

R
Rad 1 Varatha
4999
Auto
Speech
File

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

SRI M. R. MASANI

WHILE INAUGURATING

THE FARMERS' FEDERATION

OF

INDIA

AT BANGALORE

ON 1-10-1972



[2000 Copies have been printed by The Bangalore Educational Trust for wide circulation to Farmers all over India and for public education]

THE FARM - A BASTION OF FREEDOM

By M. R. MASANI

Mr. Chairman, Delegates to the Convention, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel deeply honoured to have been asked by my farmer friends to be with them here this morning. In a way I regard myself as a fraternal delegate from the urban community among the rural people. They regard me - I hope rightly - as a friend of the farmer and to that title I would like to plead further.

This has nothing to do with party politics. I started campaigning for the rights of the farmer even before Independence. I remember my friend Professor Dantwala (till recently Chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission) invited me to address the Conference of Agricultural Economists many, many years ago in Karachi, when it was still part of our country. It was at that Conference that I first launched the fight against collective farming which, later on, Pandit Nehru tried to impose on the country by that infamous Nagpur Resolution of January 1959.

Once, of course, the Resolution was placed before the country, the cat was out of the bag and we knew what to expect. From that time onwards the fight for the survival of the peasant-farmer in India has been going on under the leadership of farmer-leaders like Mr. Thimma Reddy whom I am delighted to see taking the Chair today. I am particularly happy not because he belongs to any particular political party

but in spite of it I would like to say that I am here today in spite of my being a member of a political party and not because of it. Choudhary Charan Singh is another distinguished figure who has fought for the rights of the peasant. I am delighted to hear that it is proposed this afternoon, to elect a non-party President, not a practising politician but a practising farmer in our old friend Bhanu Pratap Singh from the U. P. He is a practising farmer and I am glad that the leadership and control of your organisation will be in the hands of some one like that.

Today it seems to me that the danger is graver than ever. Let us not kid ourselves—the issue is not land reform, the issue is not ceilings, the issue is nothing less than the survival of the farmer in India. Now why is this threat posed to the farming population? Has the farmer failed the country? If the farmer has failed the country then the country has the right to abolish the farmer. But I think the meanest intelligence will know that, if there is one class in India that has not let down the country, it is the farmer. We have been boasting the last few years about the Green Revolution, including we in the cities as if we had something to do with it, and New Delhi also rejoices about the Green Revolution as if they had a hand in it: Let me say it quite clearly—if there has been a Green Revolution in this country, it has been due to two factors, God in the shape of a good monsoon and the farmer himself. This combination of God and the farmer which has given India this Green Revolution some criminally stupid people are trying to undo today by their anti-farmer policies. Instead of the farmer having failed the country, it is the Government of our country that has failed the farmer for twenty-five long years. There has been a cruel neglect of agriculture in all our Five Year Plans starting with the Second Five Year Plan. Money that should have been given to the farmer, for fertiliser and for seeds, for building village roads, was diverted to those

monstrous steel plants which Pandit Nehru copied from that other monster, Stalin. This priority for the wrong things, the diversion of scarce resources from the land which is our basic industry to heavy machinery and engineering which was not wanted, which is making crores of rupees of loss today has been a crime against the peasants and against the people of this country.

When our country has reason to be grateful to the farmer, why this persecution? Let me say it quite clearly that this persecution of the farmer has nothing to do with his record or his performance. It is due to the fact that the reins of authority in this country since Independence have been in the hands of the Marxists, people who have practised the Marxist doctrine and to them it is a Doctrine that the farmer is an enemy of communism. There is a gentleman called David Mitrany, a Rumanian, who once wrote a book many years ago called *Marx versus the Peasant*. The book is nothing but a description of the war the Marxists throughout the world wage against the peasant. I would say that to the Marxist the peasant is a much bigger enemy than the Capitalist. The capitalist he can handle, as we see in India today, but the farmer he cannot ignore, the farmer is too much for him. The man who says "This land is mine", is the man who is the biggest enemy of tyranny and ultimately the basic defender of freedom. That is why, by hook or by crook, the Marxists, in authority in Delhi today, following those who have gone before them elsewhere, seek, from time to time, to crush the farmer, to emasculate him, to pulverise him. There is another reason why those in authority have this animosity against the farmer and that is because this so called socialist class, which is really the New Class described by Milovan Djilas in his book. *The New Class* is an urban class. The urban class, unfortunately, tends to be selfish and anti-rural. Gandhiji, who was a great friend of the farmer and the rural people saw this long

before Independence. He used to say sarcastically that we of the cities would do everything for the peasant except get off his back!

