

Chapter-VII

THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS IN THE KISAN STRUGGLES AGAINST THE CHALLAPALLI ZAMINDAR

Krishna District has got significant place in the history of Andhra Pradesh. It has a distinct place in the arena of politics, economics and literature. Srikakulam which was the first capital of Satavahana is in our District. Ghantasala, Gudur, Avanigadda ports were the prime centres in this district. Once used for transactions of trade to Rome during the regime of Portuguese, Dutch and Britishers. These areas were also in the limelight as the centre of cloth and merchants. In the revival of Andhradesa culture the role played by 'Bandar' could be written with Golden letters. Raghupathy Venkataratnam who dedicated his life for the cause of Brahmasamaja born and brought up in Bandar. National movement paved the way among the Andhras to swing into freedom movement actively. Krishna District was a perennial land for so many Stalwarts who took active role in National movement, Andhra state movement and communist movement. Krishna District has produced eminent political leaders and scientists. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetaramaiah, Pingali Venkaiah, Chandra Rajeswara Rao, Suri Bagavantam, Dr. K.L. Mahendra, Nada Brahma Tyagaiah were belonged to this district. Indian cricketer C.K. Naidu, Raghupathy Venkaiah who was the major in Telugu cinefield, Viswanatha Satyanarayana first recipient of Gnanapeet award prominent actor N.T. Rama Rao, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, all are belonged to Krishna District. The birth place of Kuchipudi dance is also in Krishna District, Kondapalli which is known for beautiful toys, Kolleti lake which is known for nature beauty is also in Krishna district.¹

¹ Nageswara Rao, Edupuganti (2002). "Visalandhra Swarnostava Krishna Zilla Pratyeka Sanchika", Visalandhra Press, Vijayawada, p. 69.

First Phase of Community Party

Krishna district had rose to an important place by 1930. Due to the influence of National movement, students, ordinary farmers entered the national movement. Civil disobedience movement which reached to peak stage made the several patriotic youth to be in forefront. These movements made the public enlightened to fight against British imperialism. Majority of the youth were punished and sent to prisons. Chalasani Jagannatha Rao, Chalasani Prakasa Rao, Chalasani Narayana Murthy, Velineni Bheemaiah, Chalasani Seetaramaiah and others were arrested and sent to Rajamundry, Bellary prisons for participating as congress volunteers in Bhatla penumarru group and for picketing in front of toddy shops. Similarly, Muddukuri Chandrasekhara Rao was sent to Rajahmundry prison for printing pamphlets secretly. Later, he was sent to Bellary prison.²

Kavuri Balaramaiah was given one year rigorous punishment and sent to Rajahmundry prison from 16-1-1933 for participating in civil disobedience movement. In same way, Gadde Lingaiah was given severe punishments and confined in Rajahmundry and Kannanur prisons for six months from 2-5-1932. Kosaraju Sessaiah was severely punished and sent to Rajahmundry and Tiruchirapalli prison from 23-5-1932 for distributing prohibited pamphlets. Puchalapalli Sundaraiah used to meet one by one and explained the ideology of communism. All these people had joined Communist Party. Maddukuri Chandrasekhar Rao was the first person joined in Communist party. As a result of these consequences, Karlapudi meeting was held in May 1934. Maddukuri Chandrasekhar Rao, Kosaraju Sessaiah, Chalasani Jagannatha Rao, Katragada Narayana

² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Rao, Chalasani Vasudeva Rao, Surapaneni Gopalakrishnaiah attended the meeting. They passed a resolution in this meeting that Communist Manifesto, Labour and Capital books should be translated into Telugu. Further, they had also taken a decision in the meeting that they had to concentrate to organise the urban labour and agricultural labourers. All the people who attended this meeting were the members of communist party except Katragadda Narayana Rao. In this meeting, a District organising committee was formed with the Kosaraju Seshaiyah as its Secretary.³

In political school held at Kothapatnam and in 1937 and in 1938 held at Mantenavaripalem produced some more communist activists. Communist Party members tried to establish Gudivada Factory Workers Union, Municipal Workers Union and Press Workers Union in 1938. By the end of 1939, Ventrapragada, Kavutaram, Katur, Gudlavalleru, Yalamarru, Veerullapadu, Jameegolvepalli, Mangalapuram, Pedamaddali, Nadakuduru, Balliparru, Bhatlapenumarru, Dintakuru, Pamulapadu, Jarlapudi Ravulapadu, Jonnapadu and other villages in Krishna district along with Vijayawada, Gudivada towns party cells were formed and functioning. Afterwards communists independently formed Labour Protection Councils in 1935 at Vijayawada. Pillalamarri Venkateswarlu elected as its Secretary, Kosaraju Seshaiyah, Chalasani Vasudevarao, Alluri Satyanarayana, K. Sreenivasa Rao, Maddukuri Chandrasekhar Rao were elected as members of the labour protection samithi. All these people tried to form municipal workers unions and press workers unions. In 1938, Chalasani Vasudevarao, Kamineni Venkatappaiah, Josyabatla Satyanarayana travelled in the villages of Munagala Paragana area and prepared the farmers for struggle. Again in the middle of 1938 Chadnra

³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Rajeswara Rao, Nanduri Prasada Rao also travelled in the Munagala Paragana. Moturi Parandhamaiah, Vemulapalli Hanumantha Rao enrolled 4,000 farmers as the members of peasant organisation with a view to formation of peasant organisation. Communist leaders, in Munagala heroic freedom movement, Josyabatla Satyanarayana, Nanduri Prasada Rao, Moturi Parandamaiah along with estate farmers were arrested by the Government in December 1938.⁴

Second World War

Government had imposed policy of repression after the commencement of Second World War in September 1939. Government had oppressed the activists of Communist Party and prevented them publishing pamphlets secretly for the cause of independence. It had expedited arrests and attacks on communists. In spite of facing this type of severe repression, they fought against imperialism. Andhra communist party had given a call to make January 26, 1940 as independence day by taking pledge that they will fight for Indian Independence and non-cooperation to world war. To make this call a success communists in Krishna district came forward without any fear. Processions took place in Challapalli and Gudivada were the examples for it. In Challapalli they have conducted procession with 400 members and public meeting was held with 1,000 members. The public meeting straight away conducted in front of Challapalli Zamindar. The Goondas of Zamindar tried to disturb this meeting but communists had conducted the meeting successfully resisting the goondas. They openly read the content of pledge in the meeting which was published secretly. On the same day in Gudivada, very big procession was organised. In this procession, youth, students and women from Kavutaram, Angalur,

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.71.

Gudlavalleru, Ventrapragada Vanapamula, Dintakurru, Pamulapadu, Ravulapadu, Jonnapadu, Lingavaram, Pedamuddali, Yelamaru, Chowtapalli, Pedapalaparru villages participated with placards and red flags. In this procession, they raised slogans with big voice against imperialism, and to unite all peasants and workers of the world”.⁵

Though, a policy to curb the activities of communists was practiced during the world war but members of communist party stood for the cause of public particularly agricultural labour. As a result of it, agricultural labour and labour movement had rose to a stage. Guntur Bapanaiah who joined in Rythu-Coolie movement in 1939 through the challapalli Narayana Rao, Member of Communist Party who played a key role in its movements. British rulers imposed severe repression against communist party during 1939-41. At every step, they faced obstacles. Printing of Newspapers and its distribution became very difficult.⁶

Peoples war phase

Party followed a new approach in the peoples war phase after June 1941. In order to protect the public from the dangers of world war which was expected air attacks from Japan then the party started ARP training. Apart from politics, air raid precautions (ARP) were also taught in classes. By the end of 1942, Party was extended to all taluks in Krishna District. Gannavaram, Divi, Gudivada Talukas became strong centres for the party. All the organisations right from Rythu Sangham, Bala Sangham and other mass organisations have become more effective. District first party conference was held in

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

June 1943. Community Party became major political force with 1561 party members. After the third state party conference was held in July 1943, party reviewed the struggles and organisation of the party. In order to review, Andhra State Communist committee convened large scale meeting in Vijayawada. The membership which was 3,000 members in July 1943 has gone upto 4050 by the end of January 1944. Party Central Committee member Putchalapalli Sundaraiah had stated that membership increased abnormally because party had concentrated and worked on local problems. In 240 villages, cells were formed with 2,130 members in Krishna district. There are 36,000 members in farmers organisation in 660 villages and 16,000 members in agricultural labour organisation. Youth organisations were formed in 300 villages with 10,700 members. In 193 villages women organisations were working with 11,000 members. There were Bala Sangham (children organisation) branches working in 216 villages with the 8,600 members.⁷

