

"orchestration of consensus," Stalinist praxis more and more resembled that of Italian fascism, a phenomenon often pointed out by Trotsky. (One area of remarkable dissimilarity. Literally millions of Russians were directly killed by Stalinist repression; political executions while Mussolini was prime minister numbered about twenty-five.)

Gregor reviews the impressive Fascist achievements in industrialization. Even where a policy was largely unsuccessful, as in the effort to hold down urban gigantism and unemployment through improvements in rural living standards, the major concepts were sound. Finally, Gregor makes it clear that the latest revolutionary theories of our time, in which people's revolutions can be made by men of determination in any setting and without industry and proletariat, had been developed by syndicalist thinkers more than sixty years ago.

To summarize, Gregor has slain the conventional wisdom by demonstrating that fascism possessed a coherent ideology which was much more relevant to underdeveloped societies than is Marxism, that this ideology determined policy to a substantial degree, and that Fascist ideology and practice have found imitators in the (theoretically) least likely places. Readers interested in an authoritative treatment of some of the most fundamental political questions of our century will be well rewarded by a careful study of these books. [VVV]

**ABORTING AMERICA**  
by Bernard N. Nathanson, M.D.,  
with Richard N. Ostling  
(Doubleday, 320 pp., \$10.00)

**A PRIVATE CHOICE**  
by John T. Noonan, Jr.  
(The Free Press, 244 pp., \$11.95)

Robin W. Lovin

Few public issues are as frustrating as the debate over abortion. After a decade of proclamations, marches, legislation, litigation, and slogans we seem no closer to a public consensus on abortion policy than we were at the beginning. Times change, the law changes, the public mood shifts left and right, but the principals in this controversy continue to glare at one another from the

same fixed positions, armed with the same arguments and shouting the same slogans.

In this atmosphere two books by advocates with well-known positions in the debate might seem to offer little hope for progress. In fact, however, Bernard Nathanson's *Aborting America* and John T. Noonan's *A Private Choice* illuminate the key problem in the abortion debate. Though both writers stand opposed to current abortion policy, it is Noonan who treats it as a public issue

and points the way to a public resolution. Nathanson, by contrast, appeals to scientific evidence with a finality that cuts off public inquiry and leaves us waiting for a definitive word from the laboratory, a word that never comes.

Nathanson's book is both essay and autobiography. He narrates his experiences as a medical student and gynecologist, his encounters with the victims of shoddy backroom abortions and the discreet assistance that was available to monied patients with unwanted preg-

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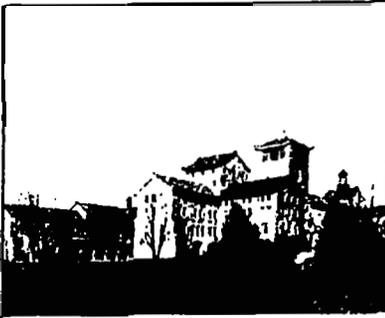
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nancies in the old days before *Roe v. Wade*. He explains with candor and humor how he led the medical arm of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and became director of the world's largest abortion clinic. Then, simply, he tells how he changed his mind.

*Aborting America* offers up healthy measures of good politics and good gossip, but the striking thing about the narrative is Nathanson's own indifference to the public, political discussion of the issue that was the focus of his professional life for six years. "The news of the Supreme Court's abortion decisions broke on the same January day of 1973 as did word of Lyndon Johnson's death. Curiously, of the two events, I was more interested in ruminating about the former President."

The reason for Nathanson's lack of interest in Justice Blackmun's reading of medicine and morality becomes clear as he narrates the subsequent change in his own opinions on abortion. The convincing arguments were medical indications provided by the new equipment and new techniques he employed in his regular obstetrical practice. "What began to erode the NARAL dogmas was the daily realization of the 'intrauterine patient' that we were treating, tracing, sampling, and observing through electric monitoring or the flickering images on an ultrasonic screen. To a physician, *that* is reality." From this point of view, the public realm of law and politics is a forum in which the scientist dispenses information or even engages in persuasion, but the laboratory is where issues are decided.

John T. Noonan, Jr., is a lawyer. His argument thus begins with a meticulous dissection of the Blackmun decisions that Nathanson found so uninteresting. In twenty-one well-constructed "inquiries" Noonan undercuts the logical, legislative, and jurisprudential foundations on which the Supreme Court erected a "constitutional liberty of abortion" that made the termination of pregnancy a matter that a woman alone can decide, at least for the first six months.

Noonan's real target, however, is not the Court. It is the people. It is the power we have accorded the Court by abdicating responsibility for public discussion of abortion and other issues that are basic to human life in society.

