

A Letter from the Publisher

To follow the rising cost of crude oil and its effect on the world economy, the subject of this week's cover story, TIME correspondents and writers had to report, evaluate and coordinate the outcomes of two important summit meetings in cities 6,000 miles apart. In Tokyo, correspondents from three news bureaus were on hand when leaders of the U.S. and six other petroleum-importing countries met to forge a common strategy on the oil problem. Washington Correspondents Johanna McGahey, Gregory H. Wierzynski and George Taber followed President Carter throughout the talks and on an odyssey that included state visits to Japanese and Korean leaders. Hong Kong Correspondent Ross H. Munro and members of the Tokyo bureau kept tabs on the European and Canadian delegations to the summit, who were housed, conveniently enough, some miles away from the U.S. envoys. "The heavy security was a joke to some correspondents, an annoyance to others," said Tokyo Bureau Chief Ed Reingold. "We were scrutinized by more police at more places more times than anywhere in the world."

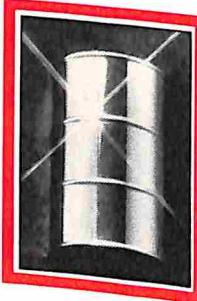


Correspondent Jeff Melvoin records the gas-line blues

Except perhaps Geneva, where representatives of the 13-member nations of OPEC met to raise the price of crude. Reporters in that city were greeted at every turn with airport-style metal detection tests, luggage checks and platoons of Swiss police armed with automatic weapons. Said Tehran-based Correspondent Bruce van Voorst: "The four gorillas who guarded Saudi Sheikh Yamani practically walked in his pockets."

While important decisions were being made abroad at the oil summits, TIME correspondents in the U.S. were sounding out federal policymakers, oil executives, striking independent truckers and hard-pressed motorists. Boston's Jeff Melvoin got the closest view of long lines and short tempers by spending a day at Jim Harrington's Exxon station in nearby Burlington, Mass. Melvoin watched as motorists pleaded, cajoled and, not infrequently, remained civil while Harrington tried to equitably apportion his meager supply of gasoline. Concluded Melvoin: "A gas-station owner is just another confused citizen, trying to get a handle on what's going on."

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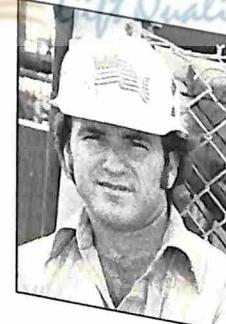
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