Struggle Against Challapalli Zamindar

It is memorable that farmers community struggle against Challapalli Zamindar for his exploitation and harassment. Zamindar grabbed all the lands in the villages. By declaring all lankas in Krishna river are belonged to him and thus he encroached 6,000 acres. In 1908, since the Madras Government had formulated Estate Land Act, he got right over the encroached lands in Vakkalagadda, Chinnapuram, Bogireddipalli, Yendakuduru and other villages. Vakkalagadda farmers lead a struggle to have a right on

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

the encroached lands by the Zamindar. This struggle called as “Dhaka Struggle”. In Ghantasala ‘Ghotakam’ farmers recaptured their lands by fighting against the zamindar attacks and illegal cases. In 1920, Krishna Mandal ‘Rythu Sangam’ public meeting held in Pedakallepalli, passed a resolution to abolish Zamindari system. In 1930, Non-Tax payment, non-cooperation movement took place for increasing tax on land. In 1931, farmers in Mangalapuram resisted in collection of land tax. The punishments given by the Deputy Collector to the agricultural workers in a dispute case between the Challapalli Zamindar and peasants of Mangalapuram were reduced in the Madras High Court. The punishment of three months imprisonment as per 3 sections to the State Communist Committee Secretary, Rajeswara Rao and five others to one month imprisonment. Forty five agricultural workers those who were fined was confirmed the punishment two months imprisonment in the land boundaries (Gatla Vudyamam) case to Narayana Rao and others was also confirmed the fine levied by the Deputy Collector to the remaining thirteen members was also confirmed by the honourable high court. The court delivered judgement after conducting the trial on 5th and 11th of this month.⁸

We should know the attitude of the Challapalli Zamindar and his followers towards the public institutions and towards the people. It would be evident if we recollect the Mangalapuram struggle. Before we know the history of Challapalli struggle every one should know the tendency of zamindar and his follower the Prudhvi Raj people were put to many sufferings denying their natural rights. But they had continued an unyielding struggle for their rights. They were strongly supported by the Peasants Organisations and Communist Party. The agricultural workers union leaders, communist

⁸ Prajasakthi (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.17th November, 1943.

leaders and the Mudiraj caste people were very often sent to jails. The people withstood and questioned the injustice of the zamindar for the first time which created awareness and confidence among these poor people. The people put up with all injustices, hardships, exploitation being done to them previously as were afraid of the zamindar. But now the people were not ready to excuse as there was unity. They were keen in becoming the members of peasants organisations which had been taking up their day-to-day problems and strengthening the organisation for their survival. On the other hand, the self-centred followers of zamindar wanted to suppress the awareness and enlightenment that had been motivating people towards a struggle. They wanted to take the people to their previous condition. They were ready to go to any extent and to destroy any public institutions if their interests were not protected. Challapalli cooperatives issue was the best example to their selfish tendency.⁹

In 1947 elections, Government had declared to bring an act to abolish estates. But, no concrete steps have been taken in this direction. Zamindars expedited to encash the lands. Similarly Challapalli Zamindar also tried to dispose off lands. Under the leadership of Communist Party, they had severely protested in selling 6,000 acres lanka lands. Zamindar tried to attack the farmers through his goondas, and illegal cases against the farmers and made them to arrest. On 23 January, 1947 Tanguturi Prakasam Government keeping aside the abolishment of Estate act and brought another ordinance in the name of “Public Peace Committee”. Due to this government, initiated repression against the farmers. This is the ordinance of Prakasam. On 10th April 1947, police opened fire on the farmers at the instigation of Zamindar. In this fire, four farmers along

⁹ Prakasakthi (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.22nd December, 1943.

with Bavireddy Viyyamma were shot dead. Diviseema area became reddish due to the blood of martyrs and is lead to revolt against Zamindar. Agricultural Labourers, poor farmers from Ayyanki Pedakallepalli entered in hundreds of acres of lands by farming surrounding lands which were under the control of Zamindar.¹⁰

On this occasion, as per the instructions of Chandra Rajeswara Rao, Chalasani Vasudeva Rao, Kavuri Kutumba Rao went to Madras and submitted a memorandum to Kala Venkata Rao and explained the situation that prevailed here. If government assured to take measures for not encroaching lands by Zamindar, then only they would stop the movement. Kala Venkata Rao assured that such type of action would be initiated very soon. After some time, Government had brought an ordinance prohibiting encroachment of lands by zamindar. Afterwards, struggle was continued for Lanka lands.¹¹

Challapalli Lands Struggle in 1978

Challapalli sugar factory lands struggle became severe in 1978, CPI, CPI(M), CPI(ML) parties formed into an action committee. Donepudi Dattu acted as convenor of this committee. During the struggle, CPI State Secretary Dasari Nagabhushana Rao frequently used to come and guide the movement. CPI(M) State Secretary Koratala Satyanarayana used to give suggestions in all party action committee meetings. General Secretary of CPI, Chandra Rajeswara Rao directly participated and started the sowing operations. While Chandra Rajeswara Rao undertaken Padayatra in each and every village public gave rousing reception. During the padayatra, villagers of Menakapalli had welcomed Chandra Rajeswara Rao and announced that they too also would take up crop

¹⁰ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.29 September, 1983, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

production in the lands. In the initial stage though CPI(M) opposed this programme, but later they too also come forward for cultivation of land. By overcoming this type of disputes and to lead a movement unitedly by action committee, convenor Donepudi Dattu had played a significant role. Not only this, he also played equally an important role in filing the cases in the court. Because of all these efforts, it was inevitable to recognise this struggle. During 1947-51 period, 41 people who lost lives due to the murder attacks of Challapalli Zamindar, Goondas of Congress Sevadal, Valiappan police massacre, for these martyrs in their memory 49 feet statue was constructed and named it as Amarnagar on 4th June 1966 at Challapalli. On this occasion, 30,000 people attended the meeting and paid floral tributes.¹²

The District Council of CPI passed a resolution for the immediate possession of Challapalli zamindar excess lands and their immediate distribution to the poor and landless peasants. In spite of all favourable orders in the court to the peasants the government had been indifferent favouring the zamindar. The District Council of CPI demanded for immediate action plan and intervention of the government. If not the Council would take up the agitation to express their solidarity to the peasants.¹³

The excess or surplus land which is nearly two thousand six hundred and sixty one acres of land belonging to the zamindar of Challapalli had to be taken over and had to be distributed the same to the landless poor and tilling and cultivating agricultural workers had been delayed over years. The court litigations continued over years because of the political indecisiveness of the popular governments. The agricultural workers

¹² Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.26th January, 1983.

¹³ *Ibid.*

unions have taken up many struggles and agitations against the injustice done to the poorer sections. During these struggles, many of the leaders lost their lives and had greatly suffered. The zamindar and his agents tried several ways to curb or to suppress the struggles. The courts had given judgements in favour of the struggles deciding these lands as excess lands and Challapalli sugar factory couldn't be exempted from the Land Ceiling Act of 1973. In spite of all favourable judgements at all levels, the government couldn't take initiative to take over the lands. The previous congress governments adopted sympathetic attitude towards the zamindar and did not take any serious action. But the newly formed TDP government also showing the same attitude towards the zamindar. The Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao when he was asked a direct question on the issue of excess lands of Challapalli Zamindar's sugar factory, he escaped by giving an indirect answer that the government had ordered the respective District Collectors to take over the excess lands and to make arrangements for its distribution. It proved that he had not taken any stringent action in the issue. As it is not simple ten or hundred acre land, it is an issue of thousands of acres of land. In this issue of taking over the land government should act promptly. The TDP government is also following the footprints of congress government in this issue. This is not only against to the promises made by them through their election manifesto and also instigate the innocent agricultural workers to take up the struggle path. Hence, the new government should try to implement their promises by adapting a rigid action plan for the fulfilment of land reforms.¹⁴

Kolli Nageswara Rao, Secretary, Krishna District Communist Council had demanded for immediate distribution of Challapalli Zamindar's surplus lands. While

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, dt.28th January, 1983.

addressing a meeting at Gudivada, he stated all leftist democratic people's organisations should get united for social justice.¹⁵

The possession of Challapalli Raja surplus lands as per the agricultural Land Ceiling Reforms Act and the litigation pending in the Madras city civil court would be looked after by the government and government would be initiating all steps to solve the issue at the earliest possible, the minister for revenue P. Mahendranath stated in the legislative council while answering the question asked by the legislative council members M.J. Manikya Rao, Puvvada Nageswara Rao, Bhupathi Venkata Narasaiah and Moturi Hanumantha Rao, the minister said that as per the government statistics Challapalli Raja family still owned nearly two thousand four hundred and forty seven acres of land.¹⁶

The Madras high court suspended the petition of Challapalli Raja and when Challapalli Raja moved to Supreme Court through special leave petition government has moved with caveat petition. As a first step of direct action plan, demanding the immediate distribution of Challapalli Raja's surplus lands nearly two thousand six hundred acres, the all party leaders had taken up the march to the villages where these surplus lands were. In order to make the people ready for the struggles they had taken up the march in the villages like, Nadakuduru, Puritigadda, Yarlagaadda, Veluvolu and Nimmagadda. The people received the leaders without bothering the hot sun. The march started by hoisting communist flag at Nadakuduru village of Movva taluq. Dasari Nagabhushana Rao addressed the public after hoisting the party flag at the Balabhaskar Bhavan. He stressed the need for stringent actions. Madras high court and Bandar Land

¹⁵ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.28th February, 1983.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, dt.13th March, 1983.