"No 'discrete and insular minority'



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can feel secure when its constitutional existence may be affected by the exercise of such raw power. And we are all members of discrete and insular minorities, depending on the criterion employed to set up the categories. The population may be divided a thousand ways to suit the preferences of the judges, who have power to define who is a person, who have even power to declare who is alive. If it becomes settled that it is the Supreme Court's will that confers personhood and existence, no one is safe."

Noonan suggests that this positivist jurisprudence is possible only because we have lost our concept of rights that exist prior to the state and lost our sense of belonging to a public, political community that is prior to all specific constitutional arrangements. "If the legal order is a universe which can be developed without reference to the natural order, only the will of the makers of the legal order controls the recognition of legal existences."

Noonan's point, then, is in the irony of his title. Abortion is never *A Private Choice*. It masquerades as such only when jurists, scientists, and civil libertarians combine to make some specialist's conclusions decisive and render all other positions mere opinions, private choices rather than public claims. Noonan insists that the Court can and must change its mind on the abortion issue, but his real contribution to the debate lies in his insistence on where such change must originate. "The use of abortion as an event and a symbol is found in American literature. The symbolism reflects the judgments of a culture that finds life good, childbearing good, fidelity good....Functioning as a symbol of sterility, of infidelity, of destruction, the killing of an unborn child is understood as evil. Its consequences are 'muddy bootprints.' It becomes death personified. Our writers tell us that this is the experience of our culture. Because this is our experience, in our culture the liberty can be limited."

The appeal to moral sensitivities is a reminder to both friends and foes of abortion that the issue cannot be settled by constitutional fiat, whether the Constitution be determined by judicial decision or by legislative amendment. The success of Noonan's position will depend upon the shared sense, painfully won, that abortion is a flirtation with death that the human spirit cannot sus-

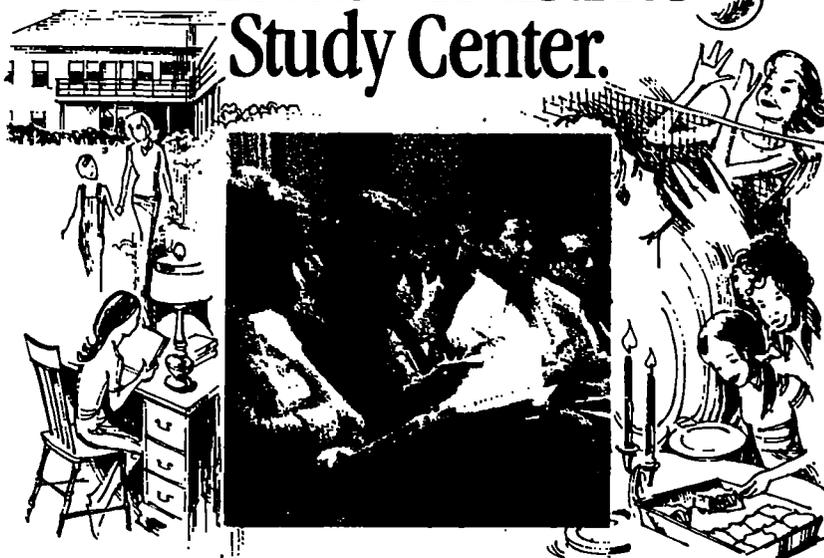
tain. Anything less will be merely a stopgap measure.

Nathanson, by contrast, leaves us in the laboratory or at the hospital monitoring station. His view of abortion is, paradoxically, privatized by the very objectivity of the needles, dials, and dancing lights on the oscilloscope. There can be no discussion of abortion, only new data. The antiabortion forces who take comfort from Nathanson's

shift in position would do well to read *Aborting America* as a report of research in progress. That is really all he promises them and, given his presuppositions, that is all they can reasonably ask.

Perhaps the way beyond the impasse over abortion is to insist that the first choice is not for or against abortion, but the decision whether or not to make it a public choice. The currently popular

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argument that antiabortion legislation constitutes the establishment of religion is surely specious, but religious opposition to abortion can be privatized, just as libertarian arguments for it have been. The tendency on both sides to cry up scientific evidence is only a lateral move among the privatized positions, not a real engagement in public discussion. Noonan, however, directs our attention to the only court that stands above the Court of *Roe v. Wade*. Let us hope that court is still in session. **WV**

## THE YAWNING HEIGHTS

by Alexander Zinoviev

(Random House; 829 pp.; \$15.00)

John Romjue

It is one of modernity's accepted dogmas that the Russian Revolution was a good thing. No matter that its popular element was rapidly extinguished, or that a totalitarian order supplanted a verging constitutional monarchy and became the most enduring tyranny in modern history. Most Western intellectuals down to our day have chosen to rationalize or ignore the documentation of class purge and *gulag*. "Avert the eyes," a strange inner voice has told them, and a great silence prevails.

