

# A Letter from the Publisher

"I started reporting on the automobile industry the day I arrived here," says Detroit Bureau Chief Barrett Seaman, "and I won't stop until the day I leave. Such is the lot of Detroit bureau chiefs." Seaman was posted to Detroit two years ago. Since then TIME has devoted 61 stories to the troubled automobile makers. For this week's cover story on the present plight and future prospects of the nation's most important industry, Seaman could draw on familiar sources, including the top executives of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. One whom he knows especially well: Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca. Seaman is the co-author of a forthcoming book on the ailing auto firm and its new chief. Last year he brought the ebullient executive to New York City to meet with TIME's editors.

Tokyo Bureau Chief Edwin Reingold's report on the rival Japanese auto industry is written from a unique perspective. He was Detroit bureau chief for seven years and now is able to study firsthand America's deadliest commercial competitors. There are notable differences in style, he reports: "Detroit's press previews used to be orchestrated like TV spectaculars, with carefully scripted speeches,

followed by eating and drinking and Ella Fitzgerald singing. Minnesota Fats doing billiard tricks, or Glenn Miller's band creating nostalgia. The merchandising was razzle-dazzle, the sales claims often outrageous and heady." Not so in Tokyo. "The typical Japanese new car preview," says Reingold, "is an hour in a packed, hot hotel salon facing a phalanx of unsmiling engineers." But Reingold admits, "Even without the glamour this is a great opportunity to investigate how the Japanese are rewriting the book on this most American of modern industries."

Staff Writer Alexander Taylor, who wrote the cover story in New York, is also an old auto-industry hand. He was a business reporter for the Detroit *Free Press* before joining TIME seven months ago. To prepare for this week's story, he took a trip back to his old haunts, joining Seaman and Correspondent Christopher Redman for interviews with executives. He drove around for a day in one of the first K-cars, the front-wheel-drive compacts that Chrysler hopes will turn the company's fortunes around. Says Taylor: "Detroit is learning how to build better small cars. These look and feel more solid and they drive better. The price tags, though, are a shocker."

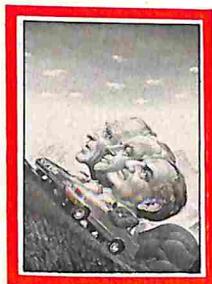


Chrysler's Iacocca with Seaman in New York

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*John C. Meyers*

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# TIME

Poland on the Tightrope

## Detroit's Uphill Battle



GM's Murphy

Ford's Caldwell

Chrysler's Iacocca

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