

# Showdown Urged With Oil Producers

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In the backrooms of Washington, alarmed policymakers are calling for a showdown with the oil-producing countries before it is too late.

They want President Ford to serve notice on the oil potentates that present oil prices are ruining the Western world and, therefore, constitute hostile action.

They point out that the United States has befriended the principal oil rulers in the past and has helped them develop their fields. The policymakers advocate, therefore, that the President draw upon this good will to seek an oil price settlement that will avert the economic collapse of the West.

If a peaceful settlement cannot be reached, they believe military intervention will become inevitable. They don't see how the United States can stand by helplessly while the Western world is plunged into economic and political chaos.

They contend that the United States must take the lead in pushing down world oil prices. The other consuming countries

apparently are too divided and disorganized to unite against the oil-producing bloc. They are also paralyzed with fear that their oil might be cut off completely.

The backroom strategists urge, therefore, that the United States should prepare to act on its own. An early showdown, they believe, will reduce the risk of military action.

If the allies had stood up to Adolf Hitler at the Rhineland, they say, citing a lesson from history, he would have backed down and World War II might have been avoided. In an economic sense, they suggest, the oil powers have already occupied the Rhineland.

The strategists are now preparing their arguments to present to President Ford.

From sources privy to the backroom discussions, here are the arguments that will be laid before the President:

- The Western nations simply cannot afford to pay the rigged prices that the oil cartel is now charging. These nations became dependent upon oil because it was a cheap source of energy. They cannot get along without the 30 million barrels a day that

the oil cartel sells them. If they must pay \$11 and \$12 for a barrel of oil that costs 11 and 12 cents to produce, the Western nations, one by one, will go bankrupt.

- Western leaders, staggered by the sudden quadrupling of oil prices, haven't come to grips with the problem. They have offered only peripheral solutions, which cannot possibly work. The consuming countries cannot reduce consumption enough to pay the soaring oil deficit without paralyzing their economies. Recycling the massive oil profits, most experts now agree, will break down the world monetary system. Meanwhile, it will take more than a decade to develop new sources of energy.

- Exorbitant oil prices, like bombs, are killing people. In impoverished lands like India and Bangladesh, oil costs have reduced the funds available for food and fertilizer. This has already brought starvation to people who otherwise would have survived. One confidential analysis estimates that hundreds of thousands of people will die as a direct result of high oil bills.

- The oil squeeze has thrown the Atlantic alliance into disarray. America's allies suddenly

are more eager to cooperate with their Arab oil suppliers than with Washington. There has been muttering inside the NATO policy councils against U.S. moves in the Middle East. If the United States should side with Israel in a new Middle East conflict, the allies likely would close their bases to the United States, and the 30-year, postwar, Western alliance would break apart.

- The United Nations also is coming under heavy Arab influence, as nervous nations seek to placate the oil sheikhs. Already, the Arabs have been able to use the United Nations to punish Israel. For example, the United Nations' cultural arm, UNESCO, arbitrarily cut off aid to Israel and barred Israel from participating in its meetings. Intelligence reports warn that the Arab states are preparing to play a leading role, both financially and politically, in the world organization.

By their control of the oil valves, in other words, the petroleum powers have begun the peaceful conquest of the Western world. The backroom strategists will tell President Ford this is intolerable.

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