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Honduran Government Concerned Over Pro-Castro Activity

Officials of Honduras' moderately leftist government evidently are becoming alarmed by the extent of pro-Castro agitation in their country and are no longer reluctant to speak out against it. President Villeda Morales, who often feels he must cater to the influential pro-Castro left wing of his Liberal party, has been chary of criticizing the Cuban regime or of interfering with the increasingly well-organized Cuban activities throughout Honduras. Reassured by the International Court of Justice award of 18 November favoring Honduran territorial claims on the Nicaraguan border and by orderly local elections earlier this month, Villeda now may feel strong enough to take a firmer stand against a reported campaign to manipulate his government from within for Cuban purposes.

At Villeda's birthday reception on 26 November, Foreign Minister Alvarado Puerto--who is often sympathetic to the left-wing Liberals--questioned the loyalty of Hondurans who were dedicating that week to "defense of Cuba" rather than to celebration of the territorial award. He was challenged by the Mexican ambassador in Tegucigalpa, Cesar Garizurieta, whose cooperation with Cuban Embassy activities in Honduras has enhanced the respectability and representation of local pro-Castro and pro-Communist groups. Rebuffed by other guests, Garizurieta reportedly boasted he could arouse greater response among the Honduran people than anyone present.

This open challenge aroused Villeda to strongly abusive language against Garizurieta. The President is also reported to have accused Mexico of having two faces in foreign policy, one for the US and one for Cuba--evidently referring to pro-Castro statements by high legislative officials of Mexico's ruling party. Villeda's outburst was wildly applauded by the other guests. Garizurieta reportedly will leave for Mexico on 2 December with no plans for return.

If Villeda can better control the leftists within his party and administration without threatening his own position, he will be able to move ahead with planned economic and social reforms which would lessen the popular appeal of the Castro revolution in Honduras. However, he is also faced with high unemployment and labor unrest on the banana plantations.

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