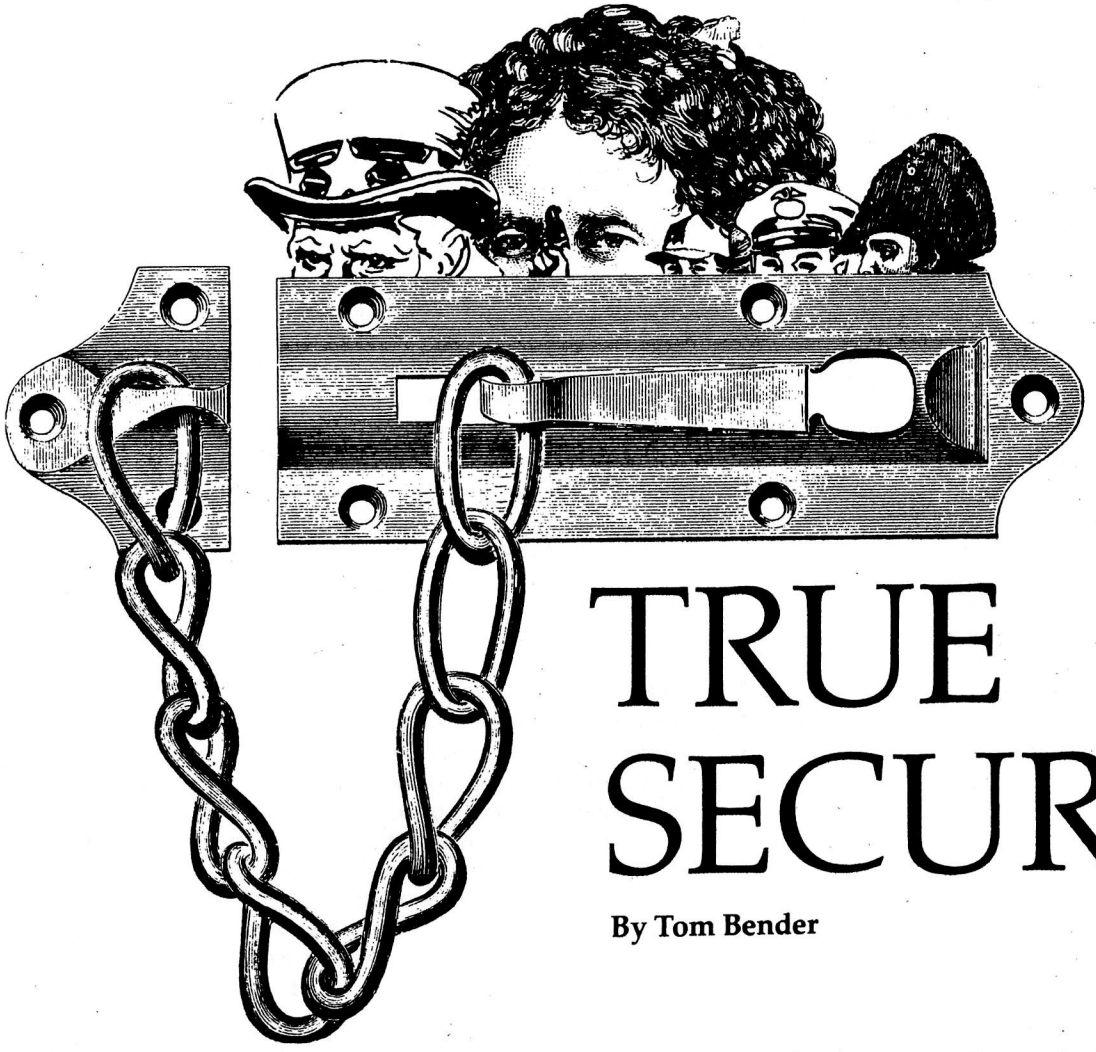

TRUE SECURITY

By Tom Bender

In the not-too-distant future we are likely to see a worldwide default on U.S. "development aid" loans.

All nations hold some concern about their safety and security and seek to avoid being bullied or abused by other nations. But there is much evidence to suggest that our own country is making no serious effort to understand where its true security lies or to act in ways to ensure that security.

Our vast military expenditures have very little to do with real security, which must rely more deeply on our social, political, and economic relationships with others. Our defense expenditures, in fact, jeopardize our security more than aid it through genocidal nuclear overkill capabilities, offense-geared structures, and diversion of funds and attention from other important dimensions of our society. It is peculiar, too, that in an era when the only real military threat to our national security has been Soviet nuclear ICBMs (and we have admitted that there is virtually no defense against such weapons) that we have continued to expand our nuclear arsenal and to encourage a policy of centralizing our population, industry and energy systems into gigantic and easily-targeted settlements and installations.