Against the know-nothing tide has stood a succession of great imaginative writers—Zamyatin in the 1920s, Orwell and Koestler in the two decades following, and since the late 1950s Solzhenitsyn. The genius of these great antitotalitarians has thrown an unrelenting light upon the demonic power, merciless coercive spirit, and endemic self-sabotage that animate and enervate the Soviet creed.

To this band belongs Alexander Zinoviev, a Moscow professor of philosophy whose satirical devastation of Soviet society, just published in its American edition, prompted Soviet authorities to strip its author of his citizenship and academic degrees while he was on a visit to the West in 1978.

This humorless Soviet due process was amply provoked. Zinoviev has written the unforgivable about the socialist paradise. The "yawning heights of Soc-ism" reflect an infinitely boring society proceeding in a state of chronic self-sabotage. Zinoviev's metaphor is the earthiest of all insults—the mythi-

cal country "Ibansk" is a Russian pun connoting an obscene, four-lettered state of being.

Nothing makes sense in this jumbled land. "If you want to learn to understand our life, you've first got to learn how to walk about upside down." In Ibansk values exist as self-mockeries, "anti-logic" prevails, deception is fundamental, denunciation is the normal pattern of life.

All the Ibanskians are named Ibanov and are distinguishable only as allegorical figures representing famous politicians and intellectuals. That things are so Ibanskoid owes to the legacy of "Boss" (Stalin) and "Hog" (Khrushchev). The poet Snottyhanky (Yevtushenko) travels extensively in the West and is directed to go to America and "show the world that we here in Ibansk have complete artistic freedom." Claimant, Colleague, Sociologist, and Thinker are the system's hollow men who imagine that they are using the system, even as through them it consolidates its great gray power.

Against the systemsmen are the dry-eyed system critics, alert and dangerous—Chatterer, Slanderer, and Schizophrenic. Chatterer and his co-disputants peer into every cranny and social contradiction of the Ibanskian state—the many manifestations of class privilege, "psychiatric" clinics for the writers of *samizdat*, egalitarian education where bribe and privilege govern, informers, "History yet to come," the ubiquitous corruption fostered in all human relationships by the theology of the Total Ism. All the Ibanskians discuss spiritedly the great figure of Truth-teller (Solzhenitsyn), whose Book has awakened some in the West but not others, including "that friend of Ibansk, the American millionaire Shark."

Zinoviev delineates universal values in this important book. One does not have to go to Ibansk to learn that "there are two ways of advancing: one is to make yourself bigger, the other is to make others smaller." As he queues for his crematorium chit at the end of life, Chatterer perceives clearly for the first time that "Truth is the foundation of any truly human existence....The battle for truth and against it is the most ferocious and profound battle fought in society."

Zinoviev's critique of the closed society has depth and great range. *The Yawning Heights* belongs to that body

of serious literature within which civilization has always seen itself most clearly reflected. Zinoviev's fantasy-reality recalls those concentrated discourses on good and evil in Thomas Mann's great novel *The Magic Mountain* or, better, Kafka's prescient vision in *The Castle* of omnipresent state power against which resistance has become absurd.

Hope does not reach out to the pilgrims of Ibansk as it did to Bunyan's Christian. Zinoviev's figures traverse a totalitarian landscape toward the visionless secular void. They are heroic and good, greater than the evil that crushes them; but like the society from which they spring, they are self-amputated from a transcendent moral world. Zinoviev has not followed Solzhenitsyn out of the dead ends of secular humanism and onto the uplands of faith. **WV**

### CONTRIBUTORS

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## Briefly Noted

### THE CIA AND THE AMERICAN ETHIC

by Ernest W. Lefever and Roy Godson

(Ethics and Public Policy Center [Washington, D.C.]; 161 pp.; \$5.00 paper)

The authors argue that a full range of intelligence activities, including covert operations, is consistent with the Judeo-Christian ethic, that the organized opponents of intelligence work are indifferent to the threats to the national interest of the U.S., that the communications media are outrageously unfair in presenting an essentially negative picture of intelligence work, and that these and other propositions should be more widely and intelligently debated. Ben J. Wattenberg, in a foreword, and Charles M. Lichtenstein, in an afterword, agree with the authors.