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Stop the `New Violence,' Create a New Renaissance

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Helga Zepp-LaRouche delivered an address on the "New Violence" to an audience at the São Paulo State Appellate Criminal Court, on June 13, 2002. Subheads have been added.

Mr. President, dear ladies and gentlemen:
It is a great honor for me to be able to speak to you on the subject of the New Violence today. Actually, this is a phenomenon, which threatens human civilization in the same way as a new global epidemic, and I have launched an international campaign for the banning and outlawing of this media violence and of media products which glorify violence. This will be the first aspect of my talk, and the second one is the equally urgent need to have a Classical-humanist education.
You may have read in the newspaper, or seen on TV, the renewed discussion about this problem, after, about four weeks ago, in Erfurt, east Germany, a 19-year-old pupil went into his school, and shot 14 teachers, 2 pupils, and then himself. As the police found out afterwards, this person, with the name of Steinhäuser, had trained for this horror-show one full year before. He trained on the video game, "CounterStrike," and among his most favorite movies belonged the Schwarzenegger movie "The Terminator." And, on his home page—his personal web page—he even had written, months before, that one day, he wanted to go to his school and kill everybody, like "Arnie," meaning Arnold Schwarzenegger.
After this occurred, which sent all of Germany into a big shock, I did an interview with an expert on "killology"—or on killing—the American Col. Dave Grossman (ret.), who has written many books on "killology." I asked him, how is it possible that *nobody*—not his parents, not his friends, not his teachers—noticed anything for one year? And, he said, because it's normal: Millions of youth worldwide do exactly the same thing. The video game, CounterStrike, which you can download (I'm not suggesting it) on the Internet, is being watched, at any moment, at any hour of the day, by an average of 500,000 people. CounterStrike is only one of many, many such games.

Path to Violence: Like the Law of Gravity

Already, in 1972, the American Medical Association, the American Association of Psychologists, the U.S. Surgeon General, the Red Cross, and many others, had done studies, which all proved, that there is a direct connection between media violence and the increase of violence in society, ranging from the so-called "school youth violence," street violence, and the barbaric acts in war.

The counter-argument made by the industry promoting these media products, is that there is not such a connection, that only those children and youth who are predisposed will react this way. In 1992, the American Psychological Society said, the scientific debate over this question is beside the point: There is no doubt. In 1999, the same society said, to deny this connection is as if one denied the law of gravity.

So, when you hear that there is not such a connection, these are massive lies. The main reason is twofold: One, it is naturally a gigantic profit; between Hollywood and the producers of these video games; it is a billions and billions business. So, therefore, the denial of the industry is much worse, than that of the tobacco industry.

The second reason for the lies, has to do with the military-strategic dimension. In the Second World War, it was recognized that only 15% of all soldiers were willing to kill the enemy, because to kill another human being is not normal. So, there is a biological and psychological barrier to kill somebody from your own species.... In such a situation in which you have to kill, to kill somebody else, the person freezes in horror; medically, the veins contract, and in the moment of heightened fear, the brain literally stops functioning in a normal way. At that point, reflexes take over. And normally, what happens is, that this more unconscious reflex—not wanting to kill somebody of your species—takes over; that even applies for most animal species.

So, in looking at the result of this unwillingness to kill in the Second World War, the military came to the conclusion that the training was not adequate. Since people only were trained to shoot at targets, whereas real persons were killed, this training had failed. So they developed a program to train for killing. In a similar way, that you don't put a pilot into a plane after he's read the flight manual and tell him, "Fly"—nowadays, you put him in a flight simulator, where he trains for many, many, many hours. The same happened with the army: The soldiers were put in killing simulators. First, the bullseyes there were replaced with humanly-shaped targets. In the past, real ammunition was used for this training, but that turned out to be very expensive. Since they developed video simulators, they put humanly-shaped bodies on the screen, told people to shoot in quick sequence at these targets. The U.S. Marine Corps actually bought the rights to the computer game "Doom," and they used it as a tactical exercise.

With this kind of training, they could increase the so-called "killed-to-injured ratio" (I will come to this in a second). Now, if you shoot in quick sequence, it becomes a habit. Now, for the military and the police, one could argue—I'm not doing this, but one could argue—that this is part of the army, or part of the war. But, as everybody knows, the military and the police have a very rigorous drill,

discipline, and command structure, and they're in a body, which is very disciplined. If you give the exact same video games to children and youth, there is no such discipline.
And even for the police, it doesn't function. In the United States, there were many cases, like the famous [Amadou] Diallo case, in New York, where four police in plainclothes fired 41 shots at an unarmed man. It was a typical overreaction, which comes from this training.