It is in this context that we have to consider the so called Ceiling legislation which is on the anvil today,

Now, Mr. Chairman, as a thinker, as a student of history, I would say that there is nothing wrong in principle in creating economic farms, fixing a floor below and a ceiling at the top and saying this is the kind of land holding which will give the country the prosperity and food that is required and to give the peasant a good life. In principle, there is nothing wrong with it. Ceilings have been set after World War Two in Japan and in Formosa (Taiwan). They have worked very well. The ceilings are quite low but the farmer whose surplus land was taken away was given full compensation. The motive was an economic one and every effort was made to help the farmer to become an industrialist. Facilities were given to him to invest the money which he got as compensation to set up an industry. Factories were set up near the farm; I had the privilege of going through the countryside around Taipeh in the Republic of China in 1963. It was a pleasure to see how the countryside was dotted with workshops and factories, quite small ones, alongside of the farm, using and processing the farm produce and selling it in the world market, getting valuable foreign exchange and then importing steel at a cheap price. That is why the Republic of China today has one of the highest per capita incomes in the whole of Asia. That is why it produces the highest crop of rice per acre in the whole world. The ceiling in Japan did the same thing.

But there is nothing in common between what happened in Japan and Taiwan and what is happening here. Here there is sheer malice and an evil motive is behind the ceiling legislation. The so called compensation offered is a multiple

of land revenue - it has nothing to do with the value. I saw an item in the press this morning, coming in the plane, that in Kerala somebody calculated this to be one-seventieth of the value of the land to the farmer. Is that compensation?

The very first objective that this ceiling legislation has claimed-to give land to the landless - is a big fraud. There is simply not enough land in India to give to even one out of ten of the landless, leave aside all of them. The Statesman of August 24 gives an analysis of what would happen in West Bengal, and it worked out that the ceiling legislation would make available one-third of an acre per head for the land less - one-third of an acre! It is quite clear that it is not the solution of rural unemployment. What is wanted is not a piece of land one-third of an acre what is wanted is jobs, what is wanted is creating employment as has been done in Taiwan.

What is the real policy behind the ceiling? I may be suspicious, but to me there are two basic motivations behind this legislation. The first to destroy the farmer-to break his back, to behead him, to take away his national natural leaders and make him a headless man, to reduce him to the position of a hewer of wood and drawer of water who can never hope to live a middle class life, never hope to send his children to college, never hope to live in a civilized way. The farmer must remain held and a submerged part of the population. It appears to me that this is nothing but an attempt by the "new brahmins" to establish their supremacy over the common people under the garb of communism and socialism.

A second objective is even more diabolical and that is to create a situation where peasant farming becomes impossible and collective farming can then be enforced on the country. If every few years the ceilings are lowered, the size of the farm will be so small that the peasant will not be able to make both

ends meet, and than he will be told : " Oh ! poor man, our hearts bleed for you, you are no longer able to make a profit of your cultivation, let us help you out, we will collectivise the land ". So the farmer will become a la bourer on the collective farm as in Russia and China. Now this is not only fantasy. I have very good evidence to show for it. The division of land was the slogan under which the communists, after they occupied the countries of Eastern Europe after World War Two, actually introduced collective farming. They did not have the guts to go about it straight away. They brought in land reforms—exactly what is being done today in India—land reforms which reduced the size of the farm, smaller and smaller. And when it was reduced to uneconomic proportions, they collectivised the land. This has been done by the communists in one country of Eastern Europe after another. I have always had the suspicion that this was really what was at the back of the minds of the Marxists in Delhi. Unfortunately for them one of their number blurted out the truth in public on 29th November 1971. He happens to be Mr. Antulay, a Minister in the Maharashtra Government. And this is what he was reported as saying in the *Indian Express*, which remains uncontradicted till to day. And I have quoted it over and over again and drawn attention to it. Mr. Antulay said in Poona : " The lowering of the ceiling is not the ultimate solution. It is only a stopgap arrangement. We do not have sufficient land for distribution among the landless peasants. So ultimately the whole land will have to be nationalised in order to provide social justice to all." Make everyone a coolie, make everyone a pauper, and social justice will have been done! Here the cat is out of the bag. Therefore, when I say the motives are evil and Machiavellian I am not being over suspicious.

It is very interesting that these people who are copying Moscow, do not seem to bother about the failure of Soviet agriculture and collective farming. The biggest failure in the

Soviet Union, of the many failures that have taken place there, is that on the land. In spite of the land being collectivised by Stalin, it still remains a backward part of the economy which simply refuses to produce the goods.

