

**Cronyism Paid Off**

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# From Parking Lot to Castro's No. 2

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MIAMI, May 30 — The sudden prominence of Maj. Juan Almeida Bosque, an old and trusted revolutionary pal of Fidel Castro, offers an example of how cronyism pays off in Cuba today.

Almeida zoomed into the limelight earlier this year when it was announced that he was Acting Armed Forces Minister, substituting for Fidel's younger brother, Raul, who was going to spend a year studying political and military matters.

Then Almeida was tapped to make the important May Day address this month in Havana, a role traditionally reserved for Fidel.

## STAR ROSE

Almeida, a onetime parking lot attendant in Havana, attracted little notice after the revolution that catapulted Fidel to power. Now, his public star has risen for three reasons?

- His impeccable revolutionary credentials. He has been with Fidel since before the attack on the Moncado barracks in 1953—the abortive assault that give birth to Castro's July 26th movement.
- His unswerving personal loyalty to both Fidel and Raul.
- The fact that he is a Negro makes his present post a useful decoration for a regime trying

to convince the world it has no race problems and is the champion of anti-imperialism.

Almeida, now 40, was a porter at the University of Havana in 1952 when he first met Fidel. He has been at his side ever since, in jail after the Moncado attack, in Mexico training for the guerilla warfare in Cuba's eastern mountains, cooking chicken in Harlem's Hotel Theresa when Fidel visited New York in 1959, as head of the air force after the revolution and later chief of staff of Castro's army.

In 1961, Almeida spent several months in Czechoslovakia. Purpose of the trip never was explained, but it was presumed he was sent to Prague for communist indoctrination.

Altho Almeida is a member of the eight-man politburo, top-ranking organ of the Cuban Communist Party, few knowledgeable observers consider him a dedicated communist. He is believed to be as opposed to theoretical communism and old guard communists as he was during the combat in the Sierra Maestra range.

This wariness of doctrines and ideologies has served Almeida well as Fidel has turned increasingly to personal rule and systematically removed Cuba's old-guard communists or reduced them to holders of empty titles.