

CRISIS OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR – A FEW POINTS OF CONCERN

Comrade Jaswantha Rao

[Here we publish the extracts from a speech made by our Comrade Jaswantha Rao, the editor of Class Struggle and Central Executive Committee Member of CPI (ML), in a Death Anniversary Meeting of Comrade Kotaiah, a senior leader of our Party, held in Vijayawada (AP) on December 7, 2019. Unexpectedly and much against our wish, it has turned out to be his last speech. From a reading of it, one can understand that he had gone deep into the main content and consequences of the anti-peasant and anti-people policies of the Indian ruling classes, which have now become a matter of wide debate and cause of struggle. - Editor]

The governments can double the farmers' income, if they wish, even within the frame of present system by taking some measures in the agricultural sector. Modi came to power in the second term. But the farmer's income has not doubled as he promised. Does it mean that there was no increase at all in their income as compared to last year? It has increased. But it was only because of recession. According to an official survey published in Economic Times, while the farmers' income saw a 10 per cent increase, their expenses had gone up by 110 per cent. The farmers today are selling their produce at a rate higher than what it was 5 years back. One can understand how the farmer is cheated if he knows there is a ten-fold increase in the cost of production.

DEBT RELIEF IS A HOAX – IT ALONE CANNOT END THE CRISIS

The entire peasantry is in debts. So, the govts at the Centre and the states are talking about freeing the farmers from the indebtedness. Our experience of the last two decades period say that just measures like debt relief alone could not lift the farmers permanently from out of the quagmire of debts.

Instead of developing agri-culture in the Country, the rulers are providing all opportunities to the foreign capital to take away the wealth created in our agricultural sector. The agriculture is getting ruined as we are pushed into a situation where we cannot use the wealth created by our agriculture for the development of agriculture. We must note that, more importantly, the agriculture is getting ruined more than the resolution of problems like debts and other problems faced by the individual farmers.

CONSPIRACY TO GIVE AWAY LANDS TO CORPORATES AND FOREIGN CAPITALISTS

The Indian ruling classes are trying to bring a gradual transformation of agricultural sector and the agriculture into a capitalist system of farming. This method of gradual transformation will be extremely tortuous. It throws millions of farmers into most difficult conditions of life, and into suicides. We must oppose this kind of transformation. Our Country will gain only when the initiative of the peasants is unleashed and the revolutionary distribution of the lands on the basis of "land to the tiller" is done. Lakhs of peasants are committing suicides right before the eyes. But the rulers are unmoved. Why-? Because, this is what really they want. They are clear in their mind that the peasants must be pushed into bankruptcy and forced out of their lands. So far, the rulers were giving away what the peasants had earned by toil and the wealth created from the lands to the Corporate and foreign -capitalists. Now they are out to give them away even the lands. Every reform of the Indian ruling classes and their every policy decision since 1950s had this direction alone. [present Central Farm Laws are only a part of it.]

THE PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR AND TENANT FARMERS.

We must oppose the solutions sought to be imposed by the rulers on the people for the crisis of their own creation. We must demand that the right to land to the tillers, mainly agricultural labor, must be ensured to resolve the agrarian crisis.

Similarly, 80 per cent of farmers in the coastal areas of AP and 50 per cent of farmers in India are tenant farmers. Whatever the rights are promised in the Tenant Rights Laws, they are kept aside. Tenants are denied any return for their toil in cultivation as they have no right over the land. A basis for the resolution of agrarian crisis can be created only by ensuring them this right. We must, therefore,

demand full throatically: Carry out the land reforms basing on the principle of “land to the Tiller”. We must make the people conscious to realise that no other solution peddled by the govt. can resolve the agrarian crisis.

CROP POLICY AS DIRECTED BY THE IMPERIALISTS

The imperialists, MNCs which had entered India are not only grabbing the lands of peasants, but also are dictating them what seeds are to be sown and what crop is to be raised in their lands. For instance, there is one American Company called Bangi in Singapur. It controls 80 per cent of palm oil production in the world. Our rulers are importing palm oil from it at the rate of Rs 10 per liter. According to WTO Treaty, the govt. is empow-ered to levy a 60 per cent of import duty. But, it is levying only 10 – 20 per cent. As a consequence, the production of edible oils had come down in our Country. Our Country, which was self-sufficient at one time in the production of edible oils, is now has turned into a second biggest importer of edible oils after petrol and petroleum products. With this, just in Kurnool (AP), 300 oil mills were closed. As a consequence, many ground-nut producing farmers were forced either to commit suicides or lose their means of livelihood.

WHY RCEP WAS SIGNED?

We have seen how our rulers did not exercise the right under the WTO to levy a maximum import duty on edible oil, succumbed to the pressures of foreign capitalists and allowed palm oil to flow into our Country at the cost of our farmers and small industrialists. The same rulers are indulging in a deceptive drama claiming that they have refused to sign the RCEP only keeping the interests of our people in view, retain the right to levy the import duty of their own choice on the industrial products and extract equal rates for the Indian farmers. It is only a drama to keep the people in illusions. In reality, the Indian rulers are not opposed to any key point of the RCEP Agreement.

SHELIVING OF MARKET YARDS – A CONSEQUENCE OF CONTRACT FARMING

With the New Economic policies, the meanings of certain words have undergone a change. Earlier, the word ‘reform’ was used to mean to bring good by removing bad. Now it is used to just mean a ‘change’. The Fifteenth Finance Commission has advised the Central Govt. to extend financial aid liberally to the states which are implementing the reform policies well that widely open up the agricultural sector for the loot and control of foreign capitalists and fastly evict the peasants from the lands. For instance, the Central Govt. had enacted a Model Market Act. According to it, the states must bring changes in the Market Committees Laws. Privatizing all the market yards and allowing the private companies and private traders to set up the market yards where ever they like are its aims.

Similarly, the states which are implementing the contract farming well would get more funds from the Centre. This Contract Farming will displace the peasants from the lands and reduce them into bonded laborers’ in their own lands.

Thus all the measures that are being taken by the Indian rulers in agriculture, in the main, are more in favor of allowing the foreign capital into the agriculture. On one side, the Indian rulers are draining the peoples’ wealth to allow the foreign capital into the country and provide the basic infrastructure for them. On the other side, they are deceiving the people by claiming that all this is done for the good of peasant masses.

* * *