Simulators of Murder

There is one game, for example, which is called "Time Crisis," where the person has a pistol, and if he hits the target, the target falls down. Then he feels the recoil of the pistol. If he misses the target, the target fires at the person: Now, this is a murder simulator, nothing else. It has been made available for children, only for one purpose: To teach the children the ability and the will, to kill.
Again, under stress, we operate on the basis of trained reflexes. There is the example of the policemen, who trained at the time when the police were trained with revolvers; and they were trained, that after they emptied the pistol with six shots, they would put the shells in their pockets—so that they would not have to clean up the firing range after the training. In many cases, when these police fired in a real situation, they automatically put the empty shells into their pockets, because what you train under stress, you repeat in real life under stress. That happens when children play video games, day after day, hour after hour—sometimes six, eight, ten hours a day. They lose completely the feeling for the difference between virtual reality, and reality. There was the case of a shooting, in Paducah, Kentucky: A 14-year-old boy, who had never had a real weapon in his hand, went to a school, and he fired eight shots; he hit eight people, and three of them were dead with a head-shot.
The video game trains the killing reflex, and in the game, the good shot is rewarded: For example, a head-shot gets a point. This is why we call this phenomenon, "New Violence." Violence has been there for eternity, since mankind existed, but there is a qualitatively new dimension. In Michigan, a six-year-old boy, after watching TV and playing video games, went and shot a six-year-old girl, and he had zero awareness of what he had done.
Another aspect is, that these kinds of virtual shootings pervert the sense of joy. In Japan, in the Second World War, they taught the soldiers to laugh about atrocities, and some of the Asian history, like relations between Japan and China, Japan and Korea, still suffer from the atrocities committed in this period. These are Pavlovian methods. In Littleton, Colorado, where there was the other major shooting, when a teacher went to another school in Littleton, called the Chatham School, and they announced over the loudspeaker what had just happened in the Columbine School, the pupils applauded. So, they teach kids to feel pleasure about the death and the suffering of other creatures.
Now, in 1996, there was a case in Port Arthur, Australia, where 35 people were killed and 22 injured. This was a killed-to-injured ratio of 1:1.6. In the Erfurt case, it was a killed-to-insured ratio of 1:1.25—16 killed and 19 hurt. Now, this has been noted, because, even if

special forces, train for years, they hardly come to these kinds of figures, because, in normal war, if you shoot a target, it is normal that, for your self-survival instinct that you shoot at this one target, until this target goes down. But what the video game does, is, it teaches you to shoot, and to continue to shoot, quickly, quickly, quickly. If you make a head-shot, you get an extra point.

A World of Youth Violence

Now, one reason why I got involved with this whole subject, is the following: I met a six-year-old boy some years ago, who asked me what I know about Pokémon. I said, "I don't know. What is Pokémon?" And, he said, "What? You don't know what Pokémon is? All children in the whole world play Pokémon!" I said, "I doubt it. I know that the children in India, for example, most of them are much too poor to have Pokémon." And he said, "If they're poor, we should shoot them, because if we don't kill them now, they will kill us." And I looked at this six-year-old boy. So I started to investigate this: And, I assure you, Pokémon is the introduction drug to the harder video games, if only ugly fighting, fighting, killing, fighting.

In Japan, they had to take Pokémon off the TV, because the kids watching it had epileptic seizures. Because what the producers of these things do, is they use short sequences and short intervals of the pictures. They consciously *want* to cause an addiction in the brain of the kids. And they count on the fact, that violence, as such, already causes addiction. With the quickly changing images, it destroys the normal function of the brain. The same is, by the way, the case for MTV. You all know these pop videos, which have these psychedelic effects. And I compared the coverage in the U.S. media about Sept. 11 with these pop videos, and they have the same method. They want to cause psychedelic effects and manipulate the audience. So, if children watch this stuff, violence and killing on the TV, it causes what is nowadays is called "concentration deficiency disorder," and, among other things, it causes a reading disorder.

In Germany, which, if you remember, was once called "the people of the poets and thinkers," a recent study has shown that 42% of all pupils never read a book—of 15-year-olds. So, the children who watch this TV, they go to school, and then the poor teacher tries to teach them grammar, and mathematics, and other such things, and the child is not used to this; he is used to these people changing pictures. So, it is likely, he tries to switch the channel—get the teacher to say something different. But, if you have a stubborn, old-fashioned teacher, and he still wants to teach mathematics, then the child becomes hyper, and in many countries, they give them Ritalin. And, then the brain is finally destroyed for sure.

