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Honduran Congress Approves Modification Of Agrarian Reform Legislation: Events & Reactions (part 2)

by Deborah Tyroler

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National Union of Rural Workers (CNTC) leader Ramon Murica said that landless workers "will continue taking over properties in order to recover idle lands." On March 6, COCOCH president Alegria told reporters that land "recoveries" would be launched on a massive scale in response to the new legislation. Rural union leader Jorge Hernandez asserted that peasant workers "will not just sit back with their arms folded" in the face of legislation which leaves the latifundio-minifundio system intact. Natural Resources Minister Nufio owner of extensive tracts of land in eastern Honduras called on peasant groups to give the legislation time to demonstrate forthcoming benefits. He said opponents to the law have adopted "extremist ideological positions" and are often not even familiar with the precise contents of the legislation. During a recent interview with LADB staff writer Deborah Tyroler, CNTC leader Elvia Alvarado dismissed the notion that opponents of the legislation do not understand it. She said, "How can it be that we do not understand our own situation? We understand it perfectly. They are the stupid ones who do not understand...But we will make them understand that the people are starving to death, that the people don't have any land to farm. They are trying to fool us with their laws, but we are not going to fall for it." Alvarado reiterated that the government never adequately implemented provisions of the 1975 agrarian reform legislation. Historically, she said, the government manipulates agrarian reform laws in order to "continue doing whatever it wants." She added that with the agricultural modernization law, the government has essentially succeeded in rewriting agrarian reform provisions in the way it had always wanted to. According to Alvarado, the legislation reflects "a policy exported by the US government...which militates against fundamental human rights of the vast majority...[O]ur human rights are violated every day in Honduras and that includes Callejas' agrarian reform legislation." Ultimately, said Alvarado, the government's action to gut agrarian reform will only serve to strengthen and encourage organized peasant opposition, and consequently, "we expect greater repression." SOURCES News services Agence France-Presse, 03/03/92, 03/05/92. Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 03/04/92, 03/05/92, 03/08/92, 03/09/92. Chinese news service Xinhua, 03/03/92. Prensa Latina (Cuba), 03/04/92. Other Interview with Elvia Alvarado, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 03/08/92. Don't be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart. The Story of Elvia Alvarado. Translated and edited by Medea Benjamin. San Francisco: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1987.

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