Do we not know that the Soviet Union a few weeks ago signed with the capitalist United States of America an agreement to buy a huge quantity of grain costing one billion dollars, a thousand million dollars worth of grain for one year? This is a result of fifty years of collective farming in the Soviet Union. One would have thought that, if these people in Delhi had any sense of responsibility, any patriotism left, they would have shied away from this example like the plague. I would not be wrong in calling them criminally irresponsible people who, for the pursuit of their dogma, are prepared to destroy this country and the land on which it is built. But there are [some people who say, innocent people who say: "Don't worry, nothing will happen. Even if nothing ever happens after they pass laws, these are dishonest people who are only talking fool the people". Now I think this is wrong and, if any of you are taking any comfort from this kind of wishful thinking, I would plead with you to think again. Even if nothing more is done to pass the law, there are immediate harmful consequences to the nation. The first is a feeling of insecurity caused in the minds of the farmer, that further investment in land is a mistake. Not only that but the feeling that he must dig up the well which he has dug in the past, not buy fertilisers, make no profit so that he is not touched. Now this disincentive is a very bad thing. My fear is, if the ceiling legislation would undo the Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution was not made by New Delhi, it was made by the farmers of India with the help of God and providence, because most of them had five good monsoons in a row. This is contrary to the law of chance or averages. It

attention from the failure of Government to perform its own tasks, Now these are some of the evil consequences of the ceiling legislation, whatever the motives may be.

I come to the last part of what I have to say, and that is: what should be our answer what should be the farmers' answer to all this? What is the answer to the aggression that is being committed against the farming community? I am very glad that you are joining hands to form this Federation and I would like to congratulate Mr. Ganapiah, Mr. Thimma Ready, Mr. Bhanu Prathap Singh and all others for the initiative they have taken. They are performing a task of great national importance. What should the policy of the farmers be? How should they organise, what should they do?

As I understand Delhi today, it is following the old British policy of divide and rule, setting the urban people against the rural people and the rural people against the urban people. There are foolish people who say, "If there are rural ceilings, let there be urban ceilings also!" This is not a new folly. I came across this folly before the Swatantra Party was formed.

I remember in 1959, when Pandit Nehru and I were arguing the rights and wrongs of collective farming in Parliament, I was invited to a party which then existed called the Delhi Janata party of Punjab farmers to go to one of their Conventions at Sonpet, a few miles outside Delhi. When I got there, I was presented a list of resolutions that they proposed to pass and one resolution said that the Conference demanded that if there were to be rural ceilings, there had to be urban ceilings also. I told the organisers, I was very sorry but I was going to oppose this resolution. It was immoral and it played into the hands of the enemies of the farmer. But they were so wedded to this idea of no discrimination that they said: "No, no, no, it is correct and we shall move

has been worked out historically that throughout the centuries, India in every five monsoons, had one very good monsoon, one very bad monsoon and three middling monsoons, which are neither very good nor bad. We have been very lucky, we got five good monsoons in a row, and that, with the enterprise of the farmer, gave us the Green Revolution. Now it appears that man is going to non-cooperate with Nature in undoing this good work. And if this happens, nothing less than famine, nothing less than starvation will face the people. I read in the plane today that eighty starvation deaths have already taken place in Telengana and there is great alarm and discontent in that area. Our Prime minister of course is not worried. Many of us thought there was a population problem about which we should worry, but, as you know, those of you who read her interview with Mr. Khushwant Singh of the Illustrated weekly on 17th August, 1972 know that she said: "I am not worried about the population problem". So let us all relax and be happy. The Prime Minister is not worried about famine also. People are dying in Telengana, but she says that the declaration of a famine is an out dated matter. Famine is not outdated, as people are dying but one must not declare a famine — that is outdated. I would be very interested to know what our Prime Minister would like to call the death of eighty people in Telengana, what word she would invent in place of famine. Let us all watch in the coming months the new terminology that she will be inventing.

Another thing this ceiling legislation would do is to create more unemployment. The farmers inputs in agriculture cement, iron sheets and fertiliser, will drop. Already, the demand for tractors is falling. This is only one example of what will happen as the months pass. Then there is the diversion of attention from the real problem which is to help the farmer with irrigation and fertiliser at reasonable prices. The ceiling legislation is a big bogey to divert

evening, Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh and I are addressing a public meeting organised by the Indian Liberal Group in Bangalore, against urban ceilings. I shall make the same appeal to them to cooperate with you that I am asking you to cooperate with them. Either you hang together or you will hang separately; it appears to me, therefore, that the ceiling legislation is nothing but a part of the all out drive of the New Class to destroy everyone with a stake in the country whether in the cities or in the country and to monopolise power.

