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**Reply to the reviews of the main exhibition of the Museum of the Second World War by dr hab. Piotr Niwiński, prof. UG, ed. Piotr Semka, prof. dr. hab. Jan Żaryn, written on order from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage**

On 6 July 2016, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage provided the Mayor of Gdańsk, Mr Paweł Adamowicz, with the above-indicated three reviews of the main exhibition of the Museum of the Second World War. Access to them was granted in response to the request from the Mayor of Gdańsk, dated 23 June, placed in accordance with the Act on Access to Public Information. The disclosure of the reviews, as well arrangement of a public debate, had earlier been declared by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Prof. Piotr Gliński, during his communication with the Museum Director, Prof. Paweł Machcewicz, on 18 April 2016.

The disclosed reviews, just as public statements of their authors, reveal that the reviews were produced only on the basis of the exhibition summary: ‘The Functional and Content Programme of the Main Exhibition, Museum of the Second World War’ (available on the Museum website: [www.muzeum1939.pl](http://www.muzeum1939.pl)). That 75-page long document gives an overview of the main exhibition sections, where photographs of selected exhibits account for a substantial part of the document. On page one of the work we stated plain and clear that: ‘One cannot convey the complete concept of the functional and content programme of the exhibition without the relevant technical documentation. Therefore, when analysing this document one should refer to the plans of the entire exhibition, its individual areas, cross-sections, and the so-called intervention table which lists all components of the setting’.

We submitted all materials referred to, including visualisations of the exhibition and films presenting it, to the Ministry of Culture on 8 January 2016. We cannot understand why the reviewers did not use them even though the introduction to the ‘Functional and Content Programme’ gives information thereon. The creators of the Museum were also willing to provide more detailed materials, e.g. over one thousand pages of texts intended for display at the exhibition, and additional explanations. The reviewers, however, did not turn to us to obtain any.

Most certainly, studying the documentation, voluminous as it is, would have required much more effort, but would have resulted in reviewing the actual content of the main exhibition, instead of just its ‘table of content’. To us, only that approach could be considered fully responsible and fair, particularly when writing straightforwardly negative reviews of the eight years’ work of dozens of historians from both the Museum team and its Advisory Board.

In effect, a vast majority of the Reviewer’s objections claiming non-existence of various threads in the exhibition are totally misconceived, since the topics actually present therein, only the authors of the reviews could not find them without referring to the whole material the Museum delivered to the Ministry. Even more striking is the fact that the Reviewers accuse us of omitting some threads presented even in the abridged document they used; apparently they must have failed to read it carefully enough. For instance, ed. Piotr Semka objects that ‘Not a word is said about the Wola massacre during the Warsaw Uprising’. In actual fact, the exhibition gives a broad report on the Uprising and on the slaughter of several thousand civilian population of Wola. This is mentioned on p. 56 of the ‘Functional Content Programme’ which contains a photograph of an exhibit appended with the following caption: *A child’s shoe worn by a civilian victim of the population slaughters in Wola during the Warsaw Uprising, 1944.*

Ed. Semka also blames us for ‘failure to spin off a separate space for the slaughter of the Poles in Volyn within the ethnical conflict area’. He follows his accusation with the following comment: ‘This is truly scandalous’. The truth is that the Museum of the Second World war presents the Ukrainian atrocities perpetrated on the Poles in Volyn in a separate part of dedicated exhibition section: ‘Ethnical cleansing’. Alongside Volyn, we show the murders of the Serbs, Jews, and the Romani people perpetrated by the Croatian Ustaše. Both massacres share common traits: they were genocidal ethnical cleansings not committed by the Germans, however born largely from the processes triggered by the latter: the policy of

genocide the Third Reich adopted with respect to various ethnical and racial groups. Just as Paweł Machcewicz already noted in his communication with Minister Gliński on 18 April, the Museum of the Second World War is the first one in Poland and the world to give a detailed report on the Volyn slaughter. Ed. Semka could find information thereon on page 51 of the 'Functional and Content Programme'. The page features a photograph of the exhibits the Museum has obtained: *The religious medallions found in the graves of the Poles murdered by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the villages of Ostrówki and Wola Ostrowicka in 1943.*

