

Air Force Association  
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An Independent Non Profit Aerospace Organization

MONROE W. HATCH, JR.  
Executive Director

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Dr. Martin Harwit  
Director  
National Air and Space Museum  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Martin:

I thank you for letting me see the revised planning document for the Enola Gay exhibition. I wish I could give you a favorable reaction to it, but the new concept does not relieve my earlier concerns and, in some respects, it seems even less balanced — possibly because the details are now given — than the earlier concepts were.

The paper says the Smithsonian is non-partisan, taking no position on the “difficult moral and political questions” but the full text does not bear out that statement. Similarly, you assure me that the exhibition will “honor the bravery of the veterans,” but that theme is virtually nonexistent in the proposal as drafted.

The concept paper dwells, to the effective exclusion of all else, on the horrors of war. We agree that war is horrible, which is why the Air Force Association has always set such great store by the deterrence of war and has held that the nation should not enter armed conflict until other means of resolution are exhausted. Once war begins, casualties are inevitable. It is less than honest to moralize about the casualties unless one also claims the war to be immoral, and I don't believe many people are ready to say that about World War II. As demonstrated by the massive casualty toll of the Civil War, for example, extensive death and suffering in wartime did not begin with the Enola Gay mission.

Furthermore, the concept paper treats Japan and United States in the war as if their participation in the war were morally equivalent. If anything, incredibly, it gives the benefit of opinion to Japan, which was the aggressor. The revised concept plans for flashback segments, including a major one on the firebombing of Japan — emphasizing the casualties — but there is little mention of Pearl Harbor, except to characterize the American response as “vengeance.” Japanese aggression and atrocities have no significant place in this account. Artifacts seem to have been selected for emotional value (the schoolgirl's lunchbox, for example) in hammering home a rather hard-line point of view.

In this presentation, the Japanese “felt compelled to make the ultimate sacrifice to defend the Emperor and the nation,” victims in the defense of their islands. I wonder if the Japanese survivors and spokesmen describing the horrors will give equal attention to the fact that the reason Japan needed defending was that it had begun a war of aggression a long way from home. How much emphasis will there be on the refusal of the Japanese to surrender, even after the first atomic bomb had been delivered?

It is not just a matter of fairness to veterans — supposedly achieved by giving them the chance to say a few words on videotapes at the end of the exhibit. Balance is owed to all Americans, particularly those who come to the exhibition to learn. What they will get from the program as described is not history or fact but a partisan interpretation.

For these reasons I do not believe the revised concept would be acceptable to most members of the Air Force Association. Enclosed for your consideration is a concept for the exhibition that we would regard as more suitable.

If you would like to meet for lunch and talk further, I am certainly agreeable to that, but ask that we make it sometime in October. The annual Air Force Association national convention is upon us, and my days are booked wall to wall for the next few weeks.

Sincerely,

SIGNED  
Monroe W. Hatch, Jr.  
General, USAF (Ret.)