

PAKISTAN (continued from first page)

Although Pakistan is nominally a democracy, the influence of the landed class virtually removes everyone else from the political process. Two-thirds of both houses of Parliament are holders of large estates. (Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is from one of the top landowning families.) The landlords exercise such control that the major political parties are essentially interchangeable; indeed, wealthy Pakistani voters often switch their party affiliation many times over.

Mr. Malik said that the control of the landed class over the economic and political life in his nation is nearly total, and this has disastrous effects on social and economic progress. There are still many families in Pakistan "who have only one room - for their family and their cattle!" Prior to independence, landlords were obliged to keep private armies and police forces to maintain control of huge estates. Now that "the landlords are the parliament," these services are provided by the state.

As in many third-world countries where landownership is highly concentrated, the ruling class in Pakistan has little interest in making agriculture or industry more productive. In fact, "deliberate efforts are made to keep large numbers of people illiterate." The government spends far more on universities than on primary schools. The over-riding incentive for Pakistani landowners is to suppress any working-class opposition; hence, access to press and media is strictly controlled. And finally, industrial projects only go ahead if they benefit the top landowners.

Part of the reason why this dismal state of affairs has persisted for so long is that the Pakistani constitution forbids any taxation of agricultural income. There are income and sales taxes, but the most popular "tax dodge" is to represent business income as tax-free agricultural income.

Recently, however, momentum has been gathering for some sort of a tax on the wealth of Pakistani landlords. Pressure has come externally from the I.M.F. and World Bank, because of the tendency of current economic realities to retard development. Another source of pressure is the urban intelligentsia, a growing class of people (owing partially to Pakistan's large investment in higher education). And, finally, a merchant class has emerged, despite enormous obstacles; small urban businesses have a wildly disproportionate tax burden. These factors ensure a market for a popular press which discusses economic reforms, despite the landlords' efforts to curtail it.

The remedy that this loose, fragile coalition has been advocating is a tax on

HGS Fall Seminars: Immigration to a Livable City?

IMMIGRATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

This semester the school presented two seminars concerning the accessibility and desirability of living space in the United States. The first, entitled *Immigration and Human Rights*, addressed the problems of people coming to the United States - specifically the changes made in immigration laws in 1990. The seminar was chaired by Vandana Chak, an attorney and a member of the Harvard Human rights program and a teacher at the school, and Cyrus Mehta, an immigration attorney and pro bono counsel to the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights. The seminar began with a discussion of the changes made in 1990 to the immigration law, which have made it harder for people seeking asylum for political reasons to come into this country.

According to Mr. Mehta, immigration law has become more "ideologically driven," creating strong class divisions in the type of people allowed to seek asylum. The law describes a political refugee as one who "has a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion." In practice, however, the new immigration regulations make it much easier for people fleeing countries with a communist government, those leaving Cuba, and China after Tiananmen Square for instance, than for people fleeing repression in countries that have a different ideological agenda.

Another category of immigrants, one in which it is much easier to gain access to and residence in this country, is the business or employment category. This category provides a virtual open door policy for anyone who is considered "exceptionally qualified" or has \$1 million to invest. The quota for the business category is

land values. But although Javed Malik knows they are talking about Henry George's remedy, very few people in Pakistan know that. "This is a totally domestic idea," he said. The overwhelming power of the landowning class naturally suggests it, the constitution does not forbid it, and, in the end, a consensus is emerging that a tax on land values is the easiest way to remove the anachronistic ties that continue to bind Pakistan's economy. □

400,000 a year, as opposed to only 10,000 for those seeking political asylum. Mr. Mehta wondered if the phrase "give us your huddled masses" is losing its meaning. Ms. Chak concluded the seminar by expressing the hope that in the future there would be an "open market" for immigration because the movement of people across boundaries in search of new opportunities is "natural to the human species."

THE LIVABLE CITY

The seminar *The Livable City*, given at the school a few weeks later by Professor Stephen Sussna, a charter member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a member of the law faculty at Baruch College, continued the theme of human habitat and accessibility, this time concerned with internal boundaries. Prof. Sussna, who has also chaired various American Bar Association land use com-

mittees, began by giving a brief history of urban zoning in the US. Prof. Sussna described how zoning began as "an exclusionary device" used to keep certain "undesirable elements" from moving freely and living where they want. For example, zoning was first implemented in New York City in 1916, as a way for those living uptown to keep the



Vandana Chak & Cyrus Mehta

workers in the garment district in place - to keep them from moving uptown. Zoning quickly turned New York City into "a municipal corporation" and was used to "legislate land use", usually for the vested interests of real estate interests and politicians.

By the 1920s, zoning existed in almost every major city in the US. On the positive side, zoning is a way of insuring and promoting "the public safety, public health and the general welfare." Zoning, when used properly, can help a city maintain its livability. On the down side, it is very difficult for ordinary citizens to effect changes in zoning laws.

Contrasting interests - Government policy makers, municipal engineers, city planners and real estate and corporate interests all represent different and competing sectors. For instance, affordable housing is very difficult to build in suburban sections due to because "excessive subdivision regulations" that are a way for a municipality to regulate who does or does not move into its area. Furthermore, the huge speculative profits to be had in real estate often ensure that equitable zoning rules can only be achieved in spite of formidable special interests. - David Domke