One should note that the Reviewers share a lack of understanding of the rules which govern the creation of a museum-unfolded narration. An museum exhibition is not the same as a book or encyclopaedia; here, authentic artefacts play a vital role, since they can frequently be more meaningful than pages of text which an ordinary visitor will not read anyway. It is the exhibits which can build the drama and evoke authentic empathy in the visitors, to name e.g. the above mentioned shoe of a child murdered in Wola or the medallions of the Poles murdered in two Volyn villages. An exhibition escapes analysis through the text only (especially, if in a highly abridged version); one must take into account its spatial dimension, the setting, and the exhibits which are as important as words.

The objection voiced by dr hab. P. Niwiński and concerning the absence of the media (repeated many times and considered one of the most weighty ones) provides yet another example of the Reviewers' total misconception of the shape of the exhibition. The Reviewer noticed only 3 multimedia stands in the exhibition. Actually, there are 240 stands there. This core information on the structure of the exhibition could be found in the intervention table the Museum provided.

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Below, you will find our reply to the objections of general nature (Part I), and to the detailed objections voiced in individual reviews (Part II).

## I

The Reviewers formulate the accusation that our image of the war puts too much emphasis on suffering, especially of the civilians. Dr hab. Niwiński writes that 'Thus, in principle, it is a museum of martyrdom', 'stressed human misfortune', 'domination of the bane over other features'. According to dr hab. Niwiński the Museum misses 'the other side of the medal – the forging of the human nature' (ed. Semka uses an almost identical phrase:

‘toughening up of the character’), he notes that ‘examples of negative sides or war dominate the positive ones’. This leads to the formulation of a weighty accusation (a similar objection comes from Prof. Żaryn too): ‘The whole message could be most properly summarised in a well-known slogan of the times of the Polish People’s Republic – <No more war, not now, not ever>’.

Admittedly, we do show the Second World War as immense evil and enormous suffering. We do focus our attention on millions of murdered, persecuted, and suffering civilians. We believe this is our moral obligation and we are convinced that a museum rejecting that perspective would twist the actual face of the war and compromise its goals. The major difference between the Second World War and all previous ones comes down to the fact that the civilians were its prime victims, and that the aggressors – with the Third Reich and Soviet Union in the lead – consciously pursued a planned and systematic policy of genocide perpetrated on ethnic, racial, and social groups. As concerns the Polish losses, more than two hundred thousand people fell in battle, and we recall their fate paying homage to them many times in the Museum. However, the civilian losses of the Polish society were much higher. Over 5 million people lost their lives: about 3 million Polish Jews and more than 2 million of the ethnically Polish population. Indeed, their deaths were prevailingly more horrible than the fate of the soldiers: they died in gas chambers, concentration camps, and executions, to name e.g. Pomerania in 1939, Palmiry, or Wola during the Warsaw Uprising. It is utterly unbelievable that the creators of a museum being erected in Poland, the country which suffered such horrendous losses during the war, have to explain the reasons why they adopted that perspective in the creation of the exhibition to the reviewers.

We cannot agree either that the message: ‘No more war, not now, not ever’ is a child of the propaganda of the Polish People’s Republic. Indeed, in its very essence it is deeply Christian. It was the appeal which came from Pope Paul VI during his first visit at the United Nations Organisation in 1965. John Paul II repeated the same words in 2003. On the occasion, referring to the Second World War, he also said: ‘The scale of the losses suffered, and even more the scale of the suffering inflicted on individuals, families, communities, is truly hard to gauge. (...) War was not limited to the front lines; being a total war, it hit whole societies. Whole social circles were deported. Thousands fell victims to imprisonment, torture, and execution. People far from the theatre of war fell victims to bombings and systematic terror given the organised form of labour camps which turned to death camps’. This vision of the war – which the reviewer, dr hab. P. Niwiński, would certainly consider too

‘negative’ – and of the civilian fate is close to the heart of the creators of the exhibition of the Second World War Museum.

