RR-88-31 1966

UU LEN BAS
CUBA-MYOPIA (FEATURE) 3HAVANA
AS PART OF THE PACKAGE THE PATIENT RECEIVES THREE MEALS A DAY; HAS AROUND-THE-CLOCK MEDICAL CARE AND STAYS IN A PRIVATE ROOM WITH A TELEPHONE AND COLOUR TELEVISION.

WHILE THE FOREIGN PATIENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO REST, THE CUBANS WHO ARE OPERATED FOR NEARSIGHTEDNESS ARE ALLOWED TO GO HOME A FEW HOURS AFTER THE OPERATION ON A SINGLE EYE AND THEN RETURN THE FOLLOWING DAY AND PERIODICALLY FOR FURTHER EXAMINATIONS. WHEN THE RESULTS OF THE OPERATION IN ONE EYE ARE PROVEN SATISFACTORY, THE PATIENT'S OTHER EYE IS OPERATED.

THE MICROSURGERY CENTRE NOT ONLY USES THE BELT-LINE METHOD FOR OPERATING TO CORRECT MYOPIA. THE SAME PROCEDURES IS USED TO OPERATE PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM GLACOMA AND CATARACTS.

IN A SINGLE SIX HOUR SHIFT, THE SURGONS PERFORM, IN SUCCESSION, ABOUT 30 OR 40 MYOPIA OPERATIONS, TWENTY GLAUCOMA OPERATIONS AND 15 OPERATIONS FOR CATARACTS.

NOT ALL CUBAN OCULISTS LOOK KINDLY ON THE MASS PRODUCTION OPERATIONS. ONE VETERAN SPECIALIST, WHO ASKED THAT HIS NAME NOT BE USED, SAID HE WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT ASSEMBLY LINE SURGERY. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE MYOPIA OPERATION IS NOT KNOWN AND THAT THE PATIENT RUNS THE RISK OF EYE INFECTION.

DR. OBEL GARCIA, WHO STUDIED IN THE SOVIET UNION, ANSWERS THESE DETRACTORS BY SAYING THAT NOT ONLY HAS THE SUCCESS RATE BEEN EXTREMELY HIGH BUT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN FEWER POST-OPERATIVE INFECTIONS IN HAVANA THAN IN MOSCOW.

GARCIA ATRIBUTES THIS TO THE FACT THAT THE PATIENT'S EYES ARE BETTER LUBRICATED WITH TEARS IN CUBA'S TROPICAL HEAT.
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RR-88-31 1988

UU LEN BAS
CUBA-MYOPIA (FEATURE) (PHOTOS (2) HAV01/HAV02 SEPT 29 FOLLOW)
ASSEMBLY LINE OPERATION FOR NEARSIGHTEDNESS THRIVES IN CUBA:
BY LIONEL MARTIN
HAVANA, SEPT 29, REUTER - LOOK INTO THE EYES OF HUNDREDS OF KUBANS AND YOU WILL SEE SLIGHTLY PERCEPTABLE LINES RADIATING OUT FROM THE PUPILS LIKE THE SPOKES OF AN OLD-FASHIONED CART WHEEL.
THEIR NUMBER IS GROWING AT THE RATE OF OVER 500 EACH MONTH.
THEY ARE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN OPERATED ON TO CORRECT THEIR MYOPIA -NEARSIGHTEDNESS- AT THE CENTER FOR OCULAR MICRO-SURGERY IN HAVANA WHICH WAS INUGURATED LAST APRIL.
THE OPERATIONS FOR MYOPIA ARE PERFORMED ON A MASS PRODUCTION BASIS IN AN ULTRA-MODERN OPERATING ROOM WHICH HAS A CLIMATISATION SYSTEM THAT CHANGES THE AIR SEVERAL TIMES AN HOUR.
SINCE APRIL, THE SURGICAL TEAMS THERE HAVE PERFORMED THE OPERATION ON MORE THAN 1500 PATIENTS.
THE OPERATING TABLE WHICH CARRRIES THE PATIENT MOVES ON A BELT LINE FROM ONE SURGEON TO THE NEXT. EACH OF THE FIVE SURGEONS SITS BEFORE HIS OWN ELECTRON MICROSCORE WHILE PERFORMING THE PART OF THE OPERATION ASSIGNED TO HIM.
THE MICROSCOPES RESPOND TO VOICE COMMANDS GIVEN BY EACH SURGEON.
THE FIVE SURGEONS WORK SIMULTANEOUSLY, EACH ON A DIFFERENT PATIENT.
A COMMAND CENTER, MANNED BY SPECIALISTS, OVERSEES THE OPERATION THROUGH CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION.
DR. OBEL GARCIA, SUB-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE, SAYS THAT THE OPERATIONS FOR MYOPIA HAS CORRECTED THE SIGHT OF MORE THAN NINETY PERCENT OF THOSE OPERATED.
RECENTLY, THE EARLY MIDDLE-AGED SON OF A TOP LEADER OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION, HIMSELF A HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, WAS OPERATED FOR MYOPIA AT THE CENTER.
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UU LEN BAS
CUBA-MYOPIA (FEATURE) 2HAVANA

