

# Sidelights

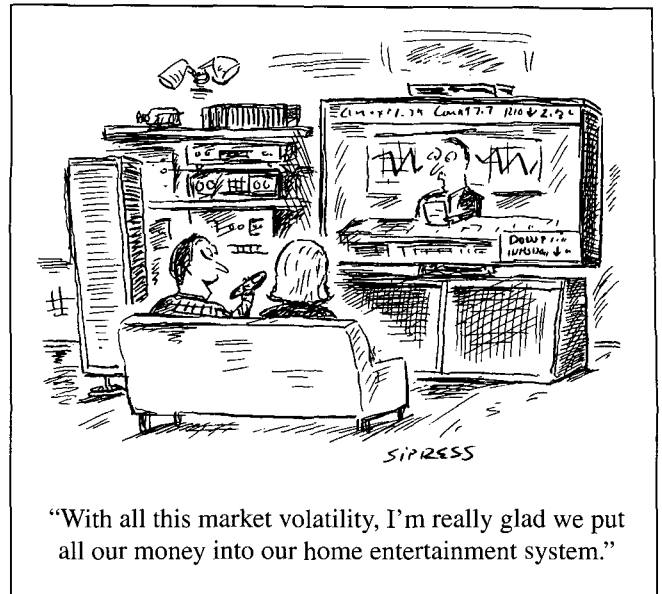
**K**enya strategically placed witch doctors throughout the World Cup stadium in order to assist its soccer team. ☛ A sign reading *Smert Zhidam* — “Death to Yids” — was seen alongside a road just outside Moscow. When 28-year-old **Tatyana Sapunova** tried to remove the sign, it exploded. Sapunova lost an eye in the blast. ... “There is nothing in Islam that gives legitimization to Judeophobia, xenophobia, and the rejection of any human being because of his religion or the group to which he belongs,” according to **Tariq Ramadan**, a Muslim college lecturer in Switzerland. “Anti-Semitism has no justification in Islam, the message of which demands respect for the Jewish religion and spirit, which are considered a noble statement of the People of the Book.” ☛ New Jersey high-school student **Eboni Wilson** won a contest with her essay in favor of sexual abstinence. She was pregnant at the time. ☛ In an effort to accommodate gay students who, due to homophobia or sexual tension, may be “uncomfortable” sharing quarters with a same-sex roommate, more colleges are allowing men and women to share dorm rooms. ... Some students at Cleveland’s Lakeland Community College were instructed to wear a Nazi-style pink triangle on campus for a day as a symbol of gay rights and then write about the experience.

“Only by uniting the effort of the people and the state can we confront these threats. That was well proven by the anti-**Hitler** coalition. The coalition countries defeated the enemy. And today, we are again uniting and finding allies against a common threat. Its name is terrorism.” So said Russian president

**Vladimir Putin** at a rally in Moscow celebrating Victory Day, the anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat. ☛ The Serbian newspaper *Blic* discovered that 97 percent of the Internet sites visited by Web surfers at the Serbian parliament building contained hard-core pornography. ☛ Nearly half of Italians have a favorable impression of **George W. Bush**, according to a survey by the German news magazine *Spiegel*. Less than 40 percent of Brits do.

**L**ondon Metropolitan Police are banned from using the word “nitty-gritty” because the term supposedly refers to the debris found at the bottom of a slave ship after a voyage. ☛ Hollywood actor **Sean Penn** complained that we “now have a President who thinks in terms of good and evil, and that comes from watching too many Hollywood movies.” ☛ The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals demanded that an Austin, Minnesota high school change the name of its sports teams. Austin High’s athletes are known as the Packers, and PETA argued that being named after slaughterhouse workers is “nothing to be proud of.” PETA suggested the name “Pickers,” which would promote a healthier, plant-based diet. ... Under pressure from PETA, the National Collegiate Athletic Association will only use synthetic-skinned basketballs at future NCAA championship games.

☛ Househusbands have an 82 percent



“With all this market volatility, I’m really glad we put all our money into our home entertainment system.”

higher earlier-death rate than men with traditional careers, according to a study by Eaker Epidemiology Enterprises.