All along, this is also a museum of struggle and heroism, contrary to what the Reviewers say. The ‘Resistance’ section ranks among the most expanded ones, and the presentation of the Polish Underground State is very detailed and comprehensive, the fact noticed by the reviewers themselves. Noteworthy, we present it not only through the prism of armed struggle, but also by giving an overview of all of its civilian arms: the underground political life, press, judicial system, education system in conspiracy, and aid to the Jews and prisoners. Indeed, that civilian dimension of the Polish Underground State made it stand out against the resistance in other occupied countries, hence should be given special prominence.

The exhibition further presents all operations of the war Polish soldiers were engaged in: the year 1939, the partisan war, Action Storm, Warsaw Uprising, Polish Armed Forces in the West (e.g. a very detailed story of Gen. Maczek 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Armoured Division portrayed through numerous exhibits, including a Sherman tank; obviously the Italian campaign and the battle of Monte Cassino are included), and the Polish Army formed in the USSR.

To us, the charge of ‘pseudo-universalism’ formulated by Prof. Żaryn is incomprehensible. On the contrary, we perceive universalism as a positive value. In the context of the exhibition, we understand it as the ability to comprehend the feelings and suffering of other people and nations, as well as such presentation of our own feelings and suffering as to make them comprehensible to people of other nations or even other cultural circles. This is how we attempted to structure the museum’s narration. All along, we do not believe that our Polish national pride or exceptional traits of our history will lose anything, if the Polish experience is shown in the European and global context. Actually, it is quite the opposite: only in this perspective can the visitor be able to grasp the essence of the Polish historic experience.

## II.

### **The objections from dr hab. Piotr Niwiński**

#### **The reservations applicable to the entire exhibition:**

- a. No comparison between the Polish effort and that of the other countries.  
It is quite the opposite. Presentation of the Polish effort against that of other states and nations enables weighing the Polish contribution against the contribution and effort of other countries involved in the war.
- a. Linearity and chronology „not too interesting”.  
The Reviewer failed to notice that the exhibition follows the chronological order at the outset (1918-1939), then changes to the problem-based arrangement, and returns to the chronological line only at the very end (1945 and the post-war times).
- b. No indicative maps.  
The Reviewer did not reach for the intervention table. The exhibition shows more than 100 maps, both traditional ones, and others available through the multimedia, many of them animated. The author of the review did not avail himself to the enclosed films either; there, he could have seen samples of the maps and the multimedia content.
- c. The Reviewer expresses doubt as to the use of the terms: ‘the Soviet Union’, ‘the Soviets’, sovietisation, and the USSR abbreviation.  
Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was the official name of the soviet state in the 1939 Poland. ‘Sovietisation’ is used as the term to describe the process of unification of the land annexed by the USSR with the „old” soviet areas, whereas the latter one is commonly accepted as denoting a citizen of the Soviet Union.

#### **Reservations about specific sections (vide: their numbering in the exhibition)**

1.0 According to the Reviewer, Poland is presented as one of the ‘few’ authoritarian countries, and uses that word to build his criticism of the message. However, the expression is never used either in the exhibition, or in the documents delivered to the Ministry.

1.1 The Reviewer believes that Marks and Engels are mentioned unnecessarily. There is no negative tint about communism.

This remark refers to the following text: *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels created an ideology which claimed that humanity developed towards the ideal system – communism. Liquidation of private property, central planning, and control of the economy were meant to lead to*

*annihilation of all form of suppression, inequality, and privation. Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Russian communists (Bolsheviks) preached that the sole way of implementing the Marxist idea was to sow armed revolution and terror.*

Unlike the Reviewer, we believe that a brief outline of the communist ideology is needed. The enclosed setting documentation reveals explicitly what kind of ‘emotion’ rules this part of the exhibition. We show collectivisation of agriculture and the Great Famine which cost millions of lives, mass terror, suppression of religion, and forced resettlements of the nations (the Polish included) in the nineteen thirties. Let us but add that the above text is entitled: *Communist utopia put into practice.*

## 1.2 No Italian conquest

It is there, in the exhibition, though not mentioned in the abridged ‘Functional and Content Programme’.