Reforms tribunal declared sugar factory lands as surplus. He tried to recollect the wastelands struggles how some people like Viamma, Malla Subba Rao, Tadi Venkateswara Rao, Challapalli Narayana Rao, Malempati Bala Bhaskara Rao, Gunturu Bapanaiah and others fought and sacrificed their lives. Taking the same spirit of the wastelands movement which had taken place thirty years ago, he wanted to show the world the value of this struggle. In this march to the villages was led by many of the all party representatives like Dasari Nagabhushana Rao, Modugumudi Srihari Rao, Karumuru Devasandara Rao, Donepudi Dutt, Gattamaneni Seshaiiah etc.¹⁷

The details of the surplus lands

The surplus lands of Challapalli sugar factory details are as follows:

Nimmagadda	250 acres
Puritigadda	36 acres
Yarlagadda	89 acres
Challapalli	192 acres
Lakshmipuram	162 acres
Vakkalagadda	183 acres
Pogolu	342 acres
Kokkiligadda	266 acres
Mopidevi	274 acres
Merakanapalli	339 acres
Bogireddipalli	276 acres
Mellamaru	107 acres

Apart from the above mentioned details, 100 acres of land in the name of Siva Gangamma at Yedurlanka village. Tekupalli Agraharam has 23 acres, Challapalli Raja two daughters have 90 acres at Bhagireddipalli and on his wife name 46 acres land at

¹⁷Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 18th May, 1983.

Kallepalli village. The surplus lands of Challapalli Zamindar in the name of Challapalli Sugar Factory nearly three thousand acres of land should be distributed immediately. The state agricultural labourers union passed a resolution to that extent. The TDP government is also delaying in taking over the surplus lands inspite of Madras high court's judgement stating the lands as surplus and the Land Reforms Tribunal judgement reiterating the same. The union condemns the indifferent attitude of the government and delaying for many years.¹⁸

The Krishna district Rythu Sangham demands for the intervention of the chief minister in the surplus lands issue of Challapalli Zamindar. They demanded for an immediate action plan. The union headed by its Secretary Chalasani Jegannatha Rao expressed their solidarity to the struggles taken up by the peasants for their legal rights. In spite of all favourable judgements to the struggles and to the poor peasants, the zamindar was trying to enjoy through illegal means which as a clear indication of his vicious attitude, the Secretary said.¹⁹

The people of Movva and Divi taluqs are so happy about the judgement of Challapalli Sugar factory surplus land issue which was disposed off by the land ceiling Reforms Appellate Tribunal. The tribunal vacated the previously given stay in the issue of Challapalli sugar factory surplus lands. The tribunal passed its orders to that extent. These lands are to be seized by the government and have to be distributed to the poor people as per the orders of District Collector. But the zamindar acting against the orders of the Collector and trying to lease these lands to the false tenants. When these tenants

¹⁸Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 22nd May, 1983.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, dt. 3rd June, 1983.

tried for tillage at Vakkalagadda lands the men and women revolted against them and detained them from entering the lands. The agricultural workers brought to the lands by the tenants were also send away by the villagers.²⁰

The spirit instilled with the judgement given by the Land Ceiling Appellate Tribunal, the agitators taking control over the lands belonging to the Challapalli sugar factory. Nearly sixteen acres of land had been occupied by thousands of people and divided it into four hundred house plots. The peasants to avoid the false tenants into the lands they have divided them into the house plots in the Ramanagar, near Challapalli. Direct Action Plan had been sorted out if Challapalli Raja's Surplus Lands are not distributed immediately, the memorandum submitted to Hon'ble Chief Minister clears, the all party committee representatives to C.M.²¹

The leaders of various unions of taluq and the MLA of Nidumolu constituency. Govada Mallikharjuna Rao belonging to TDP and its State Committee member Purchuru Eswara Rao have met and demanded for the immediate distribution of surplus lands of Challapalli sugar factory and they have also condemned the attitude of the zamindar and his crooked plans to grab and enjoy these lands.²²

The all party committee led by CPI legislative party leader in the assembly Puvvada Nageswara Rao and CPI(M) leader in the assembly Omkar met the chief minister and submitted a memorandum requesting for the distribution of Challapalli surplus lands immediately. They have also clearly stated if it is not initiated by the

²⁰ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.4th July, 1983.

²¹ *Ibid.*, dt.5th July, 1983.

²² *Ibid.*, dt. 8th July, 1983.

government, the agitators, plunge into a direct action though nearly two thousand six hundred sixty one acres of land belonging to Challapalli Sugar factory had been declared as surplus land years ago, no action was initiated by the governments. The committee also referred to the various phases of struggle for the surplus lands during the years 1975, 1978 and 1979. They also mentioned about the injection order of the Madras Civil Court in favour of Challapalli Raja. But the Bandar Land Ceiling Reforms tribunal dismissed the injection order as per the section 26 of A.P. Land Reforms Act, all the disputes pertaining to lands do not come under the jurisdictions of civil courts. A copy of the judgement was also submitted to the chief minister by the representatives. So, they requested for immediate political intervention and distribution of the lands.²³

Tribunal rejected Zamindar's appeal. All party committee demands for an immediate distribution of surplus lands. The stay which was given on the surplus lands of zamindar was vacated and dismissed by the Land Reforms Appellate Tribunal. The appeal made by zamindar was also rejected by the tribunal. The surplus land which was declared as surplus land by various courts for the last seven years and was finally declared as surplus by the Bandar Land Reforms Tribunal in its judgement given in December, 1982. But Challapalli Sugars Ltd., moved to the Appellate Tribunal on this judgement and got exparty stay. The government pleader requested the appellate tribunal to vacate the stay. The tribunal after conducting a detailed enquiry dismissed the appeal made by Zamindar. Both the communist parties through their local units had demanded for an immediate distribution of these surplus lands.²⁴

²³ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.31 July, 1983.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The struggle taken up by the peasants and the agricultural labour organisation, leaders had been participating actively in the movement for the distribution of Challapalli Zamindar's surplus lands. They declared that the agitation would be continued till the distribution of surplus lands. The Former Parliament member and Bharatiya Khet Majdur Union President Gujjula Yellamanda Reddy and A.P. State Agricultural Labourers Organisation Secretary and Kondru Subba Rao and J.S.R. Anjaneya Sastry and others visited on 17-8-1983 in the villages like Vakkalagadda, Challapalli Lakshmipuram, Ramanagaram, Kothapalem, Puritigadda, Pagolu, Mekavaripalem, Mopidevi, Merakanapalli, Mellamarilanka and they had seen the uncultivated lands. They were accompanied by Krishna District agricultural workers organisation President K. Devasundara Rao and Secretary Jelli Wilson.²⁵

After visiting these villages, the representatives released a press note requesting the government to act aptly against the illegal and unconstitutional attitude of the zamindar violating all the orders and judgements given by the honourable high court and who had been trying to bring the false lease tenants into these surplus lands. They had referred to the indifferent attitude adopted by the respective governments in this issue and the zamindar enjoying these lands violating various court judgements. In order to avoid delay and to avoid court litigation, they requested the proper intervention of the government. The government should be that the land had been taken over and properly distributed to the landless poor agricultural workers and peasants.²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.* dt.31st July, 1983.

