

30

A Tragic Result of Discrimination

THE RECENT SHOOTING SPREE by a South Korean student in Virginia, U.S.A. should convey a message to us all. Cho Seung-hui had lived most of his life with his family in the U.S.A. Cho was obviously a shy person who probably felt inferior in America and could not make friends easily. He may also have suffered from psychiatric problems.

At secondary school he appears to have been shunned by classmates. Apparently he was scorned by them because he did not speak English clearly. His family was quite poor and he could not keep up with the style of his classmates. No one seemed to notice his plight, and his inferior feeling made him so angry that he sought revenge.

Later, when Cho went to study in the Technical University in Virginia, his situation worsened. His classmates owned cars, bought the latest trendy clothes, held luxurious parties, and ignored him. He withdrew from society and prepared to show them he was somebody to fear.

According to Cho, the American students were snobbish, and lacked understanding. He mentions that on one occasion, when he was asked to read aloud in class, he spoke in a low voice and made a mistake in pronouncing a word. All his classmates, he claimed, burst out laughing and shouted: "Go back to China."

They did not even know that he was not Chinese.

By now it was clear that Cho was a "loner" (a person who cannot associate with others) and could be dangerous. Given a psychiatric examination, which he agreed to undergo, it appears that nothing was done to help him. Yet he had written essays that must have made it clear to his teachers that he had violent tendencies.

Cho took his revenge by planning a massacre of his teachers and fellow students. Without difficulty he bought guns and ammunition for his well-planned massacre. How one man was able to shoot dead 32 persons and injure several others, before turning the gun on himself, is a mystery.

This tragedy gives a clear message to us all. We should make friends with lonely people, not laugh at their mistakes. We should sympathize with mentally disturbed persons, and government medical services should give the necessary treatment promptly. Above all, we should not act snobbishly just because we can afford better clothes or luxuries. The U.S. especially should reconsider its policy of selling guns to almost anyone. Hopefully this will never happen in Hong Kong.