for this highly debatable judgment. Birch slips it past by linking ecological degradation to abuse of the poor through a common attitude, the exploitive mentality. If we exploit nature, we exploit people more readily. The industrialist polluting, he says, is like a juvenile delinquent slashing railway coach seats. Animal liberation and plant liberation, he insists, are part of one movement, which includes people liberation. This disturbingly simplistic analysis is sealed with his abrupt dismissal of those who think ecology is a distraction from the concerns of the poor. Their argument is, he tells us, "cock-eyed." So much for that.

Neither Birch nor the National Council are unaware of the claims of the poor. But both make these claims subservient to environmental concerns. Both claim, or at least hope, that the needs of the poor may yet be served. Birch’s program is de-development of the rich so that their wealth may be distributed to the poor. One may heartily agree with him that the current distribution of wealth and resource use is unjust. But it is politically naive to expect this problem to be corrected by denouncing technological development and pinning all our hopes on redistribution. There are plenty of brutal ecological realists writing today—Garrett Hardin, William Paddock, Paul Ehrlich, Jay Forrester, Jean Raspail—who tell us plainly enough what a program of strict ecological salvation means for the poor: We abandon them. Birch has a lot more arguing to do before he makes his case; and the National Council of Churches would be extraordinarily foolish, not to say wicked, to accept his position uncritically.

Finally, if this whole program is dependent on process theology, those who care about justice would do well to look to other theologies for sustenance. Actually Birch’s theological plea, far from being “the most important thing [he] has to say,” is incidental to his paper. It is at least arguable that a more traditional theology that emphasizes human responsibility for the rest of creation will serve the ecological cause as well, and that of justice better. Birch, in another of his unexamined contemptuous dismissals, writes off this “stewardship” concept as a “tamely interpreted rider” on the exploitive mentality. I would argue that a theology that treats nature as a resource to be used responsibly for human well-being is far more likely to serve justice than a theology that regards nature subjectivity and gives it intrinsic rights beyond the reach of any human beings, no matter how desperate their condition.

In any event, the National Council would do well to keep its mind open on the theological foundations for its next triennium. If the Council really intends to swallow the Birch position and impose this dubious new gospel on all its departments, those staffs and boards that are charged with implementing programs for social justice should consider the merits of insubordination for the sake of conscience.

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**EXCURSUS III**

**Tenzin N. Tethong on Tibet: The Other Story**

Tibet for centuries captured the imagination of the world as a land of magic and mystery. Located high on a plateau, surrounded by mountains forming an awesome and impregnable natural barrier, Tibet kept itself through the centuries. By the end of World War II it was finally poised to open its doors, as was most of the world then, ready to be swept along by global advancements in technology and human relations. But this was not to happen. A foreign army—China’s—marched into Tibet, closing its borders once more. And this time the flow of people across the Himalayas reached what was probably its lowest ebb since the early records of Tibetan history.

Nine years later there was a massive exodus of nearly 100,000 people across Tibet’s borders into India. This was surely the single largest movement of Tibetans in their entire history. It was the result of a courageous but hopeless uprising that attempted to shake off the alien occupant. The event was dramatic, and the world watched unbelievably as the Tibetans rallied to oppose an incredible war machine. The Tibetans stood alone to defend their integrity at all costs. But it proved futile. Those who could not conceive of a compromise with the military victors left their homes and their loved ones and fled into exile.

The Tibetans received worldwide attention, admiration, and sympathy when this happened in 1959, and the world pointed an accusing finger at China, condemning its acts as genocide. Unfortunately for the Tibetans, the international climate today has changed for the worse and China stands tall and respected. To tell the truth of the Tibetan story is an uphill battle, for every statement out of China is eagerly awaited, greeted as a gem of truth and wisdom.

