

as a matter of priorities, FDD says. Andrew Apostolou, the foundation's director of research, notes that other kinds of terrorism may require more attention in the future: "Remember that the worst war crimes of the last decade were committed by Orthodox Christians in the Balkans and these people are perfectly capable of striking out one day, [but] they haven't yet."

And just as terrorist threats may not always arise from Islamic fundamentalists, moderate Muslims can be an important ally in the war on terror, according to the staff at FDD. Eleana Gordon stresses that the foundation is careful not to be seen as calling for a war against Islam, and furthermore that it "also communicate[s] that Muslims are probably the number one victims. If you look at ... the civil war in Algeria, they kill Muslims and moderate Muslims first."

For all that, one will not find anyone speaking in behalf of Palestinian complaints against Israel at FDD. Asked about this, Gordon said that addressing such grievances is outside the foundation's purview. The foundation's interest lies in the means chosen to press the case. All at the foundation agreed that when terrorism is the means, it must be seen to reflect negatively on whatever cause it is employed to serve. May agreed that this should hold true for Israel as well, and that some discussion of the terrorism perpetrated by Irgun and the Stern Gang would be appropriate for FDD's programs.

Does all of this mean that the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies has abandoned Emet's goal of providing public relations support for the state of Israel? With mega-donor funding, a very capable staff, and a presence on campuses across the country, FDD is making a difference for someone. At the very least, the billionaire activists who established and support the foundation seem to be getting their money's worth. ■

Turn Off, Wake Up

A Gen Xer puts down the remote.

By Jenny Schroedel

IT WAS A CRISP DAY in Crestwood, 20 miles north of New York City. In my ninth month of pregnancy, I could do nothing but waddle. That morning, I had waddled my way to chapel for morning prayers. After the service, I trudged up the hill under a denim sky, so blue and fresh my eyes watered. Breathless, I made it up the flight of steps to my apartment and collapsed on the sofa. Then I called my mom.

"Jenny," she said. "You've got to get to a television." My first thought: she's still on that TV crusade. Why can't she leave it alone?

That was Sept. 11, 2001. I did eventually find a friend with a television so I could watch footage of the planes smashing into the World Trade Center, followed by the thunderous collapse of the Twin Towers, its fragments showering the city like so many grains of sand. Smoke, screaming, and then silence itself broke open to swallow the waves of resounding loss.

I will never forget the tremors those images sent through my body as I watched the morning unfold on the television screen. When the Pentagon burst into flames, I felt mild contractions take hold. "The world is coming to an end, and I'm having a baby," I thought.

One odd memory is spliced between the more painful ones: the great hunt for a working television. Although I live in a tightly knit seminary community with many people my age, most of my close friends do not own televisions.

Two years have passed, and we still lack rabbit ears. My young family now lives in Chicago, and the trend contin-

ues: few of my friends are tuned in. Those of us who have intentionally created a television-sized hole in our lives are often victims of the misguided generosity of family members. In eight years of marriage, my husband and I have turned down three free televisions. Friends tell similar tales. A neighbor gestures toward a darkened TV crouched in her fireplace. "My mom gave this to me, and I don't like it."

Generation X lingers at the end of the alphabet—restless, savvy, wary, yearning, zealous. And a small but growing group of us are troubled by the shifting generational tectonics. The same grandparents and parents who lamented our "Sesame Street"-induced comas, pleading with us to get off the sofa and play outdoors, are now concerned about our *sans*-television existences.

"You must feel lost without a television," my husband's grandmother tells us. When my father-in-law comes to visit, he brings toddler-friendly videos for our daughter. Another relative gently reasons, "You and John may be fine without a television, but what about Anna?"

My mother, of course, makes the most compelling argument. "How will you keep up with what's going on in the world?" She has a point. On Sept. 11, live television allowed me to gasp, weep, and pray with the rest of the world.

But as I said before, my generation is inherently skeptical—especially about television news. If we watch the news, we don't believe that we are getting the full story. In charitable moments, we allow that it might be *based* on fact.

During high school, I watched the fireworks exploding over Kuwait with wide-eyed innocence, believing that smart bombs actually hit their targets and that Operation Desert Storm was efficient and just, if not deathless. Years later, when I learned that thousands of Iraqis had been killed, I hit the power button on my remote control and let the television go black.

People like my husband and I turned to books for answers, trading our *TV Guide* for Neil Postman's *Amusing Our-*

elevision on, I am sucked into the square vacuum. All I can do is nod at the screen, unable to form complete sentences, let alone think independently.

More troubling than my passive consumption of mediocre programming is that I become so engrossed that I begin to think of real life as an interruption. My toddler daughter tugging at my pant leg irritates me, the dog scratching to go out makes me groan, the ringing phone is an unforgivable intrusion. Even sunlight's poetry must be shut out—I draw

Columbine, the collapsing World Trade Center. These images can be difficult to understand, especially for young people. How can we not feel helpless? Perhaps this is television's curse: it opens wounds but doesn't heal them, raises questions but doesn't help answer them.

Theologian George MacDonald wrote, "A man is in bondage to whatever he cannot part with that is less than himself." Many from my generation are breaking the shackles. When the incessant drone of the television fades from our homes, our ears are able to catch the soft thumping of life's pulse—we begin to engage each other and the world around us. We live into the moment, aware that when our numbered days break open, we will find eternity hidden inside. ■

WHEN I VISIT SOMEONE WHO KEEPS THE TELEVISION ON, I AM **SUCKED INTO THE SQUARE VACUUM**. ALL I CAN DO IS **NOD AT THE SCREEN**, UNABLE TO FORM COMPLETE SENTENCES.

selves to Death. My father bought us a *Wall Street Journal* subscription, and on Sundays we feast on the *New York Times*. News gets into our home, one way or another.

