

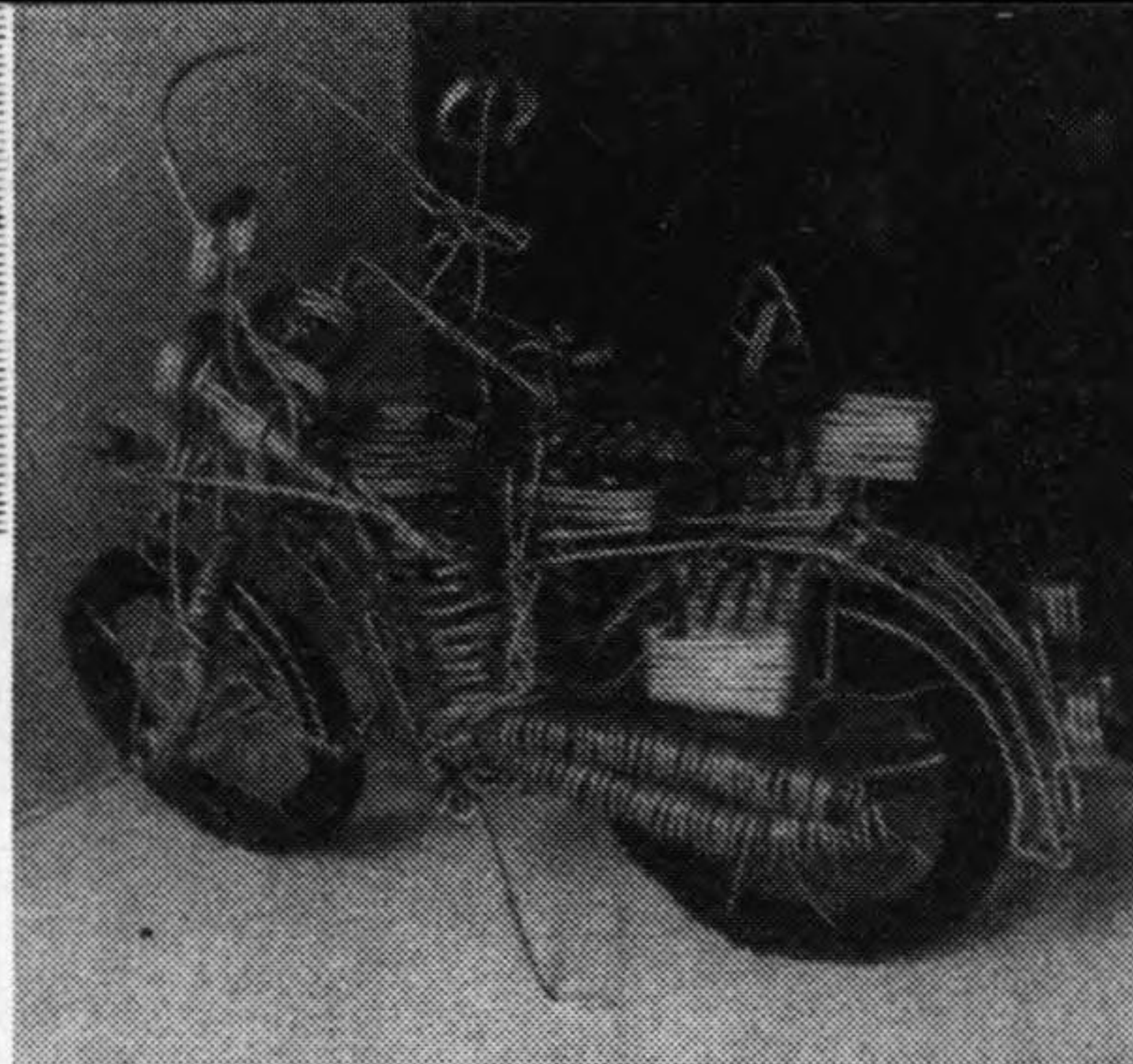
"CUBA"
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AFRICA
GENERAL

AFRICA DAY

AFRICA DAY, 1988 — The 25th anniversary of the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was celebrated in Cuba by a full spectrum of activities, ranging from official ceremonies hosted by the country's top leaders to book launchings, art exhibitions and film screenings.

General of the Army Raúl Castro, Second Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), presided over the main