⁸ Ken Ringle of the Washington Post checked the data and talked with knowledgeable people about the death toll from the atomic bombs. He found, among other things, that "differences over the figures. . . have been sharpened by the tendency of anti-nuclear activists in and outside of Japan to inflate the figures for shock value." Mr. Ringle asked Mr. Bird where he got his number.

"Bird said he had no idea what 'official Japanese records' he was citing," Mr. Ringle reported. "He had lifted the 300,000 figure without further examination from an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education."⁴⁹

In a recent treatise critical of the Air Force Association and of me personally, Professor Barton Bernstein seeks to demonstrate either that I did not know about an article, "The B-29, the A-Bomb, and the Japanese Surrender" by Herman Wolk in the February 1975 issue of *Air Force Magazine* or that my colleagues and I wished to conceal the existence of that article.

Professor Bernstein says that "he [Correll] may sincerely have not fully realized" that Generals Arnold and LeMay "had raised questions about Hiroshima" or that "in his own magazine, in 1975, official Air Force historian Herman Wolk even contended that some of these men had thought before Hiroshima that the invasion was unnecessary." Returning to this point several pages later, Professor Bernstein charges that the Air Force Association has "never admitted" that "its own magazine had published an article indicating high-level, pre-Hiroshima,

⁴⁷ John H. Coatsworth, "Historians: You've Got Us All Wrong," letter to Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28, 1995.

⁴⁸ Kai Bird, "Enola Gay: 'Patriotically Correct'," Washington Post, July 7, 1995.

⁴⁹ Ken Ringle, "A Fallout Over Numbers," Washington Post, Aug. 5, 1995.

military objections to the use of the A-bomb, and that a number of military leaders, including Arnold and LeMay, had questioned the use of the bomb after Hiroshima."⁵⁰

What Professor Bernstein neglects to say is that I cited the Wolk article *five times* in a March 1994 report — a report that Professor Bernstein acknowledges having — and that the same points were repeated at length by *Air Force Magazine* in April 1994.⁵¹ Both the report and the magazine article gave substantial attention to the differences of opinion among military leaders and the range of their advice to President Truman. It is difficult to understand how this material could have been overlooked.

Dr. Wolk says that "Bernstein misrepresents my position and Arnold's in saying that Arnold *objected* to the use of the atomic bomb. He wanted to continue the conventional bombing option, but Arnold, in fact, stated at the end of the war that the atomic bomb had given Emperor Hirohito 'a way out'."⁵²

Furthermore, as Professor Bernstein is surely aware, Dr. Wolk agrees with the conclusions stated in my two reports that "In 1945, the doubts and disagreements about the use of the atomic bomb were mostly of a strategic nature, reflecting the belief that an invasion might not be necessary or that bombing and blockade would be sufficient" and that "use of the bomb to end the war eventually saved Japanese casualties, too," because continued conventional bombing with incendiary weapons would have taken a greater toll.

War Crimes

Among the most strident in his denunciation of AFA and in his defense of the curators of the original exhibit is Philip Nobile, who bills his book, *Judgment at the Smithsonian*,⁵³ as containing "the uncensored script of the Smithsonian's 50th anniversary exhibit of the *Enola Gay*."

⁵⁰ Barton Bernstein, "The Struggle Over History," in Philip Nobile ed. *Judgment at the Smithsonian*. Marlowe & Company, 1995.

⁵¹ "The Smithsonian and the Enola Gay," Air Force Association special report, March 15, 1994; John Correll, "The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay," *Air Force Magazine*, April 1994.

⁵² Herman Wolk, telephone conversation with Correll, Aug. 16, 1995.

⁵³ Philip Nobile ed. *Judgment at the Smithsonian*. Marlowe & Company, 1995. Nobile's previous book was *The United States of America vs Sex: How the Meese Commission Lied About Pornography*.

The press release promoting this book depicts Mr. Nobile as having blown the lid off a cover-up after he "obtained a rare copy of the 300-page document." A close reading of the "acknowledgements" section of the book reveals that Mr. Nobile obtained his "rare copy" from the Air Force Association, which made hundreds of copies available to reporters, members of Congress, and veterans' organizations.

Furthermore, the document that Mr. Nobile received from AFA was not 300 pages but 559. Mr. Nobile reprints the intended wall label text but leaves out the visual elements. Mr. Nobile was aware, certainly, that much of AFA's criticism focused on the imbalance in the visual content. As my colleague, AFA Communications Director Steve Aubin points out, ignoring the graphic parts of an exhibition that is primarily visual is like watching television without looking at the picture.

Mr. Nobile's publisher says that he addresses the moral issues as "a trained theologian with a pontifical degree." He hits a low point in the book with a "mock war crimes trial of Harry Truman." According to the press release, "Nobile's fictional cross-examination of Truman leaves little doubt about the defendant's guilt." It seems unlikely that many of the revisionist historians and scholars would endorse this approach, but Barton Bernstein contributed a 129-page "afterword" to the Nobile book, which conveys an impression of sorts simply by being there. For his part, Professor Bernstein is disquieted that "what would frequently triumph, in the virtual 'war' over the exhibit" was the view that "Truman and Correll had it right."⁵⁴ Colman McCarthy, a columnist for the *Washington Post*, included Mr. Nobile's *Judgment at the Smithsonian* on a short list of "books of reliable scholarship and balanced analysis" to counteract the spin he attributed to "the easily peeved military lobby."⁵⁵

Professor Bernstein is right about one thing. Most Americans reject the revisionist assessment of Harry Truman. They share the inclination of Stephen S. Rosenfeld, deputy editorial page editor of the *Washington Post*, who said that "I find myself finally guided by a particular view of Truman the man. He was ruled in these matters much less by strategic globe-twirling than by a basic instinct to do his duty by American fighting men." Accordingly, Mr.

⁵⁴ Barton Bernstein, "The Struggle Over History" in Nobile, *Judgment at the Smithsonian*.

⁵⁵ Colman McCarthy, "Hiroshima Weighs Heavily on the Future," *Washington Post*, July 4, 1995.

Rosenfeld concluded, "Truman made his mistakes, but he got the big things straight, including dropping the bomb on Japan."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "The Revisionists' Agenda," Washington Post, Aug. 4, 1995.