

'No Killer Video Games For Christmas!'

The German Society of Psychotherapists (GwG) called for a total ban on violent computer games, in a statement issued Nov. 28 from Cologne. The Society is the largest psychotherapist association in Europe. Here are excerpts from the GwG press release, titled "Brutal Computer Games Destroy Compassion; No Killer Games for Christmas." The statement has been translated for EIR. The full text is available at www.larouchepac.com (English) and www.gwg-ev.org (German).

Psychotherapists demand the prohibition of computer games in which young people are rewarded for the killing and torture of human beings. Such games are increasingly marketed in a toned-down manner as "shooter games." The idea of media literacy frequently functions as a smokescreen—today, children and teenagers need "media education."

Cologne: Surveys show that computer games are a huge business for the manufacturer in the Christmas economic boom. For most teenage users, violence-promoting games are a catastrophe from the standpoint of their psychological development. That is the experience of many specialized staff members of the Society for Scientific Person-Centered Psychotherapy (GwG), from psychotherapeutic counseling centers and school psychological services.

The GwG is the largest European professional association for psychotherapy and counseling. It now demands that games which glorify violence be legally prohibited, so that the basic consensus of a humane society is preserved. "Killer games are like landmines for the soul," says Elke Ostbomk-Fischer, university lecturer and a member of the GwG. "The media disregard of young people has reached such a terrifying scale in recent years, that politically responsible persons have to immediately take action, before an entire generation of children and teenagers is sucked into a maelstrom of violence."

Elke Ostbomk-Fischer is thus in agreement with leading criminologists and scientists, who are critical of the media. "Many of these games are inhuman and violate the Basic Law [the German constitution]. Therefore, their production and distribution are liable to prosecution."

More and more, increasingly younger children are losing their natural compassion, when they are immersed for hours and days in the most brutal action-world, in which destruction and killing are experienced as amusement and

fascination. Particularly, young people are frequently affected by this. They then behave increasingly aggressively, and can hardly be won over to social rules of human cooperation.

An increasing number of teenagers spend more time with addictive PC-games than in school. "Many parents feel increasingly helpless and desperate in the face of the overwhelming power of the media. Often they are scolded by their children as 'backward,' if they react skeptically to the child's desire for a gift," says Karl-Otto Hentze, psychotherapist and general secretary of the GwG. Children who are versed in the Internet, frequently persuade their parents with arguments circulated on the Internet by scientists associated with the computer industry....

According to the "Bundesrat [upper house of the German Parliament] Printed Page 2007-0001-0100/ 76-07," killer games are "game programs, which represent cruel or otherwise inhuman violent actions against human beings or human-like creatures, and enable the player to participate in displayed violent actions of such a type." Such games were originally developed for the U.S. military as simulations of war. They have the objective of breaking down the inhibitions which soldiers have against killing, and of increasing their "killer-efficiency." The U.S. military psychologist David Grossman urgently warns that these methods of conditioning to violence work in the same way with children and teenagers, when they intensively play such violence-oriented programs.

'Media Education' Instead of 'Media Literacy'

Game manufacturers have misappropriated the concept of "media literacy" for a long time. The companies finance research and continuing education projects for "more media literacy." They have an interest, of course, in preventing the legal prohibition of killer games. Some experts support them in this with arguments such as, for example, "prohibitions only increase the appeal." (That would also apply to red stop lights, to theft, and even to murder.)

They have an additional strategy of evaluating computer games as "objects of cultural value." "Media literacy" in this sense, promotes the precise knowledge of game types, equipment, and technical details. Killing and violence can thus be accepted as an "artistic convention."

Media Education Includes Education of the Heart

In contrast, media education includes education of the heart. The basic principle is the explicit orientation to the ethical conventions of human rights. The overall concept and standard is the Basic Law [the German constitution]. "Media education" promotes a cooperative culture of association with one's fellow man. Without critical training, it is difficult to distinguish educationally reasonable advice from sales-promotional advice....