And what about energy? The U.S. no longer has the secure energy reserves to fight a prolonged foreign war, yet the ever present danger of import cut-offs has moved some of our national leaders to speak ominously of future (assuredly futile) military action in the Persian Gulf to protect our continued access to oil. One would think that an immediate, massive campaign to eliminate energy waste, increase use efficiency, reduce our energy

demands and convert to renewable sources would be indicated, but our present national administration continues its retreat from support of conservation and renewables.

The move of our industrial base outside of the U.S. by multinational corporations presents another, largely unchallenged, threat to our security. A large proportion of "American" automobiles, radios, tape recorders and televisions are now assembled in other countries. Thirty-three percent of the assets of our chemical and pharmaceutical industries, 40% of our consumer goods industry, and 75% of our electronics industry have been moved outside of the country. Between 1945 and 1970, U.S. firms established more than 8,000 subsidiaries abroad, with an employment growth rate of 3.5 times domestic employment. Today, one out of three employees of U.S. firms is located outside of the U.S. while jobless rates at home continue to climb. Would such vulnerability to our industrial base seem wise from the standpoint of national security?

Government support of business interests resulting in direct conflict with our national security occurs in the area of nuclear proliferation. We have supported the export of nuclear technologies, reactors and fuel to other countries — ostensibly for "peaceful" purposes. Yet we know that already, Israel, India, Pakistan and South Africa have used our exports in nuclear weapons programs.

A wealthy and powerful society like ours is complex, and oddly, very vulnerable to sabotage and terrorism. A single shot can shut down an entire electrical distribution grid. A single handful of plutonium scattered from an office building window can threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. A single anti-tank rocket fired at an LNG storage tank can create another Hiroshima. A single kidnapping can ransom an empire. Our vulnerability to such acts is already apparent to others and it underlines the importance of our voluntary and willing adjustment to new global conditions, values and aspirations. Regardless of how much overt military power we possess, terrorism could eventually escalate to a state of siege within the U.S. itself if our relations with other nations continue to deteriorate. Combined with our government's curious assistance in nuclear proliferation, such conditions could mean that within the next 15 years we will find ourselves either blown off the map or held hostage for a new economic and social world order. It is better that we learn our lesson from OPEC and initiate needed changes ourselves.

In the not-too-distant future we are likely to see a world-wide default on U.S. "development aid" loans. Unless we anticipate and prepare carefully for this, it could lead to a catastrophic collapse in the world monetary system. We need to face the reality that such loans were given more to expand the markets of U.S. companies and to create indebtedness to us than to assist development in the interests of people in the countries concerned. These loans — which represent but a drop in the bucket compared to the expropriated profits that we have taken from developing countries as a result of the economic system that the "aid" has been instrumental in setting up — should justifiably be written off.

We are also likely to see drastically lowered ceilings on oil and raw material exports to the U.S., and correspondingly higher prices, as countries realize the bargaining power and dollar value of their now limited resources and strive to stretch out their availability. It will be essential for us to develop high levels of materials reuse and recycling — the sooner seriously undertaken, the better.

Nationalization of U.S.-owned, foreign-located industries could also spread, based on the argument that U.S. investors have already been more than amply repaid their investments through excessive profit conditions imposed on other countries and that the industrial plants themselves represent but partial repayment for past exploitation.

It is also likely that other countries will demand that we make order-of-magnitude improvements in our energy use and the protein and energy efficiency of our food system, in order to escape further sanctions. Many countries are already outraged at having to support our wasteful habits, gross inefficiencies and per-capita domination of world resources.

It is important that we fully understand our changing role in the world, realize the gross injustices that lie behind our present patterns of interaction with other countries, and put our efforts into helping, rather than hindering, the transition to more equitable, fair and humane international relationships. We would be better off in the future with at least a small legacy of understanding, respect and helpfulness rather than bitterness, obstructionism and hatred, for our future security lies much more in the goodwill of others than in tending to our own narrow self-interest.

Our future security lies much more in the goodwill of others than in tending to our own narrow self-interest.

True security requires that all nations feel secure. Economic and financial self-reliance and equity of power are essential, but beyond these factors a much more important dimension of security lies in the willingness of nations to help other nations in time of need. That willingness comes as reciprocity — repayment for past aid and helpfulness. Nations will have real security only when they base their interactions on such reciprocity as well as on friendship, respect, admiration and love. Building that kind of security will require a vastly different attitude and approach than we have followed to this point. □□

<TBENDER@NEHALEMTEL.NET>