

John T. Correll
Editor in Chief

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MEMO TO: Publisher, Magazine Staff

SUBJECT: August 31 Revision of *Enola Gay* Script

As you know, the National Air and Space Museum has revised the Atomic Bomb/*Enola Gay* exhibition script, the one that the curators had declared in June to be final. The museum did not announce the forthcoming revision until August 16. We were already committed to production for the article in the September issue at that point. (In fact, the data compiled for that article and circulated in an AFA paper June 28 was the basis for much of the Congressional and media pressure that elicited the revision.)

Observations about the revised exhibit script:

1. This is the sixth planning document we have seen for this exhibition. Compared to the previous concept plans and scripts, this revision shows a serious effort to deal with some of the problems that we and others complained about. The most significant revisions are in the graphic elements and consist of both additions and deletions. To be as fair as possible to the museum, the first item in this analysis spotlights the single most dramatic and positive change found in the revision.

January	May	August	
49	32	26	Photos of Japanese casualties
3	7	14	Photos of American casualties

We (and others) have pointed to the gross imbalance in casualty photos. The ratio in January was more than 16 to 1; it is now less than 2 to 1. Such change, even in a single area, is encouraging and leads us to believe there is hope yet for this exhibition.

2. The proclaimed centerpiece of the script revision — a new 4,000 square foot section to be entitled "The War in the Pacific: An American Perspective" — exists only as a promise in a press release. The museum is saying, essentially, "trust us." That's asking a lot, considering the museum's taste for revisionist history and unwillingness to make changes unless forced by outside pressure to do so. Why is this labeled an *American* perspective? What is that supposed to mean? What perspective does the rest of the exhibit have?

3. The new script revisions are of two kinds — the addition/deletion of graphics and line- in/line-out text changes. Consequently, the structural bias of the exhibit persists. The program still centers on the atomic bomb. The *Enola Gay* is still a prop. The exhibit leads up, as it has all along, to an "emotional center" in unit 400, "Ground Zero: Hiroshima and Nagasaki." No opportunity is missed to tug at the heart strings. A kitten, for example, cannot simply be dead. It must glare with "eternally locked eyes," After Unit 400, the visitor departs via unit 500, "The Legacy," which also carries a definite political spin.

4. Some parts of the script have been changed far more than others. Unfortunately, the critical unit 400, "Ground Zero: Hiroshima and Nagasaki" is virtually unchanged except for deletion of graphic elements. Also unfortunately, the excess in this section had been so extreme that it is still overpowering, even with reduced visual images. The museum director has cited the necessity to show the effects of nuclear weapons. It does not require the present total of 69 visual images to achieve that, especially considering the shocking nature of the images. In an internal memo last April, the museum director himself told the staff to "take out all but about one third of the explicit pictures of death and suffering in section 400." The

graphic deletions in the latest script still do not meet the standard for balance prescribed by the museum director in April.

January	May	August	"Ground Zero" Visual Images
75	64	51	Total Photos
49	37	27	Human Suffering Photos
25	23	15	Photos featuring women, children, religious objects.
26	24	18	Total artifacts.
13	12	8	Artifacts related to women, children, religion.

5. Among the more offensive features of the previous script were six "Historical Controversies," all casting suspicion on the actions and motives of the United States. At a meeting we attended in the Pentagon August 16, Museum Director Martin Harwit said the "Historical Controversies" would be removed and speculation about US motives would be eliminated. Indeed, the revised script has no "Historical Controversies" explicitly labeled as such, but a closer examination shows why we remain concerned.

For example, in the case of Historical Controversy #1, "Would the bomb have been dropped on the Germans?" the curators simply dropped off the "Historical Controversies" tagline and removed a bit of the text. The question remains (200 15) with its own label heading, within a page of its location in the previous script. Controversy #6 — "Was an invasion inevitable without the bomb?" — is also still there (200 52). The difference is that it is preceded by the word "Hindsight" rather than "Historical Controversy." In one way or another, most of the other "eliminated" material also shows up somewhere.

6. The museum still has an attitude — and it still shows. This is seen, for example, in the instance of another of the itemized "Historical Controversies" asked: "Did the demand for unconditional surrender prolong the war?" This entry has been removed as a series item, but speculation about it persists in the script. It says, for example (500 10) that "The failure of the American note of August 10 to clearly guarantee the Emperor's position provoked another dangerous deadlock in the Japanese ruling elite." Do the curators mean to suggest by that wording that the United States was to blame for Japan's reluctance to surrender, even after the atomic bomb had been dropped?

Nor does the unconditional surrender issue — detailed here as an example of spin and bias remaining in the script — end there. Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew, who argued for moderation of demands placed on Japan, is obviously a hero to the curators. They say that "Grew understood the mentality of the Japanese leadership and wanted to end the war early. . ." (200 26) Implying that others did not want to end the war early? The curators put the least charitable construction possible on President Truman's action: "Truman did not accept Grew's arguments because he foresaw much resistance, at home at abroad, to modifying the policy of unconditional surrender." (200 25) That gives Truman no credit for actually believing in the policy — or any credence to the policy itself being right.

By contrast, as seen in the line cited above (500 10), the curators are always ready to explain away anything that questions the sincerity of Japan's quest for peace. The Emperor is depicted as especially devoted to peace. Should anything make it appear otherwise, that is no doubt because "he hoped that one final victory would force the Allies to offer better peace terms." (200 24.)

7. As measured by the factors on the chart on the next page, the emphasis on Japanese suffering is about the same as it has been all along — 28 percent of the total text pages in the January script, 28 percent in the latest revision. The changes in the script, while commendable, are not as sweeping or as comprehensive as some may believe.

May		Aug		
Text	Photo	Text	Photo	Emphasis on Japanese Suffering
58 pg	64	54 pg	51	Hiroshima/Nagasaki "Ground Zero"
21 pg	28	23* pg	28	Previous bombing of Japan
5 pg	5	5 pg	5	Hardship/deprivation on Japanese home front

* Does not represent any actual increase in text. Consequence of line-in/line-out revisions in which some pages expand and others contract.

8. It would be possible recite additional examples of why the revisions so far fall short of making "The Last Act" a balanced, fair story, told in the context of the times. The Air Force Association and Air Force Magazine, however, have said repeatedly that our content analyses and examples are just that — examples of what's wrong — and that the basis for judging the overall exhibition must be the net effect it creates.

Taken overall, the exhibition still lacks balance and context. Unless visitors are wary or well informed, they are likely to get a distorted understanding of history from what they see here. Whether the National Air and Space Museum is willing to make further changes — or enough changes — remains to be seen. The August 31 script shows movement in the right direction, but it isn't there yet.