2.1 The author of the review suggests replacing the photo of Chamberlain with an interesting exhibit related to the conference of Munich.

The idea is excellent, and we will be grateful for indicating an authentic artefact linked to the conference which would be available to us.

2.2 The accusation saying that the phrase *separation of Gdańsk from Germany* suggests that the authors of the exhibition consider the Treaty Versailles unjust.

The paragraph reads: *Among other consequences, the First World War brought separation of Gdańsk from Germany, a Polish city in the times before the partitions. In 1920, it was transformed into the Free City of Danzig.* The Reviewer has manipulated the original text.

Section 3. The charge that the exhibition „divides” the Polish citizens into Jews and Polish. The different approach the Germans took to the Polish and the Jewish is a fact of history, and is reflected in the exhibition.

## 3.1 The figure of col. Stanisław Dąbek left out

The abridged ‘Functional and Content Programme’ makes no mention of the figure. It is, however, included in the main exhibition.

3.2 The charge that when telling about the German atrocities of 1939 we consequently write about the crime perpetrated on the Poles and the Jews, “dividing” the Polish citizens.

Yes, we do write about the Polish and Jewish. Back in 1939, the Germans did not perpetrate any such crime on Polish citizens of the German, Belarus, or Ukrainian nationalities.

## 3.4 The reservation claiming that the way the 1939 defence war is described is ‘disputable’.

The narration dwells on the topic highly extensively. The visitor can follow the details of the campaign on touchscreens in the room. The Reviewer apparently did not consult the intervention table. The Reviewer refers us to the findings of Tymoteusz Pawłowski.

Admittedly, we did not resort to his book, since respectable military historians welcomed it with crushing criticism.

### 3.6 The charge of missing information on the atrocities perpetrated by the Red Army.

The atrocities are presented on multimedia monitors where, for instance, one can listen to witnesses' reports.

Section 5. – Contrary to what the Reviewer writes, the title of the section is: 'A war of a new type', not 'A new war', and that title appears in all documents submitted with the Ministry. It is hard for us to say what made the Reviewer conclude that the section omits the role of Italy. Nevertheless, the conclusion is wrong.

6.2 The author of the review believes that the part devoted to the blockade of Leningrad does not highlight Stalin's responsibility for leaving the civilians in the city strong enough. The multimedia will provide the visitor with comprehensive information on the blockade, Stalin's decisions included.

6.3 According to the Reviewer, the exhibition allegedly leaves out the bombings of Frampol, Wieluń, or London. All those threads are in the centre of the museum-told story in this part of the exhibition. When assessing the part, the Reviewer clearly did not watch the enclosed film material.

Another allegation made about this part is the charge that 'equal weight is ascribed to the suffering of the victims of the Nazi system and that caused by the Allies' air raids'. Indeed, the 'Functional and Content Programme' delivered to the Ministry states clearly that the Germans, Soviets, and Japanese would employ air-raids of the civilians from the very beginning, whereas *the western Allies resorted to them to any larger scale only in the second phase of the war*. This is also exactly the message this part of the exhibition conveys.

8.2 The author of the Review is wrong stating that the soviet deportations are first touched upon in that space.

That allegation stems from brushing through the 'Functional and Content Programme'. Apparently, the Reviewer did not study the description of space 7.2. Dr hab. P. Niwiński expresses the concern that the visitor will not learn how many people were deported deep into the USSR. The number of the deportees and the maps showing the deportation destinations constitute an important component of that exhibition space.

11.1 The Reviewer accuses that the exhibition makes no mention of 'Żegota' or the action of saving the Jews.

Of course, the topic is markedly present in the exhibition, in the part devoted to the Polish Underground State. Had the Reviewer consulted the intervention table, he would have found notes indicating where the 'Żegota' operations are shown, Irena Sendler's role especially highlighted.



