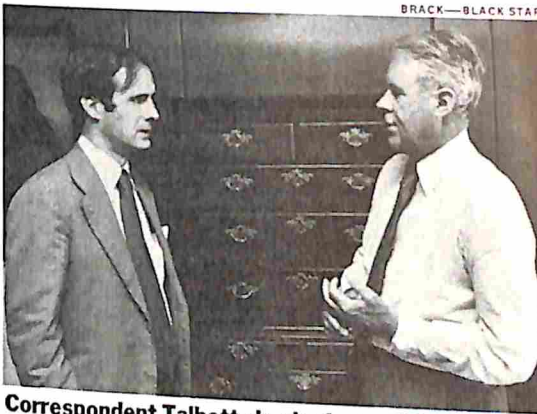


A Letter from the Publisher

"SALT by Christmas" was the slogan in Washington last fall, when the long stalled Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in Geneva showed promise. TIME Diplomatic Correspondent Strobe Talbott raced to synthesize five years of notes—replete with diplomatic circumlocutions and the technical jargon of weaponry—into a lucid history of SALT. But Christmas came late, and history had to wait. Only last week, when Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin reached a general agreement on the proposed treaty, could Talbott complete his project. Talbott's narrative, part of this week's 15-page Special Report on SALT, is accompanied by Associate Editor Burton Pines' appraisal of the terms of the treaty and an assessment of the great Senate debate ahead.

"SALT confronts a journalist with two challenges," says Talbott: "Understanding the complex, secrecy-shrouded subject and writing about it so that readers can grasp it." Talbott undertook the first challenge armed with the discipline of a Rhodes scholar at Oxford (B. Litt., 1971). "I put myself through a crash course in the exotic hardware, the nomenclature of force levels and the foreign language of arms-con-

trol acronyms," he explains. As a student of Russian literature, the translator and editor of two volumes of Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs (1970 and 1974) and an observer of statecraft, Talbott knew three essential SALT tongues: Russian, Kremlinese and the diplomatic parlance in which "frank" and "businesslike" indicate disagreement and stonewalling.



Correspondent Talbott checks facts with Vance

The halting pace of the negotiations proved an asset in attacking the second challenge of SALT reporting. Says Talbott: "I've had the luxury, rare in deadline journalism, of time to evolve a historical perspective and to return several times to my various sources. Most of these sources—officials in every U.S. agency involved in the talks and some Soviets—refused to be identified as informants. "The SALT records are classified," explains Talbott, "and participants were constrained from publicizing what they knew." Talbott managed nevertheless to fill his "SALT notebook"—overfill it, to be precise. His expanded version of this week's Special Report will be published by Harper & Row as *The Inside Story of SALT II*. Is that the last word? Not at all, says Talbott. "Preparations for SALT III are already under way."

John C. Meyer

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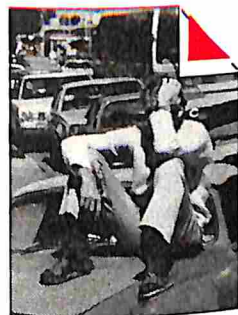
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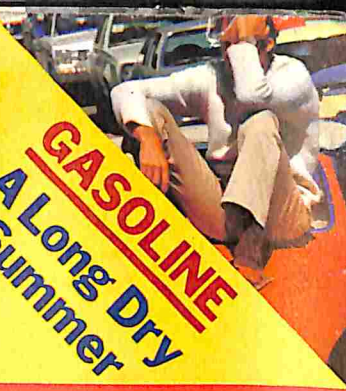
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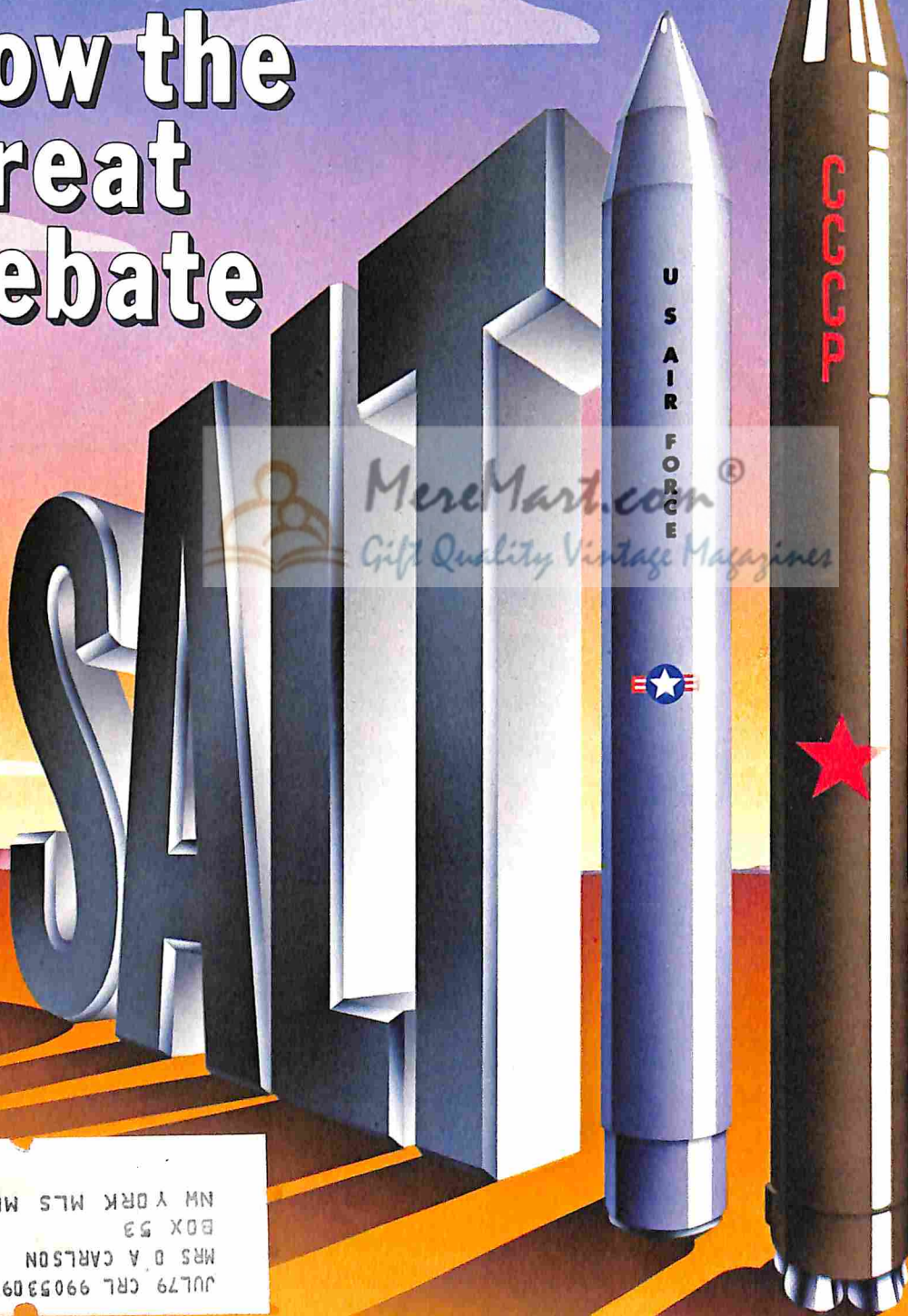
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