

5th August, 2016

**Statement of the Advisory Board of the Museum of the Second World
regarding the reviews commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and National
Heritage**

The historians of the Advisory Board have read the three reviews commissioned by the Ministry of Culture. It would be unfortunate if the Ministry of Culture were to take action on the basis of these texts.

The task of a historian is to read the sources and formulate interpretations accordingly. In the case of these reviews, this work was not done. The bulk of these reviews are devoted to the claim that one aspect or another of Polish history is not represented in the exhibition of the Museum. In every case, these claims are wrong, and often grotesquely so. The reviews also provide various opinions about exhibition structure. One reviewer believes that the Museum should be arranged more chronologically, another thematically. These recommendations contradict one another, and reveal no serious reflection. In fact, the Museum is arranged in three major chronological blocks, with themes within each of these blocks. One of its innovations is its serious consideration of the prewar and postwar periods, so important for understanding the origins and consequences of the war, and in particular the fate of Poland and other east European nations whose postwar fate was communism. The exhibition's thematic treatment of the war itself is intellectually pioneering, historically accurate, and accessible to Poles and others. It provides a singular opportunity present the Polish experience of war to the world.

The reviewers permit themselves to express certain metaphysical beliefs about the character of war. Disagreement on such matters is natural. It would be best if those who experienced the war were allowed to speak for themselves, which is what the Museum's exhibition permits. As historians we are humbled that so many Poles have

contributed the precious family heirlooms that permit the history of the war to become an opportunity for public experience, discussion, and memory. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Paweł Machcewicz and his colleagues, admirable historians of Poland and the war, and creators of a Museum without precedent and without peer.

Elie Barnavi (Tel Aviv), Jerzy W. Borejsza (Warsaw), Włodzimierz Borodziej (Warsaw), Norman Davies (Oxford), Ulrich Herbert (Freiburg in Breisgau), Pavel Polian (Moscow), Krzysztof Pomian (Warsaw/Brussel), Henry Rousso (Paris), Timothy Snyder (Yale), Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw), Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań).