

The way forward is with capital

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Pre-modern, agrarian society was based on a fundamental inequality: it depended upon the labour of peasants, who could not share the fruits of civilization.

—Karen Armstrong

THE comments of Mr Amir Buksh Bhattu (Encounter, March 27) and Mr Abdul Khalique Junejo (Encounter, April 17) on my article "Why the feudals seek Bifurcation" published in this space on March 20 are educative and useful. I do hope there will be more discussion on issues raised in them and their scope will be widened to include the basic issues of our national political life.

The crucial point here is that neither respondent has addressed the subject of land reforms — the re-distribution of the most important means of production that we have. One concludes that it is not on the agenda of their movements.

The comments of the two politicians are, however, very different from each other otherwise. They both favour the proposal to turn the federation into a confederation. But while Mr Junejo speaks of the emancipation of the people, Mr Bhattu tells us that "the relationship between the 'feudal' and his hari" ... "is based on mutual trust and benefit." Though it remains to define what Mr.

Junejo means by "emancipation" and "people", Mr Bhattu has simply closed the doors on social change.

As to the relationship between the landowner and his hari, mentioned by him, every durable relationship of exploitation has some mutuality of interests, or it would not last. But equally all such relationships become redundant due to general progress of mankind, technological and cultural. The point is which relationship is more productive, more conducive to economic and cultural advancement. Here, the capitalist relations of production have proved to be far superior to all others known to us.

Mr Junejo generally agrees with the definitions of the capitalist and feudal modes of exploitation offered in the article of March 20. But he favours regional "nationalisms". His observations, therefore, demand a wider discussion. Regional "nationalism" is the ideology of the nascent bourgeoisie, of the shopkeeper, the small entrepreneur, the children of the junior state bureaucracy and the school teachers.

Their inclination as a class would be to ally themselves with and support the peasants against the landlords, since every land-owning peasant is a petty bourgeois. At the same time this peasant is oppressed by the big land-owner — an oppression he shares with the landless peasant. The main demand of the nascent bourgeoisie would, therefore, be effective land reforms.

However, this bourgeoisie has chosen the path of regional "nationalism." All nationalism is based on class collaboration. The question is which one is the leading class in a coalition, as that class imposes its agenda upon the movement. Our regional "nationalisms" are obviously collaborating with or are led by their pre-capitalist classes, who have no social programmes. They wish to freeze the social relations at various stages of backwardness. Hence the absence of any

reference to land-reforms in the articles being discussed here. Obviously, the nascent bourgeoisie of these provinces helps their re-feudalization by collaborating with, in fact accepting the lead of, their pre-capitalist classes in the name of regional "nationalisms."

Mr Junejo says that the members of the Pakistani feudal class have historically supported the central government, while the biggest regional movement in our history has been bourgeois in character.

Members of our feudal class do not support the central government. They participate in the federal, provincial, district or local government, in fact in any government, even a colonial one, because they need the states' coercive machinery to maintain the system in which they can exploit the peasantry. Actually, a smaller state would serve their interests more as they can control it better and it would be less expensive. Hence the demand for confederation.

Capitalism is exploitative. But since capital can exist only in the act of expansion and, therefore, constantly increasing production, capitalism is the most productive mode of production discovered by man up till now. It has brought the mankind, or an important part of it, from darkness to light. It is the only way forward in our situation. And it can operate only at the level of the whole national market. Therefore, the only progressive class coalition can be the one led by the bourgeoisie; the only nationalism which can lead us forward is Pakistani nationalism.

If a central state comes in the way of the bourgeoisie of a region, the latter would opt for secession or for far-reaching regional autonomy only if there is no hope of participating in the exploitation of the nation-wide market. But, of course, such a decision cannot be purely economic. Cultural considerations may sometimes be as important, as is the case with the Flemish particularism in Belgium.

Awami League's movement, though undoubtedly bourgeois, had certain specific features not easily replicable. They arose from the distance from the other wing, India's determination to break up Pakistan and the army's refusal to loosen its grip on power even if it meant letting the other wing go. Otherwise, the Awami League should have favoured a strong central government in Pakistan, as it later established in Bangladesh.

The capital requires a strong central government and its coercive machinery in order to be able to reproduce itself, since the state creates and maintains the whole framework in which this reproduction becomes possible. It may be recalled that the absolutist monarchy had been created in Europe not by the feudals but by the rising bourgeoisie, so that it could create a national market by: (a) removing all the barriers to the movement of the goods within the country; (b) unifying the national currency; (c) unifying the national laws; (d) promoting one national language; (e) providing protection to industry.

Even more important is the fact that, whatever the ideological hacks may say, capitalist accumulation is not possible without close interaction between the private capital and the state's financial role. I think Marx was the first economist to point out that the national debt had a central role in this accumulation. So does the state budget, which represents the biggest mobilization of the

economy's surplus.

State provides the capital with favourable fiscal and financial policies, direct and indirect subsidies, customs protection, favourable interest rates etc. Furthermore, the state crucially comes to the aid of the capital with inflation whenever the wage level threatens to eat into what may be regarded as the necessary rate of profit.

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Bourgeois democracy is a great achievement of mankind. But to make democracy a substitute for social change is not only disingenuous but futile. In order to have effective bourgeois democracy, the society must itself undergo embourgeoisement.

Army rule in Pakistan is one of the "ground realities", a term so dear

to the guardians of the status quo. The army originally performed a "Bonapartist" role, ie standing in for the bourgeois class, which had not consolidated its rule. But now it seems to have decided upon working with whichever is the prevalent class or stratum in a place — with the bourgeoisie in the cities and the pre-capitalists in the rural areas. It shares the government with the feudals at the centre. However, it still represents, mainly, the bourgeois interests in the federal government. This is possible because the army, as the most powerful component of the state, has, in a certain sense, risen above the classes for the time being.

This can happen occasionally during the periods when there is a balance between the classes. In our case, this balance has been created not so much by the correlation of forces between the classes themselves but as Hamza Alvi says, it is "related to the plurality of economically dominant classes ... namely, metropolitan capital, the indigenous bourgeoisie, and landowning classes, whose rival interests and competing demands are mediated by the state." (*Pakistan — Roots of Dictatorship*, ed. by Gardazi and Rashid, 1983, pp42-43).

The impasse between the classes cannot be broken by the feudals, with their primitive exploitation and local "nationalisms." This historic function can be performed only by the national bourgeoisie in an alliance of the industrial-bourgeoisie, the capitalist farmers and the rich peasants. Only they can, at this historical stage launch Pakistan on the road to national and social emancipation.

Let the army, as the most powerful actor on the scene, start the process by making thorough land reforms, thus multiplying the bourgeoisie a hundred-fold and opening the whole national space to the reproduction of capital. Only from this crucible will emerge a strong Pakistan and a prosperous Pakistan nation. ■