The suggestion is that by nationalising the trade, by destroying the bania and the Government becoming one big monolith bania, grain prices will not rise. We all have a little experience of State trading and the last thing that State trading does is to prevent prices from rising. The efficient bania is replaced by an inefficient bania.

In the Seventeenth Amendment, which we fought in Parliament, there was a Clause which said that lands below the ceiling for the time being would not be expropriated without compensation. Innocent people said: Now, you see, everything is safe. Only the land above the ceiling will be expropriated, the land under the ceiling is safe. But they forgot the words, "for the time being".

We asked on the floor of the House, just what does this "for time being" mean? It meant when the ceiling was lowered from thirty acres to twenty and from twenty acres to ten, all that land would become liable to expropriation because the ceiling "for the time being would be lowered". That is what is happening today. So what is being done is being done in breach of faith, breach of pledges, solemnly given in the Constitution and by its founders like Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

I believe, as one who worked under Gandhiji and fought under him, that this is a legitimate issue on which every

it." I said: "All right you move it and I shall oppose it and we shall see."

Sardar Basant Singh was one of them. Basant Singh moved this resolution demanding urban ceilings. He did it in very fluent Punjabi and I got up and, in my very broken Hindustani, I appealed to the Punjab farmers to throw it out. My argument was that, if your house is being looted by a dacoit, will you tell the dacoit "go and loot my neighbour's house also?" If your wife is being attacked by a dacoit, will you tell him, "why don't you attack my neighbour's wife also?" What should they do? They should get together and defend themselves. Mutual cooperation in defence against the dacoit was what was required.

Now this folly is still going on. I notice this among certain sections of the people both in the urban and the rural areas—both are equally wrong. I plead with you, Don't let this thought cross your minds or your lips—it is a suicidal thought. The moment you say let there be urban ceilings, you are sealing your own doom, just as the moment an industrialist says: "abolish the big farmer" he is sealing his doom also. The common opponent is the Marxist Government in Delhi and their agents in all the States. There is only one sensible decent thing to do and that is to follow a policy of good neighbourliness, bond with your neighbours, form a self defence corps to drive this dacoit away, both from your home and that of your neighbour. That appears to me to be the only decent ethical and sensible thing to do.

This calls for a great deal of education at both ends—thus bringing about a coalition of the rural and the urban middle classes which I consider to be on the order of the day. I hope your Farmers' Federation will undertake this task. We in the cities have this task to perform and I will assure you we shall do it. You perhaps know that tomorrow

No party today is worth associating with, so keep away from all of them. Their principles are good but their conduct is no longer good. Build up your organisation on a completely non-party basis. I am very glad that members of parties opposed to my own party are sitting on the platform today - I welcome them-- particularly Mr. Thimma Reddy and Mr. Poonacha over there and I hope that members of all political parties will come forward to defend the cause of the farmers.

peaceful method should be employed to remove this attack on the land of the farmer. I believe in peaceful methods, I am also a Constitutionlist. When the Constitution is being broken, the right of the citizen to defend the fundamental freedoms becomes supreme. As Gandhiji used to say, when a law is lawless the duty of the law-abiding man is to break the law and go to prison. I think, Mr. Chairman, that stage has come and, if the farmers of India really love their land, as we believe they do, then it is time for them to stand up and be counted and not submit to this kind of intimidation but to be prepared to suffer and fight for the sake of their land. In Chile also there is a Marxist Government. India and Chile are today the two countries in the Free World who have the benefit, the dubious benefit, of having Marxists as their leaders. President Allende also has a law for taking over surplus land, but I am delighted to know from the World Press that the farmers of Chile, who never knew Mahatma Gandhi and are not bound by the same inhibitions as we are, (who believe in non-violence), formed armed volunteer squads for self protection and, whenever the agents of the Marxist drove up to seize the land, they were driven away and the land remained in the hands of the farmer. I am not preaching that today because I believe in non-violence, I was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. I think that violence is self-defeatist, but certainly non-violent resistance and civil disobedience are called for. I do hope the Farmer's Federation will consider this matter very seriously.

May I end up on the note with which I started—that is to plead with Mr. Ganapaiah and his colleagues to eschew Party politics like the plague. I hope no political party will be allowed to get very near this Federation, not even the Swatantra Party. If the Swatantra Party tries to dominate this Federation, I will say they are the enemies of the farmers.

Printed at
SRINIVASA PRINTERS
168, Gandhi Bazar, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-4