

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

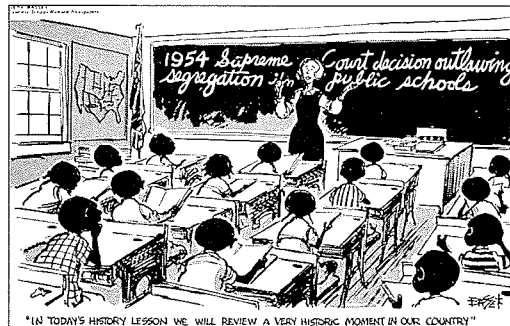
In American cities from New York to San Antonio to East St. Louis, the wasteland and the promised land are next-door neighbors. Cross a bridge or descend a hillside, and well-groomed yards and two-car garages give way to tenements, liquor stores, and lottery agents. The schools show no less stark a contrast.

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-

gether. Deng's reforms—which placed agriculture in private hands and dotted the cities with individual entrepreneurs—have undermined the communist economic system, while the collapse of Marxism-Leninism at its source, in Russia, has eroded the legitimacy of the ideology within China.

The big question looms: What will happen when the 87-year-old Deng dies? Thurston, the author of *Enemies of the People* (1987), provides some possible clues in her story of a contemporary Chinese dissident. Born in 1945, Ni Yuxian's life roughly coincides with that of the People's Republic of China. As a teenage soldier during Mao's Great Leap Forward, Ni witnessed the greatest famine in world history, one that killed 25 to 30 million people. He composed a protest letter, expecting Mao to do something. Mao did: Ni was dismissed from the Army. Ni's subsequent career as a protester and dissident earned similar recognition. He was declared a "nonperson" in 1970 and later spent two years on death-row. In 1986, feeling the noose tighten again, Ni outwitted the authorities, secured a false passport, and escaped directly to New York. Ni's outspoken, revolutionary approach, Thurston believes, is as courageous as it is exceptional. In China the traditional response to unjust politics is to retreat into private pursuits. Unlike Ni, China's other leading dissidents—the physicist Fang Lizhi and the journalist Liu Binyan—follow nonpolitical careers.

As much as Thurston admires Ni's bravery, she doubts whether he could—or even should—come to power in a postcommunist China. Ni's political style typifies that of China's highly splintered opposition: His Chinese Liberal Democratic Party spends more time feuding with other dissident organizations (of which there are hundreds) than opposing the regime in power. And for all Ni's talk of democracy, free elections, and a free press, "the structure of [his] party is disturbingly Leninist, duplicating in many respects the structure of the Communist Party itself." "Democracy for Ni," Thurston observes, "is more a way of overthrowing the Communist Party than an end in itself." But then, she reminds us, "China has no democratic political culture, no tradition of democratic institutions to guide those who lead the country to a more democratic future."

A reader puts down *A Chinese Odyssey* with a sad foreboding of *après Deng, le deluge*—or rather the *luan*, the Chinese word for the descent into disorder, chaos, and violence. One hopeful possibility, Thurston suggests, is that the next government may quietly permit the fragmentation of China into economic regions. But the Chinese themselves see their history as cyclical, and many now view the present days as a replay of the collapse of the Qing dynasty, which brought on the internal warfare of the 1920s and '30s. Yet who dares to imagine a civil war in the China of today, a country of 1.2 billion people?

**THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN:** The Unexpected Decline of Leisure. *By Juliet Schor. Basic. 336 pp. \$23*

Economists during the 1950s predicted for the near-future a "24-hour week, a six-month workyear, or a standard retirement age of 38." Increased automation and productivity would make work all but disappear. These prophecies appear in one way partially fulfilled: American workers today produce in six months the same quantity of goods that it took an entire year to manufacture in 1948. Yet greater productivity has not led to shorter work-weeks. During the last 20 years, Americans have, on average, increased their time at work by a month. American manufacturing employees currently work 320 more hours annually—at least two months more—than their counterparts in West Germany or France.

It is a myth, claims Harvard economist Schor, that the Industrial Revolution has led to declining human toil. Prior to the 18th century, agrarian labor was accompanied by far more leisure, thanks to fluctuations of weather, customary holidays, and the simple fact that poorer health and nutrition rendered people less able to work long hours. Once workers moved from the fields to the factories, however, they learned the iron law of industry: Profit depended on "operating [machinery] as continuously as possible." Corporate employers still want to operate their human machinery in the same way, Schor argues.

But even if employers favored it, could America afford to reduce work hours in a period of