²⁶ *Ibid.*,

They have also appreciated the people belonging to twenty five villages of Divi and Movva Taluqs for their active participation in the agitation being led under the leadership of all party committee. The people had taken part in the boycott of farming and cultivation in the surplus lands. They stated that they would not forget the solidarity expressed by the farmers, peasants and agricultural workers organisation in the agitations. They have requested for the distribution of surplus lands to the landless and shelterless poor people. They had also requested the administration should take all necessary steps for the immediate distribution of the surplus lands. They stressed that the issue of land reforms is a national issue which had got its significance. They have congratulated the people who have been taking part in the various agitations and people who have been expressing solidarity. They have also requested the agitators to continue their movement with the same spirit till they achieve their goals.²⁷

Solidarity had been expressed at different places in the state to the agitations of the poor farmers and peasants agitating against the Challapalli Zamindars for their legal rights land to the tiller. There were rallies at different places like Vijayawada, Guntur, Bandar, Narasaraopet, Kandukur, Kavali, Bapatla, Movva, Avanigadda etc. As per the call given by both the communist parties and their affiliating organisations, the people at different places participated in the large numbers. The leaders demanded for immediate intervention of the government. They condemned the attitude of the zamindar and violation of the high court orders. They demanded for withdrawal of all false cases filed against the poor and innocent farmers.²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.* dt.24th August, 1983.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The Challapalli sugar factory surplus lands, thousand five hundred acres of land were seized by the Bandar Land Ceiling Officer A. Satyanarayana Mudiraj, Tahasildars of Divi and Movva Taluqs Babulu, Sobhanadry have co-operated in taking the lands. They had issued tenth number notice and declared in the villages where there are surplus lands. Leader of the Krishna District Agricultural Workers Union, Modumudi Srihari Rao has expressed his worry in the extraordinary delay in the settlement of Challapalli Sugar Factory surplus lands case. The case which has been in the Honourable High Court for the last seven months or so is still unsettled while expressing his sorrow over the issue, he says he doesn't understand why the courts are also not acting on time towards such important issues. He has requested the court for speedy enquiry and judgement. In 1973, when Andhra Pradesh Land Ceiling Act was made, the government declared that the lands registered for sugar factory also come under the Land Ceiling Act purview. In order to escape from this Ceiling Act, the Challapalli Sugar Factory management moved to the Madras High Court with a lame excuse that the head office of the sugar factory is in Madras. After a long trial, the Madras High Court gave its judgement on December 4th, 1981 and it said that the Land Ceiling Act 1973 of Andhra Pradesh is applicable to the lands of Challapalli sugar factory also.²⁹

After this judgement in 1981, Bandar Land Tribunal has conducted a trial for one year and finally delivered its judgement on 19th November 1982. As per the judgement, Challapalli sugar factory lands also come under the Land Ceiling Act, and as per the Act, they are excess or surplus lands. The sugar factory management once again appealed in the appellate tribunal. The Chairman set aside the appeal on July 2nd 1983, the appellate

²⁹ Visalandhra (Telugu) daily newspaper, dt. 9th April, 1984.

tribunal reiterated the judgement given by the land tribunal and declared the lands as surplus. Once again the sugar factory management made an appeal in the High Court. While accepting the appeal, the Court has given an order which says that both the parties (peasants and the management) should not bring any third party into the surplus lands. The judge has also stated that as the case has got its own importance and priority it has to be solved within the shortest time limit. Saying so it was adjourned to the 1st of August 1983. Eventhough seven months passed the case was not disposed. There was some enquiry into the matter in the first, second and third adjournments. Later on, no enquiry has been taken up the whereabouts and the time limit are unknown. It is said there is no such divisional bench dealing with such cases and the judge appointed for this purpose is unwilling to work. He also expressed his doubts over the judgements given by the higher courts and why are they failing in implementing their own judgements. He also expresses his grief over the public interests and delaying processes adopted in the courts over such issues.³⁰

The Challapalli Surplus Lands meeting was held at Challapalli in Divi Taluq of Krishna district has urged Government of Andhra Pradesh for an action for distribution of surplus lands to the poor and agricultural workers before 15th of May. Laying down a deadline, the conference said that they would plunge into direct action after that date for which the State Government is held responsible.³¹

The Conference also urged the government to take over the factory from the management of Challapalli Raja and pay the arrears to farmers amounting nearly one

³⁰ *Ibid.*, dt. 9th April 1984.

³¹ *Ibid.*, dt. 4th May, 1984.

crore forty lakhs and salaries to the employees for the past eight months immediately. The resolutions were passed in the Conference on these issues. The conference also warned the false tenants not to lease these surplus lands. If they do so they will held responsible for the later consequences. The Conference gave a call to the peasants, agricultural workers to take part in the direct agitation for achieving the distribution of nearly three thousand acres of surplus lands of Challapalli.³²

The Conference held at Kamala Talkies in Challapalli was chaired by all party committee convenor Donepudi Dutt. The Conference was attended by the both the Communist Parties and their affiliating agricultural workers unions representatives. Kamal Talkies was overrun with participants from all the villages of Divi Taluq. They had participated with such a zeal and they would not care for the hot Sun of the hottest month. The women workers attended the conference with their small babies in their laps. The Conference was attended and addressed by popular leaders like Chandra Rajeswara Rao, Secretary, Communist Party of India, Dasari Nagabhushana Rao, Secretariat Member of Andhra Pradesh Communist Council, Koratala Satyanarayana State Secretariat member, Communist Party of India (Marxist), A. Srimannarayana, Secretary, Krishna District CPI (M), Puttagunta Subba Rao, Secretary, A.P. Agricultural Workers (Labourers) Union, Kolli Nageswara Rao, Krishna District Communist Council, M. Srihari Rao, A.P. Agricultural Workers (employees) Union (Hyderabad) and Vangala Subba Rao, Secretary, CPI(M) Divi Taluq unit. The leaders have appealed the people of

³² *Ibid.*, dt. 4th May, 1984.

all communities of Divi Taluq to get ready for any kind of militant agitation for achieving surplus lands. They must get ready for a day and might fight without rest.³³

Anti-Zamindari struggles in Andhra Pradesh are more stronger and continued longer periods. One such historical struggle against Challapalli Zamindar is a prominent. In this agitation, many of the peasants, agricultural workers and communists sacrificed their lives. Different such agitations against zamindars resulted in the State led to the abolition of zamindari system. The Congress leaders had worked in favour of these zamindars and had paid crores of public money to them as compensation. Later on, they were also helped by them to escape from Land Ceiling Act and to take up false distributions of their lands. Taking it as an advantage, Challapalli Zamindar encashed by selling hundreds of acres of land. Not only that they tried to have control over three thousand acres of land in the name of a sugar factory. In spite of all the judgements favourable to the peasants saying that these lands are surplus lands and they come under the Land Ceiling Act purview. But these surplus lands have not been seized by the government and want only they are delaying in doing so.³⁴

Eventhough Honourable High Court declared them as surplus lands and no third party would be allowed into these lands and they should neither cultivate nor lease them violating all the judgements and directions given by the various courts, zamindar has tried to bring the false tenants and to cultivate them. But it was strongly protested by the peasants and it became a state level issue. It is also surprising to note that the Telugu Desam which came into power in 1983 could not seize the surplus lands. Not only that

³³ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 4th May, 1984.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, dt. 6th May, 1984.

the governments are permitting court litigations. It is absurd on the part of the government, the zamindar's men are allowed to enter the lands violating the court orders. Allowing them into the lands inexcusable mistake.³⁵

On the other side, the sugar factory being run by the zamindar and his family was in bankruptcy and they were in debts to the farmers an amount of one crore and forty lakhs. The farmers stopped the growing of sugarcane in their lands. As the management declared lock-out, the employees suffered. As a result, many of their families suffered from poverty and there were suicides as a result. There is no other alternative than seizing this factory by the government. If government takes over the sugar factory, long pending issue of surplus lands of the sugar factory, will be settled within no time. The Government can withdraw the revision petition on behalf of the factory management pending in the High Court. These surplus lands of the sugar factory can be distributed to the poor, landless peasants during this season. We can permanently say good-bye to the litigation when the government really has a political conviction. Hence, TDP government in the state should take all initiatives to seize the surplus lands without any further delay. This is actually a big question whether the government acts promptly and seize the excess lands by considering the historically prominent and prolonged struggles of Challapalli surplus lands.³⁶

The state agricultural workers union annual conference held on 9th May had passed a resolution in support of the agitations for the distribution of surplus lands of Challapalli Zamindar. The conference demanded for the immediate distribution of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, dt. 6th May, 1984.

