that embody the unrealized yearnings and potential of their race and who educate the public in interpreting these expressions of its own soul. If Bazin stops short of Matthew Arnold’s notion of art criticism as a secular substitute for religion, he nonetheless assigns to it a role that may seem quixotic today, when production companies and billion-dollar conglomerates, not reviewers, form popular taste, when intelligent film criticism has generated only its own elite readership, and when the distinction between “movies” and “the cinema” seems bolder than ever.

Bazin’s hopes may seem improbable, but even in this collection of his earliest efforts he has given us a model of what film criticism can and should be. At their best these pieces contain far more than the “minimum of intelligence, of culture, of honesty” that he asks of his fellow critics. Bazin can dissect and recompose a few frames of celluloid with the same incisive thoroughness that Ruskin discussed a painting. This is film criticism of a high order, criticism that, at once, encourages speculation upon the boundless potential of cinematic analysis and reminds one of how rarely it has lived up to this potential.

DOUBLETALK:
THE STORY OF SALT I
by Gerard Smith
(Doubleday, 473 pp.; $14.95)

THE SOVIET UNION AND SALT
by Samuel B. Payne, Jr.
(MIT Press; 110 pp.; $19.95)

Roger Zane George

The reader of these two very different volumes on SALT, the strategic arms limitation talks, will come away with a single question. How did the United States and the Soviet Union manage to conclude a SALT I agreement, much less come close to a second accord? Gerard Smith, the former director of the U.S. Arms Control Agency and a professional negotiator for thirty years, chronicles the twists and turns of SALT I. Professor Samuel Payne, an expert on factional struggles in the Soviet Politburo, articulates the “militarist” and the “arms controller” poles of opinion within the Soviet leadership. Both accounts capture the fragility and uncertainty of the negotiating process. The two accounts taken together lead to doubts that the concept of arms reductions can survive the current state of Soviet-American relations.

Gerard Smith, in public service since the London Disarmament Conference of 1957 and head of the U.S. SALT delegation from 1969 to 1972, speaks with some authority, and his story of SALT I is bittersweet. The book praises the positive contributions of his delegation to the 1972 ABM treaty but damns Dr. Kissinger for his now famous “back channel” negotiations with the Soviet leadership. The author’s most fervent wish is that future presidents rely more on a “collegial” approach to negotiations with the Russians than on the personal style of a Henry Kissinger. Totally ignorant of the important agreements between Kissinger and the Politburo, Smith could not properly advise the president. The delegation later found problems arising from the ambiguities of these unrecorded agreements. One such area that became a major stumbling block involved limitations on submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). According to Smith, Henry Kissinger once implied in a casual remark to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin that as far as the U.S. was concerned SLBMs might or might not be included in an interim offensive agreement. “Here in one sentence,” complains Smith, “the position which the United States had pressed for almost a year was changed.” It was not until shortly before the May, 1972, interim freeze was signed that the White House gained Soviet acceptance of an SLBM limit. By then it had also accepted terms permitting larger Soviet submarine forces, a condition no one in the delegation had favored.

The irony of this vignette and many others throughout the book is deepened by the president’s rude treatment of the delegation. Mr. Nixon’s reputed aversion to “arms controllers” seems out of place. The delegation, after all, included Paul Nitze, later co-founder of the anti-SALT II Committee on the Present Danger, and Dr. Harold Brown, former secretary of defense. Possibly Mr. Nitze’s acid criticism of the recent SALT efforts stems from a lingering distrust of White House judgment on how negotiations should be conducted with the Russians.

Lest the reader be misled, the Smith volume is much more than just a
lament about White House handling of the negotiations. Its chronological organiza-
tion provides a detailed account of both U.S. and Soviet proposals and counterproposals. For the uninformed, the five-page glossary of strategic arms terms will be indispensable. For some, the 450 pages will be too detailed in their analyses and too lackluster in their prose to commend reading to the end.

In contrast, Professor Payne's slim volume on Soviet attitudes toward SALT presents a more detached and academic view of Soviet interests and negotiating philosophy. This analysis of unclassified writings on SALT is so heavily documented, though, that the book almost collapses from its own insight. Sovietologists have argued for years over whether the Kremlin suffers the same divisions on policy questions that the West does. This book attempts to argue, with some success, that there are discernible differences within the leadership on the value of arms limitation talks. Payne is quick to note that one must be careful in drawing firm conclusions from the few Soviet journals that openly discuss strategic questions. Nonetheless, he asserts that it is quite evident that "militarist" and "arms controller" communities coexist in the Soviet leadership. Presumably this research will invite U.S. experts to review their debate about disagreements in Soviet policy-making circles.

Professor Payne sees evidence of such division in Soviet discussions of U.S. strategic ambitions and of its own peaceful initiatives on arms control. He attributes the division to "institutional alignments." The two schools, he notes, are of one mind in their hostility to the United States but are at odds over the immutability of U.S. aggressive actions. Both "militarists" and "arms controllers" detect a weakening of U.S. power and influence. The former conclude that the probable consequence of this weakening of capitalism is greater international conflict, requiring of the Soviet bloc greater vigilance and stepped-up military efforts. The "arms controllers," however, see the emergence of a sobering realism in U.S. policy-making circles, leading them to support negotiations as "a guarantee of Soviet parity and limited opportunities to strive for strategic superiority." While both groups view the struggle with the United States as continuing unabated, they part company on how useful SALT can be in waging that battle. According to Professor Payne, this evidence suggests that the Soviet leadership had made no decision to accept any SALT I agreement until the process was well under way. Brezhnev's hold on the Politburo sustained Soviet interest in SALT, but the underlying division on this matter could reemerge with his passing.

These two books suggest, at a minimum, a stormy decade for SALT. The Soviets have indicated by word and deed that SALT is yet another battleground, and the U.S. appears on the verge of adopting the same attitude. Any future negotiations will call for serious preparation, skillful presentation, and extreme patience on the part of American participants. As Paul Nitze said on leaving the 1972 Moscow summit, "From the beginning we agreed that nothing was agreed until all was agreed. Today we achieve that reward of two and one half years patient and constructive work to bring that about. I feel that only those of us who were part of it will ever fully know what was involved."