

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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May 25, 2016

Minister Piotr Glinski
Minister of Culture
minister@mkidn.gov.pl

Dear Minister Glinski,

The American Historical Association wishes to register its concern about the possible merging of the planned Museum of the Second World War with a newly proposed museum focusing solely on Poland's military struggle in 1939. Our organization, which numbers 13,000 members, is the principal professional organization of historians in the United States, and includes some members in Europe as well. It includes many specialists in the history of World War II, as well as in Polish and European history.

The planned Museum of the Second World War is poised to make a unique contribution to the public understanding of World War II: it would be the only major museum focusing on the international context of the war. The museum's planned exhibition has been vetted by renowned experts with international reputations. Its content is not driven by present-day political concerns. It will showcase Poland's extraordinary wartime contributions and sacrifices, and contextualize them within a cataclysmic global conflagration. With its dramatic architecture and world-class exhibition, the museum would become a major tourist attraction in Poland, while at the same time providing essential public education about the history of Poland, Europe, and the world. A more narrowly conceived museum, attracting fewer visitors, would actually do much less to inform new generations about the history of Poland during the war.

The AHA emphasizes how much admiration and prestige Poland has gained in the world during the last two decades as a result of the critical approach its society has taken to its own past. International publication projects, like the multivolume collection of primary documents regarding the situation of ethnic Germans in postwar Poland, and museums like the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, have set international standards. Few countries have done as much to confront the difficult chapters in their past. The AHA expresses its hope that Poland will continue on this path and play an international leadership role in this respect.

I urge you to reconsider the possible merger so that the Museum of the Second World War can continue as planned. Please allow Poland's history during World War II to receive the worldwide attention it so rightly deserves. Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Patrick Manning
President, American Historical Association, 2016