³⁶ *Ibid.*.

surplus lands of Raja of Challapalli. The meeting has expressed its grief over the indifferent attitude of both the governments previous congress government and the present TDP government inspite of many representations for amicable solution.³⁷

They have also expressed their solidarity to the resolution made by the Challapalli conference that they would plunge into direct struggle if the issue is not amicably solved before 15th of May. All party representatives met here today the Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao who came here for the by election campaign and discussed the issue of Challapalli surplus land. This representation consists of Dasari Nagabhushana Rao, Koratala Satyanarayana, and Donepudi Dutt, Convenor all party committee Puttagunta Subba Rao, Secretary, Agricultural Workers Union (Vijayawada), Modumudi Srihari Rao, Vice-President, Krishna District Agricultural Workers Union (Hyderabad), Vangala Subba Rao, Secretary, Divi Taluq CPI (M), and Mallu Reddi Ramasubbaiah and A.V. Gopala Rao of local Communist leaders.³⁸

They have appealed the Chief Minister to take over the Challapalli sugar factory and to pay arrears to the farmers and to the employees immediately. Also requested him to seize all the surplus lands on the name of sugar factory and to distribute them to the poor and landless peasants in the respective villages. They have also brought to his notice various conspiracies of the zamindar and sugar factory management. They have clearly indicated the unrest prevailing in the villages who have been aspiring for the surplus lands. As they are in the despair it may lead to violent agitations which leads to the law and order problem. They have also made it clear that they had already sent him a

³⁷ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1984.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, dt. 15th May, 1984.

telegram expressing their deadline for taking over the sugar factory surplus land and the steps to be taken for the distribution of those lands. After listening to the representatives, Chief Minister said that he understood the seriousness of the issue and the temperament of the poor people. He assured them that the government would safeguard rights of the farmers, peasants, workers and employees and promised for an immediate intervention. The campaigning for the direct agitation is going on in the surrounding villages of Challapalli and the people are ready to plunge into the direct action at any movement.³⁹

The pervading movement of surplus lands of Challapalli Raja began at Vakkalagadda village and Sita Pedalanka Hamlet of Movva Taluq, in Krishna district agricultural labourers and poor people distributed the lands belonging to the zamindar planting the red flags first and fixing their own boundaries. In this two villages, nearly one thousand members participated including women. The all party leaders declared that this occupation would continue upto 22nd of May in all the villages wherever surplus lands of Challapalli Raja have had.⁴⁰

So as per the resolution made in the Challapalli conference on 4h of May direct occupation of surplus lands began. Eight acres of surplus land of Challapalli Raja's sugar factory has been occupied by the 150 poor people and built small thatched houses at Vakkalagadda.⁴¹

At the hamlet of Nimmagada village Sita Peda Lanka nearly two hundred and forty acres of agricultural land has been seized by one hundred and twenty families.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.18th May, 1984.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, dt.19th May, 1984.

Nearly four hundred members belonging to this village crossed the Krishna river on foot and occupied the lands and they fixed the boundaries for themselves. Women were majority in this agitation.⁴²

The State Secretariat member of Andhra Pradesh State Communist Council, Dasari Nagabhushana Rao who has been leading the direct agitation of seizing of surplus lands while addressing the media reporters from Vijayawada that their agitation being taken up by the agricultural workers is only for the immediate distribution of surplus lands and he reiterated their agitation is not against the government. If the government continued the same indifferent attitude in distributing the surplus lands, the agricultural workers would know how to protect their lands, he said. He also said that the surplus lands of Challapalli Raja were spread in fifteen other villages and the land occupation movement would be started in those villages also within four five days.⁴³

He also stated to the press persons that as a result of the various agitations led by the all party committee the Madras High Court delivered its judgement on December 4th 1979 in favour of the movement. The Honourable High Court said that Challapalli Sugar factory also comes under the purview of Andhra Pradesh Land Ceiling Act 1973. The petition was suspended by the court. In 1982 November, Bandar Land Tribunal also suspended the appeal of the zamindar and stated that all the lands in the name of Challapalli Sugar Factory were considered to be surplus lands the Challapalli Raja had no right over these lands. Challapalli Raja knowing the justice pretty well in order to delay the process of distribution, he went to the High Court of Andhra Pradesh with a Revision

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19th May, 1984.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

petition and the court had been delaying in the enquiry process. He criticised the attitude of the High Court in this regard.⁴⁴

He once again clearly brought to the notice of the press that their major demands were to take over the Challapalli Sugar factory by the government and to distribute surplus lands to poor and landless labourers and to pay arrears to be paid by the sugar factory to the farmers and to the employees immediately safeguarding their rights.

The High Court in 1983 while receiving the revision petition had clearly indicated not to bring third party into the lands and *status quo* orders were given. But the zamindar violating these orders illegally brought some of his family landlords into these lands as false tenants and he had leased these lands to them. “We would fight till all the surplus lands were distributed to the poor, landless agricultural workers without bothering about their political party affiliations”, he said. They would be ready for the worst to face and they were not afraid of any action of the government. If this land distribution completed nearly six thousand agricultural workers would be benefitted he said.⁴⁵

Communist Party of India, Andhra Pradesh State Council which met on 16th May 1984 has demanded for immediate seizing of closed sugar factory at Challapalli and surplus lands of Challapalli zamindar. The CPI has asked the government to step down from its indifferent attitude in this most important issues.⁴⁶

“Challapalli Raja of Movva Taluq in Krishna district is still having two thousand seven hundred acres of land under the name of his sugar factory at Challapalli. The

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19th May, 1984.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, dt.20th May, 1984.

government has to seize his lands as per the land ceiling act of 1973 and should distribute them to the poor and landless agricultural workers. But he had been enjoying all the crops showing court litigation as an excuse.”⁴⁷

Either the Congress Party which was in power both at the Centre and the State or the presently ruling party in the state TDP did nothing to seize the surplus lands and to distribute them to the poor people. The united agitation under the aegis of both the Communist Parties and agricultural labourers unions being organised since 1979 and in 1983, the agitation was continuously taken up for one hundred and thirty days. As a result, the Bandar Land Reforms Tribunal and Appellate Tribunal gave their judgements in favour of the agitators. They declared the sugar factory lands as surplus lands as per the Land Ceiling Act 1973. Even then Challapalli Raja appealed in the High Court on lame excuse to delay the process. The High Court Judge gave *status quo* and asked both the parties not to allow third party into the lands and the judge also felt that the final judgement should be delivered within a fortnight. As a result of these agitations, the people could sustain the false lease tenants from entering the lands and cultivating nearly 1,400 acres of land. High Court had not taken up the trial even though nine months passed away.⁴⁸

On the other side, the sugar factory at Challapalli had been closed for all these nine months and the employees and workers were not paid salaries. One employee committed suicide as he couldn't bear with the hardships of poverty and unemployment. The factory management had to pay debts to the banks and arrears to the farmers and

⁴⁷Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 20th May, 1984.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

salary arrears to the employees and workers. So the government should immediately intervene in the matter and should seize the factory and the surplus lands from the management and set right all the turmoil existed over here in Challapalli and other villages. The leaders had met the Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao and other government officials for justice. But there was no proper reply from them.⁴⁹

So, the land occupation movement was taken up as a last resort as all the doors for solution were closed to the agitators. So the Andhra Pradesh State Council of CPI gave a call to the people in general and to the agricultural workers and peasants in particular to participate in the agitations to make it a stringent movement the CPI also appealed the government to intervene into the matter and to seek an immediate solution. Gujjala Yellamanda Reddy, President, All India Agricultural Labourers Union, J.S.R. Anjaneya Sastry, Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Labourers Union, Kolli Nageswara Rao, Secretary, Krishna District Communist Council had requested the Krishna District Collector through a memorandum requesting him for his intervention and justice in the surplus lands issue of Challapalli Zamindar who had been illegally enjoying eventhough he had no right over those surplus lands.⁵⁰

They toured in all the villages where the land occupying movement had been taken up and the surplus lands were occupied. They had assured the people that they would continue their support till they got their legal rights over the lands. They had covered important villages like Vakkalagadda, Puritigadda, Nimmagadda, Yarlagaadda and other villages. They had seen the peasants taking part in fixing their boundaries after

⁴⁹ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 23rd May, 1984.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

taking the land into their control. The false tenants Ravi Ramakrishnaiah attacked physically two of the agitators for encroaching the land leased to him by the zamindar. He attacked Tummala Subba Rao and Akula Venkateswara Rao while they were travelling by an R.T.C. bus along with his gang and attempted to kill them. They narrowly escaped death and were admitted in the Avanigadda government hospital. The leaders consoled them and assured them for help.⁵¹

“As Challapalli sugar factory management headed by Challapalli zamindar had to pay nearly 1.5 crores of rupees as arrears to the farmers and nearly fifty lakhs of rupees salary arrears to the employees and ten lakhs to the agricultural workers and it had been closed for the last so many months and deceiving these poor people. Hence, the government should immediately intervene into the matter and seize the factory and safeguard the rights of all these poor people” demands Gujjala Yellamanda Reddy, President, All India Agricultural Workers Union here in a press conference held today.⁵²

The surplus lands of Challapalli Raja under the name of sugar factory should be seized immediately by the government and to distribute them to the poor people demands Kolli Nageswara Rao, Secretary, Krishna District Communist Council in the District Board Review meeting held at Vijayawada Sub-Collector’s office under the chairmanship of Revenue Minister, Mahendranath and was attended by District Collector Harinarayana peoples representatives, officials and other important dignitaries.⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 23rd May, 1984.

