

John T. Correll
Editor in Chief

December 28, 1994

Col. Tom Alison, USAF, Ret.
Co-Curator, *The Last Act* Exhibition
National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560

Dear Colonel Alison:

Martin Harwit has asked that we correspond directly with you on "The War in the Pacific," the new section 000 preamble to the *Enola Gay* exhibition. That makes it a little awkward for a number of reasons. As we tried to make clear at the meeting earlier this month with Smithsonian officials and Dr. Harwit, it is irrelevant to judge section 000 in isolation. We understand that you do not control the rest of the script, so please pass on to museum management those comments that fall outside the scope of your own responsibility.

Section 000, as drafted here, is a straightforward summary of events prior to the summer of 1945. If it stood alone, we probably wouldn't have any great problem with it. The things it does not say might not matter. As it happens, though, the whole purpose of section 000 was to achieve balance in a script that was so biased that it was indefensible. The only measure of section 000 that counts is what it contributes to the effect of the program as a whole. By that standard, this section is inadequate in several respects.

□ **The Illusion of Balance.** Museum officials point out that the allocation of floor space for this section, 4,000 square feet, is nearly half the total for the entire exhibition. That suggests a balance that, in fact, is not achieved. Most of the added space is taken by a Grumman F6F fighter on display. The rest of the section is a collection of pictures, some pulled from other parts of the exhibit. The script text for section 000 is 53 pages, compared to upwards of 300 pages for the other "half" of the program. Furthermore, less than a third of these new text pages (specifically, pages 1-15 and page 36) consist of material that is balancing in nature. Neither the volume nor the content provides any real counterweight.

□ **Emphasis and Tone.** In contrast to the rest of the script, where nearly every panel is a purpose pitch, the material in section 000 is matter-of-fact and understated. Most of 000 is a chronological summary and neutral in perspective. The hallmark of *The Last Act* has been its harsh view of American actions and policies. As we have noted before, the script is not equally tough on the Japanese, who seem to get the benefit of a doubt, if there is one, and the advantage of softened language in any case. Take, for example, your panel entitled, "The Japanese Attitude Toward Surrender" (000, p 36). It says that "This [*Bushido*] code of conduct made it difficult for the Japanese to understand the more lenient American attitude toward surrender and affected how they treated prisoners of war." Is that phrasing supposed to defer to Japanese sensitivity, or what? Quit pulling your punches. Say these things at least as directly and dramatically as the recital of Japanese suffering later on.

□ **Samurai Nation.** We've made this point before. The cult of *Bushido* was not something (page 000 36) foisted on the Japanese nation by Tojo in 1941. It was a national obsession, shared by businessmen, monks, and housewives and it was routinely drummed into children at school. Going into World War II — and fundamentally relevant to the issues in this exhibit — Japan was in effect a Samurai nation. You could consult Army historian Ed Drea, who is a recognized expert on this. Alternatively, you could consult such references as Edward Behr's *Hirohito* (Villard Books, 1989) or David Bergamini's controversial but massively-researched work, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (Morrow, 1971). If these books are displeasing to the director and the lead curators, you could rely instead on popularized surveys like the World War II series from Time-Life books, especially *The Rising Sun* (1977) and *Japan at War* (1980). A folio, "A

Nation of Samurai," (pages 133 - 141) in *Japan at War* recounts how one soldier's wife killed herself so that her husband at the fighting front would not be distracted by worrying about her welfare.

□ **More Deaths Than Hiroshima + Nagasaki.** You are missing one obvious and tremendously relevant point in your panel on the Rape of Nanking (000, 5). Don't you think it's worth noting, with some emphasis, that the death toll at Nanking exceeded that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined? People need to be reminded of this. Japanese Justice Minister Shigeto Nagano was forced to resign last year — last year! — after calling the massacre a Nanking "historical fabrication." It is also reasonably well established (see, for example, not only Behr and Bergamini but also Time-Life's *The Rising Sun*, p. 23) that the Nanking atrocities were not a spontaneous rampage by troops out of control but rather a deliberate official action intended to terrorize the Chinese.

□ **Delivering on the Objective.** If you go back to August 29 when the intention to add a front section (originally known as "An American Perspective") to the exhibit was announced, you will find that the museum was reacting to unbearable pressure from Congress because the exhibit plan emphasized and dramatized the suffering of Japan while virtually ignoring Japanese atrocities, aggression, and military actions prior to 1945. (In early August, thirty members of Congress, drawing principally on *Air Force* magazine reports and our content analyses of April 7 and June 28, served notice that this approach was not acceptable.) The museum promised that the new 000 front section, which is now called "The War in the Pacific," would correct those problems. It seems to me that this is your charter, deserving relatively more attention than it presently gets in section 000. Consider the following for inclusion:

□ *The Death Railway.* Hollywood did not invent "The Bridge on the River Kwai." The Death Railway was a fact, and it's very relevant.

□ *Santo Tomas Prison Camp and "Comfort Women."* The curators elsewhere demonstrate great empathy for Japanese civilians, especially women and children. How about, then, showing how American civilians fared when they fell into the hands of the Japanese (the incredible story of Santo Tomas in Manila is a dramatic example) or how the girls and women of captive nations were forced to provide "comfort" for the soldiers of Japan?

□ **Other concerns.** We must note here, for the benefit of Dr. Harwit and the lead curators, a number of concerns that have not yet been resolved.

□ *Japanese Mayors on Video.* We received mixed signals at the meeting on December 15 about whether the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been guaranteed two minutes each of unedited video time as part of this program.

□ *Disabled American Veterans.* We have asked that, along with the attention given the *hibakusha* (injured survivors of the atomic bombs) the exhibit include comparable photos and notice of disabled American veterans, for whom the suffering also continued after the war. We do not intend to shut up on this point.

Our remaining concerns also include the continued speculation about US motives and policies, the sociological interpretation of the strategic bombing campaign, and various other issues that we have raised in the past with officials of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Air and Space Museum. We may have additional comments after we have seen the next full revision of the script.

Sincerely,
SIGNED
John T. Correll