

COMMENT

FOOD FOR MOVEMENT

With food prices defying all rules and norms the spectre of food riot and social revolution returned to the scene. “Until early March, prices of many food articles followed the demand and supply forces. But since then there has been an explosion in prices which is largely due to the role of big corporations and hedge funds.” Thus observed UN special rapporteur recently while addressing the press in Geneva. Food prices and shortages sparked protest marches and violent actions by the thousands from the Philippines to Thailand, Russia to Indonesia, Mexico to Peru where 1000 women on May Day took to the streets banging pots, demanding action.

Apprehending social unrest over food across the globe, America and its western allies suddenly made a show of action with a FAO summit on the food crisis—only to end up with what social movements called “Empty Policies for Empty Plates”.

Third World governments cannot ensure food security because global food and agriculture sector is totally monopolised by a handful of transactional corporations. And their control starts right from the beginning of agricultural work i.e. from seeds.

FAO has no solution as it says ‘prices will remain high over the next decade’. An estimated 100 million people have been added to the rolls of the hungry, which could now exceed 950 million. Even before the current crisis 18,000 children were dying daily from hunger. In America 35 million people are said to be in “food insecure” households. This is the price Americans are paying to live in the new economic order scripted by the policy makers of Washington.

For the people of third world food security does not exist. Also, given the prevailing business culture, they cannot think of food sovereignty which is something more than just demanding food as a fundamental right.

While protesting against the FAO’s exercise in escapism in Rome [June 1-4], Terra Preta Forum comprising more than 100 social movements from 5 continents issued a civil society declaration which, said in part :

“The serious and urgent food and climate crises are being used by political and economic elites as opportunities to entrench corporate control of world agriculture and the ecological commons...”

Not that the left does not know the truth. The problem is everybody knows it. But the left is reluctant to react. The Forum is said to have chalked out a programme of action with a view to agitating on Food sovereignty, not right to food as such. Whether such efforts devoid of any long-term political goal to reach can lead to a powerful food movement remain uncertain. This way or that a food movement is all that must get top priority for all progressives on the left. □□□