The Internet helps. John surfs the news daily, perusing international newspapers, gleaning diverse perspectives on world events. A few months back, when American soldiers helped Iraqis pull down Saddam Hussein's statue, we glimpsed the historic moment—unfolding before our eyes on my husband's computer screen.

The jury is still out on all of Generation X's opinions and preferences. All that I say carries only as much weight as the experiences of my friends and me. Some of my peers are discerning television consumers. They tell me that they are able to watch a few shows every week and find it both relaxing and (gasp!) interesting.

But my own dysfunctional relationship with The Tube has left me with baggage. I suffer from television-induced Sudden Onset Couch Potato Paralysis. When I visit someone who keeps the tel-

the shades and settle back into my trance on the sofa.

My daughter's birth took place on the heels of Sept. 11. Both events shook me to a new awareness that life is fragile and we may have less time than we think. Soon after Anna was born, I took her for a walk through the quiet streets of my Westchester neighborhood, flags flapping in the wind.

A gray-haired man was putting the garbage out, and he came down his driveway to peek at my daughter. She was sleeping, curled in her sling, and he gazed down at her with incredible tenderness.

"How old is she?" he asked.

I told him she was five days old, and he shook his head.

"God bless you," he said. "God bless you."

Older people seem to pity my generation. We do live in complicated, troubling times, and the media will not let us forget this. I've seen so much—almost too much—on the television screen: the flaming Challenger, the toppling Berlin Wall, the bullets ricocheting through

Jenny Schroedel is a freelance writer in Chicago. Her children's book, The Blackbird's Nest: Saint Kevin of Ireland, is under contract with Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press.

MOVING?

Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, www.amconmag.com. Click "subscribe" and then click "address change." To access your account make sure you have your TAC mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your TAC label with your new address to:

The American Conservative
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 99010
Collingswood, NJ 08108-0612

First Use Brigade

The War Party's nuclear doctrine

By Paul Craig Roberts

"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." Vice President Dick Cheney, 8-26-02

"For those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them." President George W. Bush, 5-30-03

WHEN IT BECAME obvious that the neoconservatives would succeed in turning the "war against terrorism" into war against the Muslim Middle East, I said that the consequences would be the return of the draft or U.S. use of nuclear weapons.

Bush administration neoconservatives have concluded that reinstating the military draft would incite more opposition than inaugurating a new weapons program to produce "useable nukes."

In the Oct. 26 *Telegraph*, Washington correspondent Julian Coman reports, "[I]nfluential advisers at the Pentagon are backing the development of a new generation of low-yield nuclear weapons—so-called mini-nukes—in a controversial report ... the report argues for a move away from the Cold War view of nuclear arms as catastrophic weapons of last resort."

In place of bad old nuclear weapons, the good new nukes will be easier to use and more "relevant to the threat environment."

This extraordinary proposal from the world's Arms Control Hegemon demonstrates the fanaticism of the neoconservatives. They are indeed the heirs of the

French Revolution just as Professor Claes Ryn shows in his new book, *America the Virtuous*.

The Pentagon report, which has been leaked to a defense magazine, designates "terrorists" as the targets of the mini-nukes. New nuclear weapons are said to be necessary in order to destroy deeply buried biological weapons caches, terrorist cells, and hidden weapons of mass destruction.

Such weapons caches will exist wherever neoconservatives declare them to be. For the neocons, the advantage of a nuclear over a conventional attack is that the former solves the manpower problem and, by obliterating the target, conveniently rules out discovering the embarrassing fact of nonexistent WMD.

Obviously, nuclear weapons of any size are too destructive to use against terrorists, who are scattered among much larger populations. The only purpose of the "small nuclear weapons"—an oxymoron if ever there were one—is to incinerate Muslim cities. Just as Iraq, Iran, and Syria are declared, propagandistically, to be "terrorist states," Damascus, Tehran, Baghdad, Mecca, Cairo, and Mogadishu will be declared "terrorist cities." It looks as if the neocons intend a final solution to their "Muslim problem" and are organizing genocide for Arabs.

Deeply buried caches of weapons of mass destruction exist nowhere except, of course, in the U.S., Israel, and Russia—countries that are not to be found on the terrorist list. But neocons are betting that a rumored threat can be used to justify a new generation of nuclear weapons.

Propaganda about nonexistent weapons caches is fuel for the neoconservative *jihad* against Islam, just as fabricated claims of Iraqi WMD were used as a pretext for invading Iraq. It is not American "virtue" but nuclear fallout that neocons intend to spread in the Middle East.

During three short years of the Bush administration, neoconservatives have turned U.S. foreign policy on its head. They dismantled U.S. multilateral relationships that were a half century in the making. They used lies and fabrications to deceive the American public and to launch an aggressive war. Not satisfied with their revolutionary destruction of world order, they now demand that the U.S. lead the world in a new round of nuclear proliferation. If this is not the behavior of a rogue state, what is?

The Pentagon report argues for a new generation of useable nuclear weapons on the bare assumption that terrorist underground caches of WMD will materialize out of thin air sometime in the future. The Pentagon report does not explain why terrorists who intend us harm would make targets of their WMD by storing them in bunkers instead of immediately using them against us.

In three short years, neoconservatives have reorganized the Department of Defense from a deterrent force to a means of waging aggressive war. It shows that U.S. policy, following that of Ariel Sharon, has abandoned the quest for peace in the Middle East, focusing instead on a one-sided resolution through conquest.

Deceived, befuddled, and complicit, Americans are being led into a wider war. ■

Paul Craig Roberts is co-author with Lawrence Stratton of The New Color Line, a history of U.S. racial quotas, their origin, and consequences.

© Creators Syndicate 2003.