

soldier who is trained by these games, Wetter said. This implies that a ban on such killer games must hit the designers and producers, to dry out that blood-curdling swamp.

2. In a radio interview with the Berlin Inforadio station on April 29, Elke Monssen-Engberding, director of the Federal Agency for the Protection of the Youth, said the crucial point is that the German Constitution (in its first two articles) recognizes the dignity of human beings and the integrity of the human body. Therefore, society simply cannot allow practices that openly violate those provisions. A ban on killer games is clearly mandated by the Constitution. Her agency banned "Doom" several years ago, and is expected to decide on a full ban of "Counterstrike" by mid-May.

3. Imposing an efficient ban, would have to include action against Internet providers that offer "users" (addicts, one should rather say) the downloading of such killer games, and the formation of virtual "teams" on special websites. German Minister of Family and Youth Affairs Christine Bergmann conceded, in an April 30 interview with the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, that the kind of indexation and ban of killer games that the government is considering would, as far as the Internet is concerned, be "mandatory only for German providers." Asked about American Internet providers, she said: "This is a problem. What we view as violence-glorifying here, the Americans view as freedom of speech, therefore they see no reason not to place that on the Internet." If U.S. authorities

are not cooperative, German authorities would have to block U.S. providers from operating on German Internet territory—this is technically possible.

### **'Modern Reforms' of Education**

One has to add a fourth point: Measures against youth violence must include longer-term initiatives that improve the moral standards among the population in general, including the parents. The gradual liberalization and degeneration of the German education system over the last 30 years of "modern reforms," must be reversed. If access to the humanist works of Classical literature is blocked, if video/computer games and television programs continue to construct a virtual reality for the population, the battle for human values, for humanity, cannot be won. You cannot have a dialogue among people if their predominant interaction proceeds via computer-based, brutalized virtual realities.

The numerous teachers, parents, and education experts who have made this latter point in the wake of the Erfurt massacre, have so far not yet called for a return to the Humboldt system of Classical education which prevailed prior to the late 1960s. But the campaign that Zepp-LaRouche initiated for the revitalization of the Humboldt tradition, is certain to find supporters in Germany. This way, the nationwide shock about the Erfurt school massacre can yield something positive.

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# In the Wake of the Erfurt Tragedy: Return to Classical Education, Now!

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

*Zepp-LaRouche is Chairman of the Bürgerrechtsbewegung Solidarität (Civil Rights Solidarity Movement), founder of the Schiller Institute, and a Direct Candidate for the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) from the Berlin-Mitte District. She issued the following statement on April 28.*

All Germany has been shaken by the gruesome rampage of 19-year-old Robert Steinhäuser on April 26. His cold-blooded murder of 17 people has cast a spotlight on the fact that something in our society is completely out of kilter—indeed, something much more fundamental than this particular criminal act. The fact that Rainer Grube, the chief of police in Erfurt, announced that the police had found computer programs glorifying violence, along with videotapes featuring horror and violence, in the perpetrator's home, shows what is really at stake here: on the one hand, the general moral state of our

country, and, on the other hand, the general acceptance of violence in our news and entertainment media.

On Feb. 20, 2000, at a conference of the Schiller Institute in Washington, I gave a presentation on the topic of "The New Violence," in which I pointed out the indisputable connection between violence in the media—particularly in Nintendo video games—and the dramatic increase in violent criminal acts committed by young people. Long before the April 20, 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton [Colorado] was making headlines, the United States had been witnessing literally thousands of cases of violence, and even murder, in schools and in residential neighborhoods, all committed by children and teenagers. And in virtually every single instance, a direct connection was found between this juvenile violence and the repeated consumption of violence-glorifying films, such as "The Basketball Diaries" and "Natural Born

Killers,” or killer videos such as “Doom.” At that time, I called for an international campaign against these violent video games and films. I now renew that call.

It must be recognized that, originally, killer video games had been used by the U.S. military for the training of new recruits. The experience of World War II had shown that only approximately 15% of all soldiers had been prepared to shoot at the enemy with the intent to kill. By means of computer simulation, this natural inhibition threshold was to be lowered, so that soldiers could be molded into blind executors of orders, in keeping with Samuel Huntington’s idea of an imperial professional army.

## The Destruction of Education

These computer games have been used for many years in the United States, not only for the training of military and police personnel; they have also been used by commercial firms, for the “entertainment” of children, teenagers, and adults. In its training courses, the U.S. Marines used a version of “Doom”—precisely the same game which 14-year-old Michael Carneal had played in order to train himself to kill three girls in 1997 in Paducah, Kentucky, with accurate shots to the head, even though he had never handled a real weapon before that time. The murdered girls’ parents have sued the producers of those films and video games for \$130 million in damages.

After decades of being inundated with ever more perverse, violence-glorifying Hollywood films and interactive violent computer games, it should hardly come as a surprise that official German statistics now report that 175,000 teenagers are “violence-prone.” This is even less surprising, when one takes into account the public toleration of easy access to drugs in the schoolyard. Any society that permits all of this, shouldn’t be surprised when what it has created, strikes back.

The massacre at Erfurt was merely the detonation of something that has been building up for a long time. Its pre-history goes back to a 1963 report commissioned by the UN’s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and authored by Dr. Alexander King, who was assigned to lay the groundwork for educational reform in the OECD nations, such as that carried out in Germany in 1970 under Chancellor Willy Brandt. In his report, Dr. King explained why the remaining hold-overs from the Humboldt educational system, which were still being taught in Germany, for example, had to be expunged from the curriculum. The “educational ballast” of 2,500 years of European history had to finally go, he argued, and instruction had to be re-oriented toward narrow pragmatic social requirements.

The outcome of this educational reform is well known, and the recent results of the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) only highlight facts that have long been clear: One-quarter of all 15-year-olds are categorized as a “risk group,” whose knowledge of mathematics is insufficient to hold any job whatsoever. Forty-two percent have never read a book for pleasure. This result also means that many teenagers do not have even an inkling of Germany’s



*More than two years ago, Helga Zepp-LaRouche gave a February 2000 Schiller Institute conference in Washington a complete report and warning of the deadly mass-entertainment products designed and circulated to make children more frequent, and efficient, killers. She is in the midst of Germany’s national debate now over these wares of death, and the decline of the nation’s educational system.*

Classical tradition, and that they cannot even recognize the names Lessing, Mendelssohn, Schiller, Heine, or Mörike—and the list could go on and on.

The Humboldt educational system was concerned not so much with the concrete content of education, as with the formation of the student’s character, and with the achievement of beauty of character as the aim of all educational activity. And now that this goal has been so long neglected, with the schools no longer offering a Classical humanistic education: Where are our children and young people to find personal values in a society which is otherwise completely obsessed by mindless “pleasures,” and whose adult population’s predominant mind-set is rife with boundless egotism and Social Darwinism?

We shall not overcome Germany’s profound crisis, unless and until we immediately find our way back to Classical humanistic values. We need a curriculum that is oriented toward [Wilhelm] von Humboldt’s idea of the perfecting of the individual—a curriculum which will assist in developing all of the student’s innate capacities, and which will, at the same time, educate the student into a citizen who has a deep concern for fostering the General Welfare.

If we want to prevent a repetition of tragedies such as has just occurred in Erfurt, we need to return immediately to a humanistic educational policy. If you help to elect us, the BüSo, to the Bundestag, one of our very first agenda items will to put that demand into action. Help our campaign!