

What the international press is saying

From the U.S. press

Over the course of the week, the U.S. press editorialized pro and con on President Carter's series of energy addresses and his demand for Cabinet and staff resignations. The following is a selection.

The Arizona Republic, editorial, July 16: The specific proposals he made in last night's address were not encouraging. The nation did not tune in Carter to hear a sermon. It wanted answers. It didn't get them.

Tulsa Tribune, editorial, July 16: Jimmy Carter's much-anticipated Sunday night address to the nation revealed a harassed and tired man, beginning to show age, whose gestures were reminiscent of golfer Tom Watson selling tires that "grip the road."

Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, editorial, July 16: As we listened to his energy address, we had the feeling we were listening to a president. ... While delighted with the tenor of the president's address, we fear that some of the proposals may create more problems than they solve. ... Regardless of our quarrels with some specific of Carter's plan, however, he is to be congratulated for his aggressive and forthright attack on the energy issue.

Chicago Sun-Times, editorial, July 16: Sunday night Americans saw a more somber, yet stronger President Carter than they have seen before. Monday they saw a more determined and more specific Carter than they saw Sunday, as he filled in some blanks that had been left in his prime-time speech. On balance, we think Carter has faced up to the leadership and energy challenges that threaten the country. ...

Boston Globe, "Carter Approach is No Solution to the Energy Crisis" by Richard Goodwin, July 17: Although decontrol will not increase the supply of oil, it will help achieve another objective. It will raise the cost of energy. And this seems to be the administration's real goal—prices high enough to "discourage consumption." At the heart of the issue is a simple reality. There is no energy crisis. ... We may have become somewhat sloppy in our use of energy, and that should be ended. But most of the energy we consume contributes to that marvelous diversity of goods and human possibilities which we call "the American standard of living." And the phrase "cutting back consumption" is only a contrivance designed to impart a noble, almost patriotic,

ring to the demand that we deliberately accept a reduction in a standard of living achieved over two centuries of national effort. And that is only a beginning.

The New York Times, editorial, July 17: Once again, President Carter has defined the problem, boldly and correctly. Once again he proposes a "war" to rescue the country from a crippling dependence. ...

So what does the president prescribe? A collection of measures that, at best, will keep the crisis from getting worse in the next five years and relieve it some thereafter. ...

If there is such an urgent danger to the nation's security and economy, then why does the president not propose a clear and present antidote? Why does he not capitalize on the people's willingness to follow his lead? If he is right about the peril and the opportunity, then he must be judged timid in his response ...

Joseph Kraft, OpEd in the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun, July 19: Before delivering his energy messages, Jimmy Carter broadened the discussion to include what he called a "national malaise." He thereby raised a question crucial in judging the presidency: Is Mr. Carter part of the solution, or is he part of the problem. ...

...In many different ways, Mr. Carter sows discord and works against a return to national harmony. ...

Thus his nationally televised speech on Sunday was built around an unbridled assault on Washington. He followed that up by asking and getting the resignations of the Cabinet and the White House staff—a step that looks to outsiders at least like a government in a state of collapse. ...

Hobart Rowan, Op Ed in The Washington Post, July 19: From his sermon to the nation last Sunday night after his return from Camp David and his followup appearances in Kansas City and Detroit, we now have the full measure of President Carter's new energy proposals.

As rhetoric, and as a battle plan to restore his viability as a presidential candidate, the Carter plan has elements of brilliance. As a program to meet the nation's short-term and long-term energy requirements, it is a disappointment. ...

The New York Times, lead editorial, July 19: If it's theater that Jimmy Carter now means to give us, the first thing to do is appreciate the performance for what it is. ...

The script for this melodrama is literally adapted from the opinion polls. "Washington, D.C. has become an island." ... So our hero deserts the island, and his loyal servants there, and swims for dear life. There is nothing usual about this politics. In the annals of the presidency, it is one of the most original declarations of candidacy ever devised...

Having found much merit in the ideas and works of the Carter administration over the past 30 months, we are not quite sure what to make of Jimmy Carter's sudden assault upon it. ...

From the European press

Europe has traditionally viewed the U.S. as an "energy hog," a misconception which reflects many Europeans' severe underestimation of the role of high energy consumption in a high-technology economy. The idea of America's overconsumption of energy was prevalent in most European coverage of President Carter's energy program.

Les Echos, July 18: "... I think that it is first of all a plan of expansion for the American economy. It is not on energy savings, but on growth that Carter blares the trumpet to rally Americans. ... There are logically two ways of reducing energy dependency. The first one is to save energy, the second is to produce more energy. In Carter's speech the second by far takes precedence over the first ... But those unprecedented expenses in investments, whom will they benefit? ... We are very far from an austerity program! On the contrary it should represent for the American economy guaranteed prosperity for at least a decade. ... Nowhere in this speech is there any call to resignation [as we so often hear in France] to low growth and moderate ambitions.

Verdens Gang, Norwegian daily July 18: It is a balancing act without a safety net. Hamilton Jordan is the circus director ... The danger is that the newly awakened lion will fall flat.

Journal de Genève, Geneva, July 7: [The President] indeed announced relatively ambitious objectives—massive development of alternative energy, ceilings on oil imports, etc., but all these measures are long-term, 1990 or 2000. The man in the street has nothing to bite on right away. ... In fact, the only measure which undoubtedly would have given Americans the feeling that the energy war was truly engaged would, we believe, have been the immediate freeing of gasoline prices.

Frankfurter Allgemeine

July 17: Baron von Muenchhausen, according to his

own report, succeeded in escaping from a swamp by pulling himself out by his own hair. President Carter's energy program has something of the credibility of this tale. ...

In truth, however, his proposals move in the direction that in a world becoming more impoverished, America will become poorer, too. It is true one can say that a part of the money one sacrificed to the rising OPEC prices now can flow to jobs creation and to strategic economic growth.

The technological and financial development of the gigantic experiment, the exploitation of the Canadian Athabasca project, shows what the production of synthetic energy will demand from America in capital but also in time. Muenchhausen's trick cannot be imitated; rather the Carter policy means that the American budget would reflect more severe belt-tightening than anyone now estimates. Is the American President aware of this? One doubts it, for his claim that 20 percent of the energy can be won from the sun's rays, and his temporary silence on the unavoidable use of nuclear energy shows a lack of realism.

Also, the fact that his thoughts run to gasoline rationing rather than the possibility of unleashing America's own sources of energy by decontrolling the gasoline price raises the question whether the peanut farmer ever was a 100 percent entrepreneur.

The Guardian, London, July 17: If, to a European eye, the mood of last week was mostly hysterical rubbish, then the instant adoration of Monday morning was probably pretty unsubstantial too. ... Politicians may fairly claim a little time to think and assess. Mr. Carter did not depart on a holiday to a tropical island; he went away to think damned hard. ... Instead of delivering some string of instantly forgettable platitudes he has, after 10 days, produced a strategy. The real question is whether that strategy carries conviction.

... Whilst America still cruises down freeways in gas guzzlers, consuming gasoline at something near half the price the rest of the world pays, then a giant unreality infects the entire exercise. That is the key challenge being ducked. ... So America will "never" import more oil than it did in 1977. Well, that was a flush and a comfortable stockpiling year; add Alaska oil on full flow and the constraint ... is hardly rigorous. Did someone mention conservation? Mr. Carter did, but not with the air of a man who sees it as the central, immediate, painful way of jerking America to its senses.

... Does America yet understand the vicious progression of the last few years: that fast growth begets oil imports, that these imports beget shortages and price rises which in turn beget inflation and recession?

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