

much. (He received 42 percent of the vote.) With the inauguration of his democratically elected successor, Patricio Aylwin, the authors write, a chapter in South American history has closed: "After the ceremony ended and Pinochet stepped into his open limousine between rows of matching white horses, the last of South America's modern-day dictators was pelted with tomatoes and eggs."

### *Contemporary Affairs*

**SAVAGE INEQUALITIES:** Children in America's Schools. By Jonathon Kozol. Crown. 262 pp. \$20

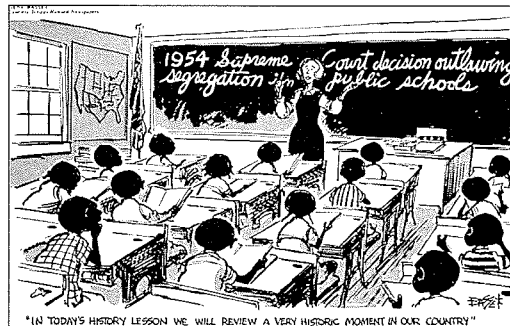
In American cities from New York to San Antonio to East St. Louis, the wasteland and the promised land are next-door neighbors. Cross a bridge or descend a hillside, and well-groomed yards and two-car garages give way to tenements, liquor stores, and lottery agents. The schools show no less stark a contrast.

William Bennett, Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, declared that throwing money at the schools would not solve our education problems. Kozol, who has aroused indignation about public schools ever since his *Death at an Early Age* (1967), here shows just what money can do. In Illinois, the richest school districts spend five times more on each student than the poorest districts do, and Kozol compares two such contrasting districts. At New Trier High in affluent Winnetka, a student advisor deals with 25 students; at Du Sable High in nearby North Lawndale, an advisor has approximately 420 charges. Ninety-three percent of New Trier seniors go on to four-year colleges; 75 percent of Du Sable students don't even graduate.

Kozol's story is not, theoretically, about race: White Appalachian children in overcrowded schoolrooms in Cincinnati fare as badly as do black students in the worst ghetto schools. Yet since most of the problem urban schools that Kozol visited were "95 to 99 percent non-white," *Savage Inequalities* is, in fact, a study of segregation. Thirty-seven years ago, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court found segregated schools inherently unequal and therefore unlawful. But the educational policies of the current and previous administra-

tions, Kozol argues, have retreated not 38 but 100 years, to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) with its "separate but equal" doctrine and its separate but unequal reality.

Why do we tolerate these disparities in education while in other areas we do not? As political scientist Andrew Hacker has pointed out, we expect fire departments to speed as readily to tenements as to affluent suburbs. Again, Kozol's answer comes down to finance and funding—to the arcane machinery through which local property tax supports public educa-



tion. Wealthy homeowners generally pay a smaller percentage of their incomes but still collect far more to pay for their better schools. As of May 1991, 23 states had lawsuits challenging the fairness of this method of funding schools. Kozol proposes replacing property tax with a progressive income tax to generate school revenues. But to make such a proposal into law, Americans would have to be persuaded to care about children other than their own. If this does not happen, Kozol concludes, "apartheid might end in South African schools before it ends in ours."

**A CHINESE ODYSSEY:** The Life and Times of a Chinese Dissident. By Anne F. Thurston. Scribners. 440 pp. \$24.95

Two and a half years after Tiananmen Square, the streets in China's cities are calm, and Communist Party leaders boast that socialism is alive and well. Of course, nobody believes them. Only the personal prestige of Deng Xiaoping and his octogenarian colleagues—the last of the revolutionaries who accompanied Mao on the Long March—is holding the facade to-