**A**n online petition urged director **Peter Jackson** to change the name of the next *Lord of the Rings* film, *The Two Towers*, because the “title is clearly meant to refer to the attacks on the World Trade Center. In this post-September 11 world, it is unforgivable that this should be allowed to happen.” ... *The Two Towers* is based on **J.R.R. Tolkien**’s book of the same name, first published in 1954. The World Trade Center opened in 1973. ☛ “The United States does not have a security system, it has a system for bothering people,” said **Shlomo Dror**, an Israeli security specialist, referring to U.S. airport security. ☛ Fifty-four percent of Germans would like to have the deutsche mark back, according to a study by the Allensbach Institute. ☛ An Italian inventor has created a line of women’s underwear that will sound an alarm if the wearer’s bottom is pinched. ☛ Casino Aztar in Indiana is offering \$5,000 to anyone who can beat its trained chickens at tic-tac-toe. The chickens get to go first. —BB

# Scan

## SMALLPOX, BIG RISK

Don't feel bad if you missed the 1995 movie *12 Monkeys*, starring Bruce Willis and Brad Pitt—unless you spend your time trying to foil terrorist plots. The flick wasn't a critical success by any stretch, but it provides a simple plan for anyone looking to inflict maximum damage with a bio-terrorist agent.

In the film, a mad scientist nearly destroys the world by igniting a devastating plague with a deadly virus. The doctoral demon doesn't release his killer pathogen in a single city, as most of our government planners have gamed, but by traveling to half a dozen major cities and releasing his bug at each stop. Now that takes real ingenuity.

Well, not really, but somehow our government has failed to consider this scenario. Current plans for combating a potential attack with smallpox, clearly one of the most deadly of the possible bio-terror agents, call for selective vaccination at the site of an attack. What's really needed is mass vaccination *before* an attack and the development of drugs that can nix the infection as easy as antibiotics can treat pneumonia.

Why should we take smallpox so seriously? We know the Soviet Union was able to weaponize the deadly virus successfully. And we should just go ahead and assume that other rogue nations did not relinquish their stockpiles of the killer agent, as promised.

A terrorist attack with this virus doesn't need to be delivered by zooming missiles. It can be as simple as a handful

of terrorists infecting themselves and coughing their way through the subways of our major cities. It kills one third of its victims and leaves others horribly disfigured, sometimes blind.

Right now, the government's official plan is to combat an attack by "ring vaccination." Federal health officials would fly the vaccine to the scene of an attack and quickly vaccinate as many of the local people as they can. It's a good plan if the virus springs up in a single location. If it is released in just a few other cities, ring vaccination is folly.

Federal officials have expanded their plan to include the vaccination of as many as 500,000 "first responders"—mostly emergency medical people and hospital workers. But the government still won't allow private citizens to get voluntary vaccinations—out of fear that the (minuscule) risk posed by the vaccine is more sinister than the likelihood of an attack and its effects.

Vaccination must be part of our strategy, but we also urgently need a drug that will kill the smallpox virus *after* a person has become exposed or infected. These kinds of drugs, born of an era of anti-viral breakthroughs as a result of AIDS research, languish on the shelves of at least a few biotechnology companies in the U.S. Their development is severely hobbled by regulatory and political obstacles.



One of the best of these drugs seems to be cidofovir, an anti-viral agent originally developed by the biotechnology company Gilead Sciences to treat AIDS. Cidofovir is already approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of some AIDS-related infections. While it's not a perfect solution (the drug must be administered intravenously and can cause kidney damage if taken for extended periods), Gilead has other drugs on its shelves waiting to be developed.

Under intense political pressure, the FDA recently outlined a mechanism by which companies can get approval for drugs that treat the agents of bio-terrorism without going through the rigors of actually testing the drugs on real people with real infections. After all, how do you run a clinical trial testing a drug on people with smallpox, considering that the infection doesn't currently exist in the population? So the FDA will allow companies to test these drugs on monkeys.

But this kind of regulatory relaxation doesn't go far enough. Given the FDA's recent reluctance to take a lead in seemingly trivial matters, few from the drug industry believe the FDA will actually approve one of these smallpox drugs, even if a company jumps through all the