Two well-known individuals from the West have visited Tibet recently: author Han Suyin and journalist Neville Maxwell. Both have spoken and written about the glorious achievements of the Chinese in Tibet—Suyin in a book published in France and Maxwell in a series that appeared in the New York Times, July 8-12. They have condemned virtually everything of the past and praised every material and visual change they were shown. It should be pointed out that there are those among the Tibetans and in the international academic community who, with more specific and sounder knowledge, can write equally glowing articles that speak favorably of Tibet’s past and certainly with greater objectivity of Tibet’s present.
But the American public, and the world at large, need not be confused by complicated arguments and subtle differences in interpretations of historical and technical matters. There are simple facts that can easily give a proper perspective to the entire question. A classic example (of Han chauvinism) is the fact that the Chinese have always claimed other peoples like the Mongolians and Tibetans part of the Chinese race, irrespective of the actual facts. But at no point in their history, and in no manner, have the Tibetans considered themselves Chinese. Furthermore, Tibetans speak a language and use a written script that bears not the slightest resemblance to the Chinese.

Apart from these and other racial differences, the Tibetans have respectfully declined to be affected by the culture of China, despite its vastness and richness, either because it did not suit them or because their cultural inclinations were quite different. If any foreign culture has made an impact on Tibet surely it is that of India. Buddhism, the cornerstone of Tibetan culture, was introduced from India and rejuvenated from time to time by both Indian and native scholars.

Coming to more recent times, specifically the occupation of Tibet by the People’s Liberation Army in the early 1950’s, it must be bluntly reiterated to China’s new admirers that the Tibetans never extended an invitation to the Chinese to come to Tibet, and no one asked them for “liberation.” In fact, the Tibetans opposed the intrusion in spirit and in deed. They did not react merely out of ignorance and fear. Nor did they reject communism because it was an idea that was new and therefore unacceptable. No, the Tibetans reacted against the Chinese primarily because they believed they alone had the right to determine their own future.

Where are Tibet’s friends who supported the cause of freedom in 1959? Is Tibet to be conveniently forgotten? Is material progress—universal during the past few decades but most heavily emphasized in official Chinese propaganda—sufficient reason for their continuing presence in Tibet?

The Tibetans are not simply lamenting the wrongs of the past and seeking compensation. They are asking for a solution to an ongoing problem. Refugees still seek escape across the Himalayas, and there are continuous uprisings and acts of sabotage against the Chinese (surprisingly, these are reported by their own media). Exiled Tibetans have gone through countless disappointments and have faced seemingly unmanageable problems. But the Tibetans’ spirit remains unbroken. It is strong and alive. The world—and not just selected friends—is welcome to inspect the communities of exiles, to meet the people, and to learn the Tibetan side of the Tibetan problem.

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### EXCURSUS IV

Patricia McGrath on

The Quiet Revolution: Women’s Education

Fifty years ago there were only forty-three Egyptian girls attending secondary school; by 1971 there were half a million. Since 1950 the female share of university enrollments has quadrupled in Pakistan and quintupled in Thailand. These figures reflect in part the massive improvements in the educational status of Third World women at the lower rungs of the academic ladder.

More of the world’s women can now read and write than ever before. For many women literacy has become a door into the twentieth century, a means of achieving social mobility and participating in the affairs of both their own communities and the wider world. In some countries the literacy differences between older and younger female age groups are striking. In Tunisia, for example, 34 per cent of women aged 15-19 in 1966 were literate compared to 6 per cent of women aged 24-34, and 3 per cent of those aged 35-44. In Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Turkey the differences in the literacy levels of the various age groups are also pronounced. Women clearly have further to go than men in the elimination of illiteracy, but they are making progress.

Today free and compulsory primary education for both sexes is a goal, if not already an actual policy, of almost every government. Even in the conservative Muslim society of Saudi Arabia, King Faisal opened schools for girls more than a decade ago, though a show of force was thought necessary to quell resistance to the idea. In almost every country for which statistics are available, female access to primary education has improved greatly, with enrollments swelling from a mere trickle to near parity in many areas of the globe.

Because primary education is a prerequisite for further educational attainment, which in turn strongly influences eligibility for independent roles in adult society, increased female primary school enrollments since World War II represent a flying wedge into the barriers that block women’s achievement and an opening to the rights and prerogatives that lie beyond.

The postwar worldwide expansion of school systems and student populations has also extended to the secondary level. As the total number of secondary students has increased, so too has the proportion of female students in some areas. Of 121 UNESCO member states filing data in 1957, 60 had attained more than 46 per cent female enrollment in secondary education—a big improvement over the situation existing in 1950, when only 31 countries had passed that threshold. During the same time span, the number of countries having less than 20 per cent female secondary school enrollment