⁵² *Ibid.*, dt.25th May, 1984.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, dt.30th May, 1984.

The Hindu Farmers Union, Krishna district branch demands for distribution of surplus lands of Challapalli sugar factory belonging to the Raja of Challapalli. They also said that the government should intervene immediately as the issue had been in the limelight for many years and many of the innocent farmers, poor landless peasants put to many hardships, and there were many agitations in favour of the farmers and workers throughout the state, both the Communist Party leaders had been leading this justified movement, the government should seize the lands and restore peace in the villages ⁵⁴

It is evidently declared by the all party committee in the Challapalli conference held on 4th of May. The peasants who had been agitating against the injustice for a long time peacefully have been legally fighting for the distribution of surplus lands. But there are doubts whether the poor, landless agricultural workers would have the same patience to continue further struggle. The conference clearly indicated to the government that the surplus lands should be distributed to the landless poor peasants before 15th of May. There was a resolution to that extent in the conference. The leader who had led the movement against Challapalli zamindar at different stages and who has been the spirit behind the present peasants movement Chandra Rajeswara Rao, CPI Secretary. All India Agricultural Workers Union, Vice-President while speaking at the conference reiterated that they would lead the movement thereafter. He also declared that the landless peasants would seize those surplus lands during that season and would start cultivating them.⁵⁵

The Government cannot ignore that it is a people's movement being supported by the peasants community of the whole state and the agricultural workers and the lovers of

⁵⁴ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.5th June, 1984.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, dt.25th December, 1984.

democratic society. The TDP Government which fails to remember its election promise on the land ceiling reforms, will have to face the consequences in the direct struggles to be organised after 15th of May. The Secretary of Communist Party of India and who had susceptibly led the anti-zamindari agitation against Challapalli Zamindar Chandra Rajeswara Rao, would plunge into the struggle. So, we hope that the government will take a political decision for the distribution of excess or surplus lands of Challapalli before 15 of May.⁵⁶

The Challapalli Zamindar had secretly sold some of the lands in some villages. The government has issued orders to the owners who have purchased the lands from the zamindar without legal rights to vacate those lands. The poor peasants have expressed their joy over the seizing of lands. It is a victory of communist party and its mass organisations which have been continuing their struggle for the past forty five years or so. Secretary, Communist Party of India even encouraged people to seize the lands and take up the cultivation. Accordingly, some of the peasants cultivated the lands. The revenue officers are busy in preparing the lists with the help of mass organisations.⁵⁷

The Challapalli sugar factory surplus lands nearly two thousand nine hundred acres would be distributed to the landless poor peasants within a month or so. The preparations were made in that way, the District Collector, R.P. Agarwal declared in a press conference.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.25th December, 1984.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, dt.25th December, 1984.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, dt.16th March, 1985.

The Communist parties and its affiliated organisation have led heroic battles for the distribution of surplus lands for many years and ultimately they got victory.⁵⁹

Surplus Lands of Challapalli should be distributed to the landless poor peasants. A requisition to the Krishna District Collector by the District Communist Council CPI and its agricultural unions.⁶⁰

The district Council, CPI and its agricultural workers unions have submitted a memorandum to the Krishna district Collector for an immediate distribution of Challapalli Zamindar's surplus lands to the landless poor peasants. The agricultural workers unions have been agitating for the past five years for the surplus lands distribution. As a result, the government responded positively and taken up the distribution. The unions have also requested the government to distribute all these surplus lands to the deserving poor. The remaining lands after the distribution in every village should be given to the landless poor peasants of the neighbouring villages. The houseless poor people also be given house plots in some of the village. The delegation led by Kolli Nageswara Rao, Secretary, Krishna District Communist Council, Uppalapati Ramachandra Raju, MLA, Vijayawada west constituency. Donepudi Dutt, Joint Secretary, Krishna district communist committee K. Devasundara Rao, President, Krishna district agricultural workers union. K. Achuiyutha Ramaiah, Secretary, Divi Taluq communist council, A.V. Gopala Rao and others met the Collector, Krishna and submitted a memorandum. The Collector assured them justice would be done to the poor

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, dt.16th March, 1985.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, dt.27th March, 1985.

people and he would take all necessary steps for the proper distribution of these surplus lands.⁶¹

Challapalli surplus lands seized nearly two thousand two hundred acres of land by the government and distributed six hundred acres in the last week to two thousand four hundred deserving landless poor people. The remaining one thousand six hundred acres of land would also be distributed in the coming month the Collector, V. Agarwal said here in a press conference today. He also said that a land of 25 cents to each beneficiary and to a number of two thousand four hundred people were distributed the land. He said that nearly eleven thousand landless poor people are identified in and around Challapalli in thirteen villages. He also said that half of the beneficiaries would be harijans. The consent of the all party committee was taken for the distribution of six hundred acres of land.⁶²

The all party committee leaders met the District Collector and submitted a memorandum requesting to consider the surplus lands of Challapalli Raja as a single unit while the distribution process is taken up. The memorandum discussed various problems that crop up in the distribution process. The all party committee leaders led by Kolli Nageswara Rao, Secretary, Communist Council, Paturi Ramaiah, MLA CPI(M), Simhadri Satyanarayana, MLA, Avanigadda constituency, Parchuri Rama Mohana Rao, President, Movva, Donepudi Dutt, Joint Secretary, Krishna District Communist Council, K. Devasundara Rao, President, Krishna District agricultural workers Union, Atchuta

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, dt. 5th April, 1985.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Ramaiah Leader of the Community Party, Divi Taluq and others have signed the memorandum and submitted.⁶³

The Collector assured them considering the issue of surplus lands to be considered as a single unit for the distribution and other related problems be reviewed. He said that the land ceiling for each beneficiary from twenty five cents to be reduced would be considered only after discussing with the state government.

The contents of the memorandum are taking up the distribution of Challapalli Raja's surplus lands to the landless poor peasants and workers. The issue of Challapalli Raja surplus lands has finally brought into the Land Reforms Act. It is a victory of a long and historical struggle in which nearly forty two people sacrificed their lives in the movement. The whole agitation was continued on the name of Divi Taluq. This Divi Taluq had been divided into Avanigadda and Movva taluqs recently. But in the surplus lands movement both these taluqs geographically come under one unit. Taking this geographical oneness into consideration, lands should be distributed. It should be seen that the lands are given to the landless poor in the nearby villages and nearer to the lands.⁶⁴

There are poor people even without house plots and houses and house sites. Such people also may be given atleast house plots in those villages. The peasants who had participated in the agitation for the land and put up with many difficulties and had cultivated those surplus lands during an impossible period must be given lands. The artisans and handicrafts lost their jobs as a result of changing global scenario. Such

⁶³ *Ibid.*, dt.10th April, 1985.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*.

artisans and handicrafts belonging to different castes like, weavers, blacksmiths, potters, washermen communities should be given priority in the distribution. The land was not allotted to the Backward Classes (BCs) and Other Castes (Ocs) at Puritigadda village and they also must be allotted lands. The land was allotted by taking lottery and it should be verified and had to be seen that land was allotted to all. If at all land was not sufficient at any village, the twenty five cents could be relaxed in order to allocate lands to all.⁶⁵

The communist leaders Dasari Nagabhushana Rao and others while addressing a conference at Penamaluru they stated that the Challapalli lands distribution is a pride of their movement. They considered it a feather in the crown of a four decades of communist movement for rightful share to the landless peasants. The distribution is materialised just because of the sacrifices made by many of the communist workers. Dasari Nagabhushana Rao felt that if the landless peasants take up the path of Challapalli and Mutchinthala agitations, and if they are united and fight in the same way they could get the remaining surplus lands in the district.⁶⁶