THE ASSEMBLY LINE OCULAR MICROSURGERY CENTRE IS THE SECOND OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD. THE FIRST WAS THE OPTHALMIC MICROSURGERY INSTITUTE IN MOSCOW.

A CUBAN SPECIALIST WHO STUDIED AT THE MOSCOW INSTITUTE UNDER ITS DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR S. FIODOROV, SAID THAT THE HAVANA CENTRE IS BETTER EQUIPPED THAN ITS MOSCOW COUNTERPART. =+WE HAVE THE FINEST AND MOST EXPENSIVE STATE OF THE ARTS EQUIPMENT IMORTED FROM WEST GERMANY AND JAPAN:+ HE SAID.

THE WAY IN WHICH THE MICRO-SURGERY CENTRES IN MOSCOW AND HAVANA ARE FINANCED GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO CUBA'S VIEW OF PREMIER GORBACHOV'S MARKET-ECONOMY IDEAS CONTAINED IN PERESTROIKA.

THE MOSCOW INSTITUTE IS A PROFIT-MAKING, SELF FINANCED ENTITY WHICH CHARGES TRADE UNIONS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS FOR OPERATIONS PERFORMED ON THEIR MEMBERS.

THE HAVANA CENTRE, IN LINE WITH PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO'S REJECTION OF COMMERCIALISM IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE FIELDS, OFFERS ITS SERVICES COMPLETE@Y FREE OF CHARGE TO CUBANS AND IS TOTALLY FINANCED FROM THE NATIONAL BUDGET.

FOREIGNERS FROM CAPITALIST COUNTRIES MUST, HOWEVER, PAY FOR OPERATIONS AT THE MICRO-SURGERY CENTRE. THIS RESPONDS TO CASTRO'S IDEA OF TURNING CUBA INTO A MAJOR WORLD MEDICAL CENTRE THAT WILL SELL ITS SERVICES IN ORDER TO BRING IN VITALLY NEEDED HARD CURRENCY.

IN PURSUIT OF THIS GOAL, CUBA IS NOW GRADUATING MORE THAN 3000 DOCTORS A YEAR AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MEDICAL DOCTORS IN THE COUNTRY HAS INCREASED FROM 6000 IN 1958, BEFORE THE REVOLUTIONARY VICTORY, TO 30,000 THIS YEAR.

THE COST TO THE FOREINGER FOR OPERATING BOTH EYES TO CORRECT NEARSIGHTEDNESS IS 1500 DOLLARS. THIS IS RELATIVELY MODEST WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT THE COST INCLUDES PRIOR EXANINATIONS, THE OPERATION ITSELF AND FOURTEEN DAYS IN HAVANA'S MODERN CIRO GARCIA CLINIC.

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