Now, it is a fact, that we have an explosion of violence worldwide. In Canada, the per-capita ratio of severe assaults, increased five times in the last 30 years. In Norway and Greece, it increased five times in the last 15 years. In Japan, youth violence increased in one year, 30%. In Brazil, Mexico, and India, there's an explosion of violence since TV was introduced. And I just learned that much of the organized crime, in the *favelas* and such ghetto situations, are using these video games as a control mechanism.

Now, anybody who does not see, that, on a world scale, we have a gigantic brutalization of society, is blind. Those who protest are not

remembering what they have lost; it's like the drug addict, who cannot remember the brain cells he has destroyed. Already, in 1948, Fredric Wertham, a German-born psychiatrist, launched a campaign against comics. These were not movies, they were little booklets. And he called these comics and the images out of them, "the fundamental problem of the 20th Century, is violence." He wrote a book, called *The Seduction of the Innocent*, and in there, he quoted a certain Robert Southey, and he said, "Young reader, would you know whether the tendency of a book is good or evil? Examine in what state of mind you lay it down. Has it attempted to abate your admiration and reverence for what is great and good? And to diminish in you, your love for your country, and your fellow-citizens? Has it addressed itself to your pride, your vanity, your selfishness, or any of your evil propensities? Has it defied the imagination with what is loathesome, and shocked the heart with that is monstrous? Has it disturbed the sense of right and wrong, which the Creator has implanted in the human soul?" [See *EIR*'s *Feature* for Nov. 18, 1994.]

And then Wertham says that what comics—already in 1942,—did, was just to cause the feeling for violence, cruelty, sadism, crime, beating, promiscuity, sexual perversion, race hatred, contempt for human beings. He quotes the first modern psychologist, St. Augustine, who already was aware of this, who warned of the effects of mass seduction by public spectacles, like, for example, the Roman circus. Because, even in people, who think they can resist this, it causes an unconscious fascination with sadism and violence.

The 'Utopian' Military, and the New Violence

Now, this was studied by what we call "the oligarchical elite," for the last two millennia. Look, for example, at certain Hollywood movies, like "The Gladiator." When this movie came out, the British media openly wrote, "Violence is necessary to control the population. Why? Because it causes the taste for the cheap, the vulgar, the violent, the immoral." Now, if Wertham could write this in 1948 about simple comic books, now just think about the actual explosion in modern Hollywood movies and video games, with three-dimensional reality. This is this old problem, which was recognized already by Plato. In *The Republic*, Plato wrote, that, even the great tragedians, like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and so forth, he did not approve of, because they only wrote tragedies with a tragic end; and, what was lacking was the sublime, nothing which animates the people. And, he said, this very devastating and bad for children.

Now, then, a lot of this was established here, in 1973, by the American institutions. Why was nothing done about it?

Recently, it became totally clear, that there is tendency in the U.S. military, which we call the "utopian faction." If you go back to the American Revolution, the British Empire never forgave America for becoming independent. And they have worked for more than 200 years, to get the American establishment to adopt this model of the British Empire. One professor, called William Yandell Elliott, taught this theory since the '30s: That the United States should become the new, global empire. This professor was the mentor of such people as Kissinger, Brzezinski; and Samuel Huntington, who wrote,

among other things, a book about the *Clash of Civilizations*. Huntington also wrote another book, called *The Soldier and the State*, which argues, there should not be a draft army, but a professional army. This conception of the army, fits the idea of the new, global Anglo-American empire, where the military is supposed to be the mindless legions who control this empire, worldwide.
After Sept. 11, and especially after the bombing of Afghanistan, this Huntington policy of the Clash of Civilizations is already operating U.S. policy. There is a gigantic effort to build up Islam as the new enemy. And, obviously, if you want to have a lot of colonial wars—Bush spoke recently about 60 countries against which this war has to be fought, eventually—we need recruits. And, you can't have people who are educated for 18 years in a humanist way, then turn them into killers. So, it's much better to have people, who have the predisposition for this killing.
If you think that what I'm saying is too wild, I can only assure you, the U.S. Army, about four weeks ago, put out a video game, which simulated shooting and fighting in real war, and they made an explicit appeal to youth who like to play video games, to come and join the Army to have the real thing! Now, for me, this discloses their intention.

