'Oldboy,' Columbine, and The VA Tech Massacre

by Michele Steinberg, Phil Fisher, Jr., and Neil Martin

On July 18, 2007, at the fourth and final public meeting of Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine's panel on the Virginia Tech shootings, where 33 students were killed by fellow student Seung-Hui Cho, a number of the parents of victims pleaded with the panel to extend its investigation to get to the bottom of the story. They also complained that they had been treated callously by Virginia Tech and state authorities.

Reports from the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), which attended the panel's public meetings, confirm that the panel is a long way from understanding what happened at Virginia Tech—a lack which could prove fatal. In fact, the investigation of the shootings has become a battleground over the issue of the cult of violence among youth—a cult that not only includes $9 billion in the video-game market, but also spin-offs in the form of films, TV shows, and cartoons.

At the July 18 meeting, in a private conversation with the LYM, a member of the panel admitted that she was very concerned about the effect of violent video games on young people, but, she claimed, "in the Cho case there is no evidence that he was addicted. None of his friends at school said that he played violent video games." *Such "evidence," cited by the panel is a dangerous over-simplification.* Even more worrisome, at the same meeting, the chairman, Col. Gerald Massengill (ret.), a former Virginia state police superintendant, excluded LYM member, Paul Mourino from testifying.

Why? Had the video-game lobby intervened? Had the White House report which insisted that there was *no* video-game involvement in the Virginia Tech case, been used to pressure the panel to drop that line of investigation?

Despite the attempted censorship, Mourino was able to point out that: 1) Dick Cheney's cult of violence—perpetual war and the revolution in military affairs—that was behind the developing of more intense "killing simulators," such as those Cho played in high school; and 2) the agreement of Cho's family to speak to the panel, offered the chance to probe this angle, that has been covered up.

The Smoking Gun? 'Oldboy'

If the panel wants a "smoking gun," Cho's own video of himself posing with gun and hammer, provides it.

On the day of the Virginia Tech rampage, Lyndon LaRouche, who has led an international campaign against video-game brainwashing, since the 1999 Columbine massacre, identified several "critical questions": What was the level of accuracy and skill in shooting? Was there video or Internet shooting training involved as described by Lt. Col. David Grossman (ret.), whose book, *On Killing,* and interviews with *EIR*, detailed not only how video "games" are "killing simulators," but also have a dehumanizing effect on the players, making it easier for them to kill in the real world after thousands of cyber-kills.

Was there a breakdown of security procedures, where there was no lockdown of the campus in the hours between the shootings at the first building, and the second?

That time gap is when some of the most important evidence of Cho's connection to the video-game cult emerges: Cho's own poses mimicking the film "Oldboy," a Korean-made "underground" movie. During that time, Cho e-mailed a video to NBC-TV, that not only included a statement that glorified the video-game-addicted Columbine killers, but included at least two poses—one with a hammer, and another with a gun to his own temple—that a Virginia Tech professor suggested, correctly, mimicked "Oldboy" scenes. When these scenes were posed, is unclear.

"Oldboy" is not a mere movie—it is the film representation of a Japanese comic-book cult form, called "*Manga*," and the comic-book series called "Mr. & Mrs. Vengeance," which celebrates the most brutal and horrific manga themes of dismemberment, pederasty, rape, and murder. Importantly, "Oldboy " is an underground phenomenon—it has not yet been commercially released in the United States. So, how did Cho intersect the film?

It is through research work by the LYM, that *EIR* has been able to identify the significance of "Oldboy" and its links to the video-game culture, including animé (computer animation) and other cult horror films, such as Hollywood's recent garbage, "Grindhouse," made by the director, Quentin Tarantino, who pushed "Oldboy" to win the 2004 Cannes Film Festival's Grand Prix.

But among video-game developers, gamers, and violence addicts, the *Manga* series "Oldboy," on which the film is based, is well known, and has been for years. *Manga* is the Japanese word for comics and print cartoons. Outside of Japan, it refers specifically to comics originially published in Japan, or in that Japanese style. The form was widely used in the 1930s, to promote Japanese militarism especially, during the pre-fascist and fascist period. In the 1960s and '70s, it became an underground radical counterculture phenomenon, promoting suicide, existentialism, and terrorism. "Adult *Manga*" has also emerged as a specifically pornographic form, with a heavy dose of sex violence and sado-masochism.

In her book *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society,* (University of Hawaii Press, 2000), Sharon Kinsella's introduction documents the mindset of the "radical" *manga* cartoonists who "feel" the culture of violent hatred of all other human beings.

"Oldboy" and its tortured philosophy obviously influenced the Virginia Tech tragedy, and if Hollywood has its way, it's "coming soon to a theater near you."