11.4. The Reviewer raises the charge that the Warsaw Uprising is 'listed in a single line' next to other uprisings.

The Reviewer, however, failed to notice that that developments have a separate large space reserved to them, with absolutely moving exhibits related to the Uprising presented there. It is the second part of the visiting route which presents a spectacular etude of the Warsaw Uprising, exploiting features of a shadow theatre is presented alongside the etudes telling the stories of the Ghetto Uprising in Warsaw, the uprisings in Slovakia, Paris, and Prague. That configuration enables the visitors to compare individual insurrections and highlights the exceptionality of the Polish uprisings – the one in the Ghetto, and the Warsaw Uprising.

16.2 The author of the review claims that the resettlements of the Balts, Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, etc. are all given an equivalent weight.

The claim is wrong; showing phenomena side by side does not make them equal. It is further raised that the exhibition leaves out the so-called repatriation of the Poles from the eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland. In actual fact, it is shown in that very part, and the 'Functional and Content Programme' states so explicitly. The Reviewer simply overlooked the information.

16.3 The Reviewer formulates the reservation that the part says nothing of trials of the Japanese and Soviet war criminals.

The Reviewer failed to notice that the Tokyo trial is mentioned in the documents submitted with the Ministry, i.e. is present in the exhibition. Surprising, though, is the charge relating to the Soviet assassins, formulated with respect to the exhibition section entitled 'The triumph of justice' which tells the story of the post-war court trials of the war criminals. The Reviewer must be aware of the fact that the Soviet criminals, members of the anti-Nazi coalition, were never brought to trial. We do, however, show the silhouettes of the Soviet criminals (Ivan Sierov, Vasili Blokhin – the murderer of Katyń) and inform that unlike some of the German perpetrators – the latter escaped any penalty whatsoever.

### **The objections from prof. dr hab. Jan Żaryn**

#### **The reservations to the entire exhibition:**

- a. To begin with, the Reviewer assumes that the Polish experience of the Second World War cannot, by its very nature, be translated into the language of universal values. The following critical argumentation is based on that presumption. We voice a fundamental disagreement with the declaration. The assumption claiming that there is a contradiction between what is Polish and national, and what is universal, is false. That difference in the perception of the world and history makes prof. Żaryn want the Second World War Museum to preach almost exclusively that the Polish are *'loving*

*freedom, Catholic, patriotic (...) most of all – proud of our history*'. He wants to have an exhibition telling about the struggle and suffering of the Polish nation under the German occupation, the martyrdom of the Roman Catholic clergy highlighted in particular. Those topics are shown in our exhibition, and very extensively so, but the message of the Museum of the Second World War must not be limited to those issues. Prof. Żaryn's review refers to the notions of 'personalism', 'humanity', and 'global context' only in a negative context. Universalism, on the other hand, turns into 'pseudo-universalism' in his opinion. Therefore, it is obvious that he cannot accept the exhibition in the shape which tells the story of the Polish experience of war in universal and personalist categories, created for both the Polish recipient, and the visitor from the USA, China, or Japan.

### **Specific reservations:**

1.2 The suggestion alleging that only Fascism and Nazism are „bad” in the exhibition.

That erroneous comment stems from superficial reading of the documents received. The latter indicate explicitly that the Nazi Third Reich, the communist Soviet Union, the militarist Japan, and the fascist Italy are all treated as totalitarian and aggressive countries, undermining the Versailles order and – to use Prof. Żaryn's expression – “bad”. The criminal nature of the communist system is shown clearly (see: the reply to the equivalent charge from dr hab. P. Niwiński).

1.3 The objection about no mention of the founder of Opus Dei, Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, or the artist, Salvador Dali, in the exhibition.

None of the here named figures appears in the exhibition. Moreover, we see no substantiated reasons to include those very persons therein.

