

hav928 yy ylp nor

1145:medicine (profeatures):

by Lionel martin

havana, dec 28, reuter - when 106 cuban medical students were sent voluntarily to nicaragua in 1981 to work in rural areas while completing their internship, it sparked an idea which dr. fidel castro hopes will represent a revolution in cuban medical training.

in his december 20 speech, the cuban president recalled thinking: +caramba, if we do it in nicaragua, why can't we do the same thing here inasmuch as we also have problems in small town and rural hospitals.+

the idea of sending final year medical students to rural areas was first made public in castro's july 26, 1982 speech. following that speech, a call was sent out for volunteers to complete their internships by working in rural hospitals and clinics and to agree to spend three additional years there once they graduate as physicians.

according to dr. castro, all of cuba's one thousand sixth year medical students volunteered. a rigorous selection was made and on january 9, 1983, the first group of 174 sixth year students will be sent out to render medical services in 96 of cuba's 117 rural and small town clinics and hospitals.

--more/Lem

nnnnnnnn

NR 323  
1982  
A Revolution in  
Cuban Medical  
Training

hav929 yy ylp nor

2

1145:medicine 2 havana:

dr. jose machado, former cuban health minister and currently a member of the cuban communist party politburo told the selected medical students last week that the new plan will lead to a +revitalisation of rural medicine in cuba.+

machado recalled how the revolution brought local medical services to forty percent of the population which previously had none available. he said that in the heart of the sierra maestra mountains, some of the guerrilla war against the regime of dictator fulgencio batista, there was not a single doctor for the 300,000 population.

in the 1960's, despite the flight overseas of half of cuba's 6000 physicians, dozens of rural hospitals were established and the +rural medical service+ was set up.

at first, machado said, the presence of a doctor with a stethoscope, aspirins and anti-biotics represented a leap forward in quality. the infant mortality rate declined year after year and many endemic diseases were eliminated or controlled.

--more/Lem

nnnnnnnn

1355:medicine 3 havana:

but, machado said, the rural medical service in the seventies failed to keep pace with the needs and growing expectations of the rural population. by sending final year students to the countryside and mountains, the quality of service should improve greatly, he said.

according to a health ministry plan, +the method for teaching interns in rural areas must be dynamic and flexible in its practical phases in order to ensure, not only the development of skills, but also of work habits, discipline and professional responsibility.+ the plan calls for the interns to rotate in training between four specialities - internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics and general surgery. the training of other specialisits will continue to be centered in more advanced city hospitals.

the interns will be under the constant supervision of experienced physicians and will receive visits and courses from medical professors and inspectors. once graduated, they will receive salaries, like other physicians, somewhat above those of a highly skilled worker.

==more/Len

fidel castro has said that the plan to send more doctors into the rural areas, always on a volunteer basis, will not only raise the level of local medical care but will also instill the physicians with a +revolutionary spirit and greater political consciousness.+

dr. castro said a year ago that cuba would strive to become +a world center of medicine.+ he said recently that cuba now has 1400 doctors and 560 nurses working in 26 nations. it has 17,300 students in its medical schools and between 1982 and 1990 expects to graduate almost 20,000 new physicians to add to the more than 17,000 it now has.

cuban public health officials reject, for cuba, the chinese idea of +barefoot doctors.+ +we are far beyond that stage,+ a leading official recently told a group of foreign visitors. +our aim is on a much higher level, that of creating a universally recognised, first class system of medical training and public health care,+ he said.

dr. jorge osuna, who recently visited cuba for the panamerican health office, had only praise for the cuban health system. +after seeing the cuban reality up close,+ he said, +i can say that the goal for public health for the year 2000 projected by us is already a reality in this nation.+