

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1965.

Cuba, After Coolness, Appears to Strengthen Ties to Soviet

By PAUL HOFFMANN
Special to The New York Times

HAVANA, April 26—The departure of Cubans for Moscow for training in Communist party work and many personnel exchanges on various levels suggest that Premier Fidel Castro's regime is again strengthening its ties with the Soviet Union.

Earlier this year Western diplomats in Havana—and some Eastern ones, too—conjectured whether the Cuban regime was veering toward Moscow, Peking or a third force. Now there is near consensus here that the Castro regime, after some hesitation, is realigning with the Kremlin.

The personal position of the Soviet Ambassador in Havana, Aleksandr I. Alekseyev, appears to support this. The tall, hard-working diplomat, who speaks good Spanish and despite a scholarly bent has cultivated back-slapping informality with Cuban leaders, had for years been prominent in public functions here.

His behind-the-scenes influence was believed to be immense. Mr. Alekseyev was credited with having counseled moderation to Mr. Castro on several crucial occasions.

About the beginning of this year, however, the Soviet Ambassador was in eclipse. His absence from ceremonies was noted and his freely flowing public oratory dried up. There was speculation that he might be recalled.

Mr. Alekseyev is again in the forefront. In the week before Easter, he lived in a tent with Mr. Castro and President Osvaldo Dorticos Torrado in a cane field near Camagüey and helped the Government and tens of thousands of "volunteer" workers bring in the sugar harvest.

Other appearances during the last few days reinforced the general impression that the Soviet Ambassador was riding high and that Soviet influence on Cuban affairs was increasing again. The May Day celebrations on Saturday are expected to underline this.

The temporary decline in Mr. Alekseyev's prestige coincided with difficulties in Havana-Moscow relations. Renewal of the complex trade and financial collaboration agreements between the two governments for 1965

was delayed for some weeks, reportedly by haggling over prices and quotas for Cuban sugar and Soviet oil and over other issues.

Premier Castro's United Party of the Socialist Revolution agreed only reluctantly to attend the conference of some of the world's Communist parties in Moscow early in March in which Peking's ideological position was discussed.

On March 13, Premier Castro bitterly denounced the Moscow-Peking rift as harmful to such small Communist countries as North Vietnam and Cuba and covertly criticized both the Soviet Union and Communist China for having introduced the ideological "apple of discord" into Cuban Communism.

The Premier was understood to be alluding to propaganda by Soviet and Chinese Communist services here. The Soviet Embassy was reported to have been quicker in responding to Mr. Castro's appeal to curb the controversy than the Chinese Embassy. At any rate, there was no Chinese diplomat with Mr. Castro in the cane fields.

A turning point in Cuban-Soviet relations was reached when Raul Castro, the Premier's brother, returned from the East. He had represented Cuba at the Moscow parley of Communist parties and afterward had visited Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Raul Castro, who is Vice Premier and Armed Forces Minister, is understood to have come home as an advocate of close, long-term ties with the Eastern bloc.