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1980 by Lionel martin

havana, nov 19, reuter -- in a letter published in today's granma addressed to 800 cuban teachers who have completed two years' voluntary service in nicaragua, cuban president fidel castro said that they had +fulfilled their mission with selflessness and great sacrifices.+

in the letter dr castro mentioned four cuban teachers who were murdered by +somoza counterrevolutionaries+ in nicaragua and the fact that many of the teachers set up schools +in the most out-of-the-way corners of the country, which are sometimes so distant and lacking in communications that they require the effort of hiking during hours to arrive there.+

the teachers will return to cuba beginning november 20 on cubana airlines planes that will fly twice a day between havana and managua.

the 800 returning teachers were part of the +pedagogic contingent of cuban internationalists ocean airline+ which totals 2 000 volunteers. the other 1 200 teachers will also return to cuba this month for vacations.

last year the teachers voluntarily remained in nicaragua during their vacations to aid in agricultural chores and road building.

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dr castro said in his letter that the cuban teachers had helped guarantee schools and teachers for the majority of nicaragua's population, and that the number of illiterates in nicaragua had been reduced considerably since the first cuban pedagogical contingent went there in november, 1979.

granma also reported that 600 cuban public health workers, including 290 physicians and 202 interns are now working in six regions of nicaragua.

since the arrival of the first group of volunteer +internationalist+ doctors on july 25, 1979, six days after the fall of the somoza government, cuban physicians have treated 2.9 million patients, have performed 22680 operations and have delivered 16 446 babies, granma said.

cuban professors also teach at the medical school of the university of leon and at the public health polytechnical institute in managua, the newspaper said.

--reuter lem/syl