The sugarcane producers and sugar factory employees formulated together into a joint action committee and started relay hunger strike demanding for the seizure of Challapalli sugar factory by the government and to pay the arrears both to the farmers and to the employees. If the government would fail to act properly, they would take possession of the stocks of sugar in the factory threatened K. Bapaiah Chowdary, Convenor of the joint action committee. He said this sugar factory which was started with an amount of 50 lakhs in 1958 had not been maintaining good track record with

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, dt. 10th April, 1985.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, dt.15th April, 1985.

regard to the payment of arrears to the farmers and salaries to the employees. As per the Land Ceiling Act of 1961, Challapalli Zamindar, who owned so much of land had purchased his own lands of nearly 2,600 acres to the factory and had taken nearly an amount of Rs.80 lakhs as the value of land he sold to his own factory. As a result, the factory was not in a position to pay arrears either to the farmers or the employees properly. Nearly four thousand farmers produce sugarcane under this factory and there were nearly one thousand employees working.⁶⁷

The factory had to pay an amount of rs.80 lakhs to the farmers and Rs.60 lakhs to the employees and another additional amount of Rs.90 lakhs towards provident fund and gratuity to the employees. This amount altogether was around Rs.2 crores. The sugarcane producers union and employees union together participated in the relay fasting and seven members had taken part in today's fasting.⁶⁸

The Challapalli sugar factory had to pay nearly an amount of Rs.2 crores to the farmers and employees had to be seized by the government pleads Mr. Y.V. Krishna Rao in a press statement. He also requests the government to make all necessary arrangements for the payment of arrears both the farmers and to the factory employees. He said that because of the litigations involved in the Challapalli sugar factory issue both the sugarcane producers and the sugar factory employees were greatly worried. The factory had to pay an amount of Rs.2 crores to the farmers and to the employees. The TDP government had not taken any action plan either for the proper management of the

⁶⁷ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.15th April 1985.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16th April, 1985.

factory or for the payment of arrears. It is most unfortunate thing that the government had not taken part in it, he stated.⁶⁹

He also said that this factory played an important role in the economic development of Movva, Divi and Bandar Taluqs. As the sugar factory management had improper in its management and had not proper with regard to the payments, the government should take over the factory. The sugarcane producers had been agitating for the last decade or so, eventhough the governments (past and the present TDP) had all reports about the management of the factory. But the present TDP government is also indifferent like the previous government in taking action against the factory management. On the other side, Bobbili, Sitanagar sugar factories after taken over by the government are yielding good results and they are now running in profits. The demand of seizure is not only by the sugarcane producers and farmers and employees but also from the common people. So they have decided to take up the hunger fast.⁷⁰

On 11-5-1985, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao is launching the Challapalli surplus lands distribution programme with a name, Magani Samaradhana'(Worship of Wetlands). This worshipping has become possible by the historic movement against the zamindary movement which amalgamates the struggles of communists, farmers and agricultural labourers and the key role played by all these movements are given hereunder in the form of a diary with the title 'Footnotes of History'. In the prolonged movement for forty years, many people like Viamma sacrificed their lives we salute all those sacrificed their lives in the movement. This

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, dt.21st April, 1985.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

distribution is a foundation to the state surplus lands distribution. This distribution is not the ending it is only a beginning.⁷¹

Surplus Lands Distribution is the result of the sacrifices of immortals N.T. Rama Rao declared

N.T. Rama Rao, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh while addressing a meeting during the lands distribution, he referred to the anti-zamindari movement and agitation for surplus lands over thirty five years and he stated that the surplus lands distribution is resulted as a result of the immortals like Narayana Rao, Jagannatha Rao and forty two others who sacrificed their lives in the movement. This land distribution programme is foundation to the future welfare programmes of the government” he said. He paid homage to the immortals who sacrificed their lives in the surplus lands struggle and it became an example of realising their aspirations. He paid tributes to all of them in the surplus lands distribution programme called “worship of wetlands”.⁷²

Andhra Pradesh being a sacred land of agriculture now suffers from poverty, people without the minimum facilities food, shelter and clothing. He said the government would provide all opportunities to such poor people. He also said that they did something with regard to Challapalli Sugar factory and they would now intervene to see the reopening of Challapalli sugar factory. He promised that the government would never allow to the closure of the sugar factory. He assured the sugarcane producers and the sugar factory employees for a smooth running of the factory and development of sugar factory allied industries.⁷³

⁷¹ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

⁷² *Ibid.*, dt.12th May, 1985.

⁷³ *Ibid.*.

N.T. Rama Rao said that this worshipping is sharing the fruits of sacrifices of immortals. He recollected how seriously the movement was taken up by the united communist movement for the last thirty five years. The Congress party which was in rule for the last thirty five years had not achieved social equality, or economic equality in the state. The TDP government got this fortunate chance of distributing the Challapalli surplus lands which is a result of communist movement. He said that this was a people's victory and he was taking part in it as a people's representative. He also said that it was unfortunate that the leaders who were the pioneers in the surplus lands struggle and the Secretary, Community Party of India, Chandra Rajeswara Rao and others were not in the distribution programme. Their absence was a gap which cannot be compensated and he congratulated all of them.⁷⁴

The meeting was presided over by the state Home Minister Vasantha Nageswara Rao said that this land distribution had a great history and it would not stop at Challapalli and TDP government was in favour of surplus land distribution to the poor wherever there may be. The other ministers attended the meeting and were on the stage were introduced to the people. The dignitaries along with ministers participated were Yathi Raja Rao, Mahipal Reddy, Ayyanna Patrudu, Prathbha Bharathi, K.E. Krishna Murthy, Karanam Ramachandra Rao, Rajesham Goud and members of legislative assembly were Raavi Shobhanadri, Paturi Ramaiah, Vaddi Ranga Rao, Simhadri Satyanarayana, Sunkara Satyanarayana, Chairman, Krishna District Parishath, Ambati Brahmanaiah, President,

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, dt. 12th May, 1985.

Avanigadda Samithi, Pachuru Rama Mohana Rao, President, Movva Samithi and others participated District Collector, R.C. Agarwal welcomed all of them.⁷⁵

Today nearly 1160.82 acres of land has been distributed to the 5,118 beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Economically Backward sections. Nearly 2388.89 acres of surplus land had been seized from the Challapalli Zamindar. Out of which 65.37 acres of land was not distributed as the lands were on crops and 580.94 acres of lands were not distributed due to the court's stay and out of remaining 1,807.90 acres of land 1,160.82 acres of land was distributed in the programme. 647.12 acres of land was kept aside for the purpose of house plots which would be distributed.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt. 12th May, 1985.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*.

Diary of Challapalli Surplus Lands Struggle

- 17-15-1983 - As a preparatory signal for the Challapalli Raja surplus lands agitation, all party committee conducted rallies in various villages and were warmly greeted by the people.
- 18-5-1983 - If government takes the side of the landlords, government is responsible to the worst – Dasari stated at Nimmagadda meeting.
- 19-5-1983 - If government keep silent in the issue of Challapalli surplus lands distribution, people become intolerable Dasari Nagabhushana Rao warned the government at Merakanapalli public meeting.
- 20-5-1983 - Gudivada volunteers in the Challapalli struggle.
- 20-5-1983 - United struggle for the distribution of Challapalli surplus lands – Paturu Ramaiah, leader, CPI(M) pleads at Ramanagaram.
- 22-5-1983 - Challapalli surplus lands distribution becomes a big problem – It is a big issue to the Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao and he has to come out of the fire safely. Dasari Nagabhushana Rao and Lavu Balangadhara Rao stated at Vakkalagadda meeting.
- 24-5-1983 - United struggle resulted in achieving surplus lands of Challapalli Zamindar – Balangadhara Rao and others stated at the Bhogireddypalli meeting.
- 27-5-1983 - The first phase struggle concluded for the Challapalli Surplus lands.
- 1-6-1983 - Collector assured the all party committee leaders for the protection of Challapalli Raja surplus lands and he would see that they were not sold illegally.⁷⁷
- 8-6-1983 - Second phase agitation began for the distribution of Challapalli zamindar surplus lands – All party committee rally at Bandar on June 17th.
- 17-6-1983 - Rally at Collectorate, Bandar by the poor landless peasants demanding distribution of Challapalli surplus lands.
- 2-7-1983 - Stay vacated on the Challapalli surplus lands.
- 30-7-1983 - CPI, Andhra Pradesh Communist council demands for an immediate settlement of Challapalli lands issue in the high court.