2.2 The allegedly understated significance of Gdańsk in the times of the First Republic of Poland.

Nowhere in the main exhibition do we deal with Poland before the partitions. If it were done, the narration of the museum would be blown to pieces. However, the visitor will find information on the history of Gdańsk in a separate exposition devoted to the past days of the site on which the Museum is erected. The exposition is located in the same building, next to the main exhibition. Information on the exposition is given in the 'Functional and Content Programme' the Reviewers used.

3.4 The charge of the alleged disregard of the Polish Army operations during the defence war of 1939.

The narration covering the topic is truly extensive. The visitor can follow the details of the campaign on the touchscreens provided in the room.

3.5 The reservation concerning non-inclusion of photographs by Julien Bryan in the part devoted to the siege of Warsaw.

The reservation is misconceived; the 'Functional and Content Programme' analysed by prof. Żaryn explains the reader that the fate of Warsaw under siege will be shown through 'the photographs and film produced by Julien Bryan, a US war correspondent'.

3.6/3.7

The Reviewer considers the statement relating to the Soviet-German alliance of 28 September 1939 and contained in the 'Functional and Content Programme' unclear.

Here is the reading of the criticised paragraph:

*On 28 September 1939, while some Polish Army troops still continued their fight, the Third Reich and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty on Friendship and Demarcation in Moscow. The aggressors split the Polish territory approximately in half. The Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, called Poland 'a grotesque bastard of the Versailles Treaty, which had lived through the oppression of non-Polish nationalities'. The Soviet Union never agreed to return most of the seized land, even during the subsequent war with Germany. Great Britain and France did not condemn the Soviet aggression explicitly.*

We have no idea what can be unclear in the phrasing.

8.1. The charge of no account of the 'history of the Katyń lie'.

This section presents a film entitled: 'The Katyń lie', covering the period of the war and several post-war decades.

8.2 The charge of the missing 'exceptional fate of the Catholic clergy'

The crime against the clergy is presented on multimedia monitors where one can listen to e.g. the witnesses' testimonies.

10. The allegation that the OUN-UPA genocide in Volyn and Eastern Galicia „has been dimmed” by putting it side by side with the Ustaše crime.

The allegation is absolutely groundless. This part will probably be the fullest and most comprehensive story of the so-called Volyn massacre in Poland.

11.1 The accusation of omitting the history of the 'Cichociemni'.

The story of the 'Cichociemni' is told on a multimedia screen.

The charge of omitting the 'French F-2 espionage network'.

The Reviewer most probably means Intelligence Branch F of the Polish military intelligence for France (code name 'F', and 'F 2' as of 1943). The Polish intelligence is broadly presented at the exhibition. However, our overview is built primarily around the effort of the Polish intelligence connected with the V-1 and V-2.

The charge of skipping the Home Army's struggle against the Soviet guerrillas and the tragedy of the village of Koniuchy.

The exhibition discusses both issues in detail. We present e.g. testimonies given by the witnesses of and participants in the events, recorded by the Museum's staff.

### **The objections from ed. Piotr Semka**

#### **The reservations to the entire exhibition:**

The review is exceptionally inconsequential in nature. It contains many general comments just loosely linked to the exhibition. Unusually frequently, the author goes back to his opinions (even quotes them in unaltered phrasing) he disseminated in publicist texts back in 2008 when the first public debate on the Museum of the Second World War was held. In places, the text turns into a popular journalist lecture devoted to the history of the Second World War and the way it is presented by different museums. Hence, references made to Vladimir Putin, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Ernst Nolte, or Helga Hirsch. The text devoted to the exhibition itself is relatively modest. In his introduction, the reviewer expresses the belief that the main exhibition of the Museum of the Second World War should focus on the Polish 'armed struggle'. He finds leaning over the fate of the civilians as 'going over the top' and claims that in the Polish case 'the tendency is astonishing'. With such a starting point adopted, there can only be one final conclusion. Ed. Piotr Semka had to close the text stating that: 'The exhibition requires substantial alterations'.

