

Violent Videos and The ‘Killing of Civilization’

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

The high school murders by a “Counter-Strike”-addicted 19-year-old in Erfurt, Germany on April 26, and the renewed and sharpened call by Helga Zepp-LaRouche for an international ban on such games—echoed by other German political leaders and experts—have been reported in EIR’s May 17 and May 24 issues, along with background analysis by experts. As a result, Lyndon LaRouche and larouchepub.com have received many e-mail protests from younger and other persons attempting to defend those games which they play and design. Virtually all have tried to place the blame for the “new violence” by schoolchildren entirely upon their parents, exculpating completely the makers and marketers of killer videos. LaRouche has sent the following general reply to all these protesters (adding specific rejoinders to some). It is an important discussion for—as he notes—all four of the living generations affected by this growing crisis.

Today, I have received a passel of e-mail messages on the subject of my exposure of the role of point-and-shoot video games, of types which were originally designed for military training—games which have played a well-defined role in fostering the rising tide of “new violence” among minors. The well-documented recent case in an Erfurt, Germany high school, reflects a demonstrated connection between habituation to such video games, and slaughters such as that at Columbine, or Erfurt. The complaints against the conclusions of the experts, of which I am one, are not only groundless, but often exhibitions of wild-eyed, specifically juvenile types of hysteria. However, there is hope for those young people, if they could step out of the grip of the brainwashing-effects which such games induce, and examine their behavior in the adopted role of a bystander.

Therefore, I shall reply to your objections in two parts. First, I shall present a categorical description of the specific conditions which lead growing numbers of children and adolescents, in the U.S.A., Japan, and Europe, into the state of mind which the deadly potential of all point-and-shoot video games represents for the all-too-typical victim of membership in that generation. This first, generic portion of my reply to you I shall repeat, in reply to any message related to the same point. This must be undertaken at some, unavoidable length, but is more than worth the effort, since there are so many who have been victimized by that brainwashing, and since the

possibility a future civilized nation depends upon liberating the victims from that grip.

Second, I shall address some of those points which are more or less specific to your statement, omitting reference to matters which do not warrant such attention.

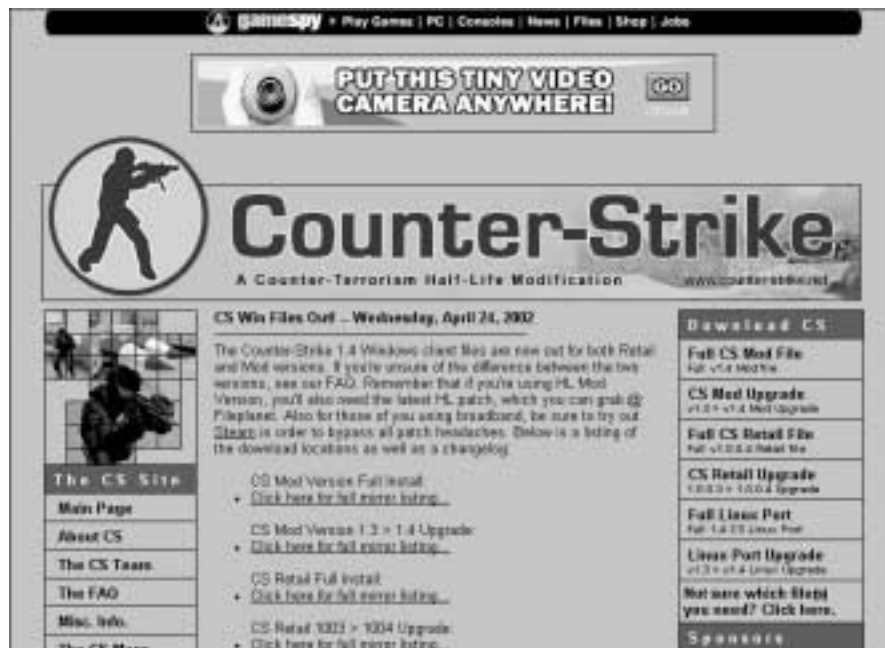
The Generation of Vipers

On the first count, nearly every U.S. adolescent, in particular, today, needs to be jolted into recognizing the kind of mental pit into which his or her entire generation has been dumped. Some such victims have escaped from that pit; most have not. Some would-be critics of my warnings are partially correct, when they insist, that they are members of a group whose families were too impoverished to provide the seeming luxury of what is deemed, usually with juvenile hysteria, as the “games which popular people play.”

It is true, that even without habituation in such games, there are social factors affecting most individuals of that same generation, factors which foster effects which are related to the same pathologies specific to those victims which are video-game players.

That said, the typical victim of video-game-playing pathology today, is a member of the fourth of four generations of living Americans. The first, the dwindling remnant of those born prior to 1914. The second, the generation born during the 1920s or early 1930s, the generation typified by returning veterans from World War II. The third, the generation of the children of the second generation, typified as the so-called “Baby Boomers.” The fourth, the generation dominated by the children and adolescents born to families of the “Baby Boomers”; the so-called “no future,” or “punk” generation. The latter two of these four generations could be regarded as typifying our national “American tragedy” of today; the widespread hatred among the fourth generation for their parents’ generation, is the underlying social phenomenon which makes the spread of point-and-shoot games so infectious a factor in spread of what is, in functional terms, a crucial, widespread mental disease among today’s youth.

The most immediate, most serious intellectual problem of the “no future” generation, is the destruction of the quality of education in pre-school, primary, secondary, and university programs today. Typical of this spread of mental disorder, is the fact that the universities to which parents sent their offspring, at prices in the order of \$50,000-a-year and so on, include institutions which asserted their right to graduate pu-



The “point-and-shoot” computer game Counter-Strike, to which Erfurt, Germany high school mass killer Joseph Steinhäuser was addicted, has a great deal of money riding on its use by tens of thousands of “mass gamers” at elaborate tournaments in Europe.

pils without requiring any significant competence in the ideas of “dead, white, European males.” Pupils about to graduate from secondary schools sometimes weep, saying that they realize that they really know almost nothing from matriculation in today’s secondary schools, excepting the rules of role-playing. Sending an adolescent member of the family to schools and universities of that sort, does not express the intention of developing the student’s knowledge, but simply the social status attributed to the student, and the student’s parents, by the fact that parents have spent so much to educate such littleness of minds.

Nothing I have just written on the matter of these four generations is untrue. In fact, it is very important that this be recognized; but, it only scratches the surface of the deep and deadly threat to civilization by mass-mania around juvenile intoxication, which point-and-shoot video games imply for the future of humanity as a whole. What is most important for the continuity of any form of actually civilized life, is less what one generation does to produce the conditions of life of the successor, than what it may fail to have done.

What Is Culture?

Although I have earned a published record, over thirty-five-odd years, as the most successful long-range economic forecaster of my time, my principal scientific accomplishment has been in defining a scientific approach to the role of Classical forms of artistic culture in determining the generation and assimilation of economically-significant scientific progress.

This is summarized in my published comments on the coincidence and differences between Vladimir Vernadsky's definition of the *Noösphere* and my own approach to the same topical area.

The working-point of relevance here, is the fact that the functional difference between the human species and all lower forms of life, is those cognitive powers which exist as a potential of the individual human mind, by means of which experimentally valid universal physical principles are discovered, and by means of which knowledge of those principles is transmitted within and among societies. Without that distinctive characteristic, the living population of the human species could never have exceeded a total of several or slightly more millions, on this planet, under changing conditions prev-

alent during a period of the recent two millions years. Thus, a competent definition of "culture," signifies the transmission of increases of the human species' "ecological" potential to exist, across cultures, and through successive generations.

As Plato emphasizes in his *Timaeus* dialogue, in his time, several causes for the collapses of cultures were known to him, partly through the work of Egyptian historians of that time: great floods, such as that caused by the cumulative melting of the great Eurasian glaciation, which struck the Mediterranean and Black Sea about 12,000 years ago; tectonic effects such as the great explosion of the Aegean island of Thera; and self-inflicted disasters of mankind. Ultimately, we would expect that progress in science would enable mankind to deal more effectively with so-called natural disasters; in the mean-

Video Ban Would Stop 'LAN Tournaments'

Germany's shocked national reaction to the massacre at a high school in Erfurt on April 26, has included calls by several political leaders—most notably by Helga Zepp-LaRouche of the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo)—for a national or international ban on sales of violent "point-and-shoot" video and computer games. Even though a ban seems difficult to enforce, as far as the Internet is concerned, it would still hit another, very important aspect of the big business with these games.

These are the so-called "LAN parties" or tournaments, where up to 2,500 video-game fanatics convene for several days, usually on weekends, to kill each other, virtually, in tournaments. LAN stands for "local access network," comprised of a larger or smaller number of personal computers connected in a local network, which creates the hardware and software configuration needed for these tournaments.

Many of the games offered in these events are first-person shooter games like Counter-Strike, which was habitually played by Robert Steinhäuser, the 19-year-old who killed 17 people, including himself, in the Erfurt High School. A big LAN party was supposed to take place in Erfurt, on May 3, which was only cancelled because the state government proclaimed a day of mourning, which includes a ban on all public entertainment events.

But, without funding, such events will be impossible because of the gigantic logistical efforts necessary to create the LAN network, not to speak of the travel expenses

and prize monies involved. As in golf, tennis, or motor sports, a number of professional LAN "sports" teams—called clans—have been created, who massacre each other (in virtual reality), for up to \$300,000 in prize monies per tournament. Some of the point-and-shoot "super-stars" earn up to \$100,000 a year. Like the gladiators of ancient Rome's circuses, they are popular heroes who are taken from one event to the next one, all expenses paid—including their own website—by some information technology or entertainment-media corporate sponsor.

The LAN parties are designed to create and sustain a milieu of game addicts, who, trying to become "professionals," will spend large amounts of money to buy the equipment needed to mimic the "stars." If the stars have the most up-to-date machines, they will buy them, too; if they have a new kind of "mouse," they will buy it, along with plenty of other paraphernalia, similar to other professional sports. This, in turn, creates a large market for super-fast processors, and this is why chip producers like Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) or Intel are among the chief sponsors for LAN parties.

Some sponsors have become cautious, because of the intensive public debate about the dangers of killer video and computer games. But, negative publicity by itself will not force them to withdraw as event sponsors. As a spokesman for Intel told the German financial weekly *Handelsblatt*: "We are waiting to see how public opinion develops, and what the lawmakers do." A ban on killer video games will put an end to this ghastly spectacle, though. *Handelsblatt* quoted AMD spokesman Jan Götter: "If Counter-Strike is banned, this will be the end of sponsoring."

Unfortunately, however, on May 17, the German Office for the Oversight of Media Harmful to Youth, decided not to ban Counter-Strike, for the time being.

—Alexander Hartmann

time, it is social catastrophes, such as that which took control of the U.S.A. during the second half of the 1960s, which represent the man-controllable forms of the worst disasters threatening civilizations. This latter is the nature of the social-intellectual catastrophe which hit the “Baby Boomers” as they were emerging from childhood, during the middle through late 1960s. This is the root of the willful catastrophes which the people of the U.S.A. have created for themselves, and their adolescent offspring, today.

That is the root of the conflict, approaching hot hatred, which today’s “punkers” express against their “Baby Boomer” parents, today. That is key for understanding the gravity of the threat which point-and-shoot video games represent among the predominantly uncultured, and cognitively deprived, digital computer-like minds of increasing rations among children and adolescents today.

Look at the relevant social process of cultural transmission, or decadence, from the vantage-point of my experience.

Under normal conditions, the pivotal feature of cultural transmission occurs within the bounds of what is identified as “the extended family.” The degree to which cognitive forms of transmission of ideas of principle occur, more or less, within the bounds of the extended family, tends to favor higher levels of intellectual and moral achievement among children of such families. The emphasis on cognitive training in primary and secondary schools and universities, functions as an extension, in the alma mater, of the relatively best standard of intellectual life within the family. In my case, such family relations reached directly into grandparents born during the 1860s, and to a personality often brought to life at the family table, a great-great-grandfather born at about the same time as Lincoln.

When we combine that family-centered notion of culture with the examination of life in earlier and foreign places in history, and render history comprehensible through reliving ancient and more recent discoveries of universal physical principles, we may achieve a practical sense of what culture really means, and what individual morality really means.

Against that background, the crisis of the 1960s brought about a general, negative cultural revolution in both the U.S.A. and in globally extended European civilization generally. This pro-Malthusian, “post-industrial,” “rock-drug-sex counter-cultural” revolution, became an increasingly hegemonic cultural trend among those “Baby Boomers” whom increasing rations of the “no future” generation have come to hate as those who have deprived the coming generation of adults of the right to have a future. It is a literally “dionysiac,” existentialist quality of hatred.

These are the circumstances within which the impact of point-and-shoot video games must be understood. It is not merely the killing of people. It is the dionysiac act of killing of civilization.