⁷⁷ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

- 5-8-1983 - False lease tenants should be prohibited from the Challapalli sugar factory surplus lands. All party committee pleads the government.
- 6-8-1983 - Don't be carried away by the deceiving words of zamindar – the poor peasants convinced the sugar factory employees.
- 10-8-1983 - Struggle for Challapalli Surplus Lands – retaliation to the binami (false) tenants in three villages.
- 11-8-1983 - Nearly one hundred and fifty all party volunteers were arrested – conspiracy of Binami tenants.
- 12-8-1983 - Binami tenants ran away and unable to withstand against the people's will.
- 14-8-1983 - Struggle for Challapalli sugar factory surplus lands – A call for solidarity rallies.
- 16-8-1983 - Statewide united representations – Call given by Agricultural laborers union.
- 19-8-1983 - Government's indifferent attitude in the distribution of surplus lands including Challapalli zamindar's lands – CPI & CPI(M) members criticised the government in the assembly.
- 21-8-1983 - Retaining the false lease tenants at Pacchagadda and twenty eight poor people were arrested on false grounds including three women.
- 23-8-1983 - Solidarity rallies to the Challapalli surplus lands agitation throughout the State. Rallies were organised at different places like Vijayawada, Guntur, Narasaraopet, Kandukur, Kavali, Bapatla, Movva, Avanigadda and other places.
- 26-8-1983 - Opposition demands in the legislative council for immediate seizure and distribution of Challapalli surplus lands. Minister assured for seizure of records.
- 27-8-1983 - Opposition condemned the indifferent attitude and support of the government to the Challapalli zamindar – all opposition parties walked out of the assembly.
- 27-8-1983 - Retained false lease tenants at Mopidevi and forty three agitators were arrested including Atchuta Ramaiah.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

- 29-8-1983 - Agitations couldn't be stopped by imprisonments. Dasari warned the government for its immoral support to the Challapalli zamindar.
- 30-8-1983 - Fifty people were arrested on the third day at Mopidevi.
- 2-9-1983 - Sixty people were arrested at Challapalli
- 3-9-1983 - One hundred and sixty people were arrested at Challapalli.
- 5-9-1983 - Forty six people were arrested including District Agricultural workers union President Devasundara Rao at Challapalli estate.
- 6-9-1983 - One hundred and forty people were arrested in the Challapalli Estate.
- 7-9-1983 - Poor peasants Dharna at Challapalli Estate – Revolt against the police attempts for arrest.
- 8-9-1983 - The work at government offices of Movva taluq was paralised due to the picketing by the agricultural workers, farmers and employees.
- 15-9-1983 - Successful obstruction of all transportation for three hours in Divi Taluq. The action plan for surplus lands distribution.
- 4-5-1984 - The Challapalli conference warns for a direct action if surplus lands are not distributed.
- 15-5-1984 - Discussions with the Chief Minister on the Challapalli surplus lands issue by the all party delegation – the agitators making preparations for direct action plan.
- 18-5-1984 - The occupation movement of Challapalli Raja surplus lands began.
- 19-5-1984 - The occupation movement extended to Pagolu and Yarlagaadda villages and poor people occupied Challapalli surplus lands.
- 20-5-1984 - Occupied forty acres of land at Puritigadda.
- 22-5-1984 - Challapalli surplus lands issue should be immediately solved – Yellamanda Reddy, Anjaneya Sastry etc., submitted a memorandum to the Krishna district Collector.
- 27-5-1984 - The Chief Minister has to decide to which side does he belong to in the Challapalli surplus lands agitation – cleared by Giriprasad Dasari Nagabhushana Rao etc., in the solidarity conference at Vakkalagadda.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

- 29-5-1984 - Challapalli Raja's surplus lands should be immediately distributed to the landless poor – demanded Kolli Nageswara Rao in the Krishna District Review Committee meeting.
- 16-6-1984 - Chandra Rajeswara Rao arrived to take part in the Challapalli surplus lands struggle – Krishna district communist council welcomed him.
- 17-6-1984 - United struggle by farmers and agricultural workers for achieving the Challapalli surplus lands.
- 18-6-1984 - “To achieve Challapalli surplus lands agitations is the only solution” says Chandra Rajeswara Rao at Yarlagadda meeting.
- 19-6-1984 - “AITUC supports the Challapalli surplus lands agitation” K.L. Mahendra.
- 20-6-1984 - Dharnas and Rallies for the distribution of Challapalli surplus Lands” Krishna and Guntur districts communist councils decide.
- 21-6-1984 - United struggle for the surplus lands stated Chandra Rajeswara Rao at Pagolu public meeting.
- 22-6-1984 - Seizure of four hundred and seventy acres land at Merakanapalli
- 23-6-1984 - Statewide Dharnas and Rallies organised by Agricultural workers unions – demanding for distribution Challapalli surplus lands, for raise of wages, for Integrated Agricultural Act etc.
- 24-6-1984 - Land Ceiling Acts would not be implemented without proper agitations stated Chandra Rajeswara Rao in the public meetings at Puritigadda and Velivolu.
- 26-6-1984 - New phase in the Challapalli surplus lands agitation – the farmers cultivation started by getting ready with the sprouts in the occupied lands – Forty six acres occupied at Ramanagaram.
- 27-6-1984 - Unprecedented statewide solidarity to the Challapalli lands agitation – Relay fastings started by CPI, Andhra Pradesh State Council agricultural workers union.
- 28-6-1984 - Surplus lands should be distributed, demanding the same, relay fastings was continued statewide. The climax of the Challapalli lands struggle stated – Chandra Rajeswara Rao at Bandar.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

- 29-6-1984 - Demanding to honour the supreme court judgement and to make necessary amendments to the maximum land ceiling Act, CPI, Farmers and Agricultural workers union. Continued relay fasting for the third day, Chief Minister rejected the opposition's proposal for seizing of Challapalli sugars. He tried to escape from the surplus lands distribution showing court litigation as a cause. The opposition criticised the escapist attitude of the government. Dasari said it would intricate the issue.
- 30-6-1984 - Fourth day relay fasting – agitating the statements of Anna (brother the then Chief Minister, N.T. Rama Rao – Giri Prasad criticised the government for its escapist attitude in the Challapalli surplus lands issue. Rs.2147/- (two thousand one hundred and forty seven) as donation to the Challapalli surplus lands agitation fund.
- 1-7-1984 - Did the government awake from its drowsiness? Fifth Day Relay fasting for Challapalli sugars surplus lands distribution.
- 2-7-1984 - Meaningless to link the Challapalli Surplus lands issue with the High Court litigation. The government should immediately take over the Challapalli sugar factory – Demanded Chandra Rajeswara Rao at a press conference at Vijayawada – statewide relay fasting continued in expressing solidarity.
- 3-7-1984 - State Relay Fasting reached to Seventh Day – Challapalli Land agitation became a statewide movement. Paddy sprouts getting ready for the cultivation at Lankathota.
- 4-7-1984 - To make at a stringent movement the Challapalli surplus lands issue – A call for statewide massive fasting, rallies and public meetings. On 7th July, solidarity to the Challapalli surplus lands agitation. Relay pastings reached eighth day.
- 5-7-1984 - Statewide women leaders relay fasting.
- 6-7-1984 - Relay fastings continued with more vigour and enthusiasm.
- 7-7-1984 - The first phase of solidarity action plan in the Challapalli Lands struggle successful. The statewide relay fastings for eleven days were ended and public meetings were held expressing their protest.⁸¹

⁸¹ Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.

- 15-7-1984 - Two hundred and sixty acres of land occupied at Mopidevi estate under the leadership of Challapalli surplus lands agitation all party committee.
- 18-7-1984 - The Evil deeds of Challapalli Raja's supervisor.
- 19-7-1984 - Paddy plantation at Challapalli lands.
- 21-7-1984 - Dharna at Collector's office protesting the wicked activities of Challapalli Raja's supervisor.
- 28-7-1984 - Paddy plantation movement continued – paddy plantation in thirty seven acres of land at Puritigadda.
- 4-8-1984 - Documents should be given to the cultivators of Challapalli surplus lands community leaders submitted a memorandum to the District Collector.
They have stated that nearly six thousand agricultural landless poor workers have cultivated nearly two thousand four hundred surplus lands belonging to the Challapalli sugar factory. The cultivation is being taken individually and jointly in order to increase the national production.
- 18-9-1984 - Challapalli Zamindar's writs were rejected by the High Court.
- 21-9-1984 - Challapalli surplus lands should be distributed to the landless poor – Demands State Agricultural labourers union – Expressed its joy at the High Court's judgement.
- 4-12-1984 - The occupied and cultivated surplus lands of Challapalli sugars at Lankathota, the hamlet of Pagolu village, the poor farmers have received their crops.⁸²

⁸² Visalandhra (Telugu) Daily Newspaper, dt.11th May, 1985.