#### **Detailed reservations:**

Section 0. The Reviewer claims that the narration waives 'an overview of the First World War, brief as it might be' [quoted literally]

The Reviewer must have left out the description of section 0 which tells the story of the First World War, the Bolshevik revolt, and the moulding of the post-war Europe. Nor did he reach for the intervention table or the enclosed film material.

Section 1.

The charge of no information given on the system of lagers and extermination of the Polish in the Soviet Union before 1939.

The exhibition contains two presentations devoted to the issues.

3.2 The Reviewer reacts with an objection seeing the extermination operations of the Einsatzgruppen and the German terrorist air raids.

We cannot understand the objection. Both types of the criminal operations were conducted in the same place and at the same time (Poland, 1939), and Polish citizens were their victims.

3.4 The charge of omitting the ‘epic legend of Maj. Henryk Dobrzański <Hubal>’

The history of Maj. ‘Hubal’ and other partisan groups operating in the years 1939-1940 (under the German and Soviet occupation) is included in the exhibition.

8.1 The charge claiming that ‘the Katyń massacre shrinks to nothing among other numerous examples’

Contrary to what the Reviewer writes, the part devoted to the crime of Katyń is not included in space 6.1, but in 8.1. The allegation that the section is too small or not prominent enough can only result from his exceptionally haphazard reading of the ‘Functional and Content Programme’ and unfamiliarity with the documentation the Museum provided. The massacre of Katyń is reserved a separate room displaying e.g. the personal belongings of the murdered officers (reclaimed from their graves), with their photographs and fragments of letters to their families on the walls, and a film on the ‘Katyń lie’ projected on the screen.

8.2 The charge claiming that the visitor will ‘learn little of the deportations of the Polish to Siberia and Kazakhstan’.

That part of the exhibition brims in exceptionally interesting and moving exhibits (e.g. crosses from graves of the deported Poles). The Reviewer was not thorough going through the documentation provided by the Museum of the Second World War.

The author believes that when using the word *expulsions* [wypędzenia], the exhibition resorts to the language of ‘the German historiography and propaganda of the wrong done to the Germans’. The notion of *expulsion* is first used in the description of removal of the Polish from Gdynia in 1939. The term is commonly used in the Polish language. One of the associations grouping the victims of the German forced resettlements (although they were not resettlements as such) is called *Community of the Poles expelled and aggrieved by the Germans in the years 1939- 1945*. To follow the logic adopted by ed. Semka, the association pursues the German historical policy. In the section devoted to the post-war forced migrations of the Germans, the term is not used; instead, we use the expression *expulsions* [wysiedlenia].

14. The claim that the battle of Monte Cassino ‘disappears’, ‘nor can one read anything about the combat fought by the ‘Kościuszko’ army’.

This comment stems from inattentive reading of the ‘Functional and Content Programme’. The text devoted to section 14 contains information on the display of the uniforms of the above mentioned formations. The effort of the Polish soldiers will be broadly presented at the main exhibition.

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In view of the facts we have presented, we believe that the reviews produced on commission from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage are acutely biased and unreliable. None addresses the whole documentation of the main exhibition we delivered, but only one element thereof, that is the ‘Functional and Content Programme’, which is not sufficient to carry out an in-depth analysis of the exhibition content. In addition, the reviews represent projections of their authors’ strongly ideology-biased views of the war, but have not much in common with the contemporary knowledge of the historic facts of the conflict. For the above reasons, we refute the charges raised by the Reviewers in their entirety.

We believe that the discussion on the shape of the main exhibition of the Museum of the Second World War should be conducted in a way that will be as transparent as possible to the public opinion and which will enable assessing the arguments from both the creators of the Museum’s main exhibition, and its critics. Therefore, we appeal to the Reviewers to join a public debate alongside the creators of the Museum of the Second World War. We will also be obliged for getting familiar with all materials of the exhibition provided by the Museum so that the discussion can be fact-based. We count on your acceptance of the invitation to the debate.