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A statement by a member of the Programme Committee of the Museum of the Second World War

I made a written appeal for the founding of a museum of the Second World War in 1985. I suggested it be located in the *Wolfsschanze* – Hitler's headquarters near Kętrzyn. The idea didn't receive approval in Warsaw at that time.

Now I think that both the *Wolfsschanze* and Westerplatte ought to function as branches of the Museum of the Second World War, portraying extremely important episodes of history. But the museum itself – its exhibition – is built around a universal idea: presenting the entire Second World War and its threat to the civilian populations of many countries. Such an exhibition is entirely appropriate in the centre of Europe, in a place that Norman Davies, a member of the Programme Committee, called the 'heart of Europe'. Our exhibition shows the community of fate in occupied Europe. It also shows the differences in the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war in Western Europe as compared to the East of the continent. No European museum has ever created such a large-scale panorama.

I have taken the liberty of speaking in a triple role: as a member of the Programme Committee of the Museum of the Second World War, as a witness of history and as a collector of documents and books. I have no intention of entering into a polemic about the facts of the Second World War, Hitlerism and fascism. No one is a more expert authority than the members of our Programme Committee. And we are in agreement.

I began to involve myself with the issues presented in the museum forty-five years ago; my books and articles from the field have been published in over ten foreign languages. A lecture of mine about the USSR's invasion of Finland finally determined my removal from the Institute of History at the University of Warsaw in 1975. I will refer my books to those people who wish to question my professional qualifications, and I can only direct my book about Hitler's views on the Poles, Russians and the entire Slavic world to those who wish to challenge my Polish patriotism. An online English version will be available this summer. From what I know it is the only book of its kind in world literature.

As a historian, I consider that the Museum's directors and staff have carried out a tremendous piece of work by setting the specific fates of Poland and Poles in a European and global context.

I am the only living witness to the notorious mass murder of Jews committed in Copernicus Street, Lwów (Lviv, now Ukraine) in the summer of 1941 by German and Ukrainian fascists immediately after the city's capture by Hitler's troops. I was six then. My mother saved me. I was meant to be recording my recollections for the museum right now. But the member of the academic staff who had discussed the issue with me is extremely uncertain about their job and future. The museum staff have been under great stress for several months.

And finally, the third reason. For almost fifty years I have compiled an archival and library collection about the Second World War and totalitarian regimes. Michał Jagiełło,

director of the National Library, regards it as one of the largest in Poland. The collection is spread over a few locations. I was wondering about donating it as a separate museum collection. It contains thousands of documents and books. I could give them to people with whom I have worked for several years in an advisory role: Professors Machcewicz, Majewski, Marszalec and Wnuk, but not to the anonymous reviewers who allegedly exist but who we have never actually seen in the museum.

So I make an appeal: it is the last possible moment – and high time – to leave in peace the staff who are about to open what is in my opinion one of the best museums in Poland. Two hundred historians recently declared their support for the museum. Who, then, is against it?

I don't wish to compare the idea of a Museum of the Second World War with a Museum of the History of Poland. I also support the idea for the latter museum – as having key importance. There is enough room in Poland for various museums and for historical truth, but they ought not to be places for Herostratuses.

The Temple of Artemis was never rebuilt in Ephesus.