For a Ban, and a Classical Education

So therefore, what we are looking at, is really a gigantic problem. And what do we do about it? I have made a call to have an international ban on media violence. The argument, that you can't blame this for violence, is absolutely fraudulent. For the Internet, you have modern processes, with which you can eliminate access to such things. You can impose punishment: You know, those people who produce those things, should have serious fines, jail, monetary sanctions. And, I think that, if the world public and the different nations recognized what is really the threat of losing civilization by these means, I can see the possibility that the United Nations would adopt a protocol to this effect. The key is to ban it, to make it despicable, to make conscious that this is ugly, that we don't want this!
But let me briefly speak about the second aspect: The absolute, urgent need to go to a humanist education. In particular, Wilhelm von Humboldt's conception—the brother of Alexander von Humboldt, who I think is more famous in Ibero-America. One of the founders of the German Classic was called Moses Mendelssohn. And he wrote, in the 18th Century, why the study of Classical drama is so important: Because, when you put the great issues of mankind on the stage, where the audience can see that the future of mankind is being discussed, then the average person identifies for the period of the drama with the person on the stage, and he can learn that the action of the hero determines the doom and decay, or a positive outcome for society. Mendelssohn says this is necessary, because ordinary people in real life, don't have the time to think about these big issues. Therefore, when you rehearse it, in the drama, and then in real life, you are hit with an important question, then you have trained for it.
So, you see, it is exactly the opposite of what the video game does. The video game trains the reflex for the ugly and the killing, and the

Classical drama trains how to be better people, how to be elevated, how to improve your humanity.
Wilhelm von Humboldt developed, in my view, the best and most famous educational reform in the world. He argued against the pragmatic tendency of his time, that the aim of education must not be for a utilitarian purpose, but the aim of education must be the beauty of the character of the pupils. Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote, "For this purpose, it is essential to eliminate everything mechanical. It is the main principle of this method, that the child must always have a full and clear conscience, in what he says and hears and acts in this way, in each moment; that he can account, for even the smallest matter, at each moment; that he learns in this way to think clearly, to want explicitly, and to speak precisely." So, you see, this method is exactly the opposite: It's supposed to make the pupil conscious and clear in each moment; not a trained, mechanical reflex.
Humboldt said that there are certain subject matters which are more suited than others, to developing all the potentialities of the child to an harmonic unity. One is the command of one's own high language—why you have to study great drama, beautiful poems of the best poets of your own language and other languages? You have to study universal history, because only if you know what you owe previous generations, will you have a noble wish to contribute to future generations. And you have to study art and science, so you can replicate the creative minds of the past.

Facing a Crisis of Civilization

Schiller wrote in the *Aesthetical Letters*, that the role of Classical art is *the* necessary means for the moral education. Schiller's highest ideal was a beautiful soul: man, when he has educated his emotions to the highest level, [so] that he can blindly trust his emotions, because they're never in contrast to reason. A beautiful soul is a person for whom fear and necessity, passion and duty are the same.
Schiller wrote, already in the 1780s.... This development, which tends to herd the human beings as masses, are more damaging than ever before. This was 1780: Now, what is herding people more into mindless masses, than pop concerts. You can turn the TV on in Germany, Brazil, China, and India, and you turn on MTV, and every time, what pops out? Britney Spears. And she has a vocabularly of exactly 80 words. And then you see the dionysian masses. And, what makes the people more into masses, than playing the same, stupid video game, in China, in South Africa, in India? There is no clear future in the world.
Now, we are right now in the end phase of a systemic collapse of the financial system. This is not my subject, today. But, if you think the combination of what happened with Argentina, the much worse crisis in Japan, the beginning of the collapse of the dollar, which would bring the whole system down; you know we are at a crucial branching point of history. When I say that we are faced with a systemic collapse, I don't just speak about the financial system: I'm talking about the crisis of civilization. The biggest problem is, that we are in danger of losing our humanity, of which the video violence is just the worst cancer and the AIDS virus. It is up to us: What

should the future be? Do we want to have a collapse into barbarism, where the youth are regarded to be the most dangerous part of society? Or, do we want a new Renaissance?

I suggest that we go the way of the Dialogue of Cultures, in the best traditions of each. And, I'm optimistic, that the view of this great horror is evoking something good in more people, and that we *can* make a new Renaissance. Therefore, I want to ask you to join my campaign, to stop this media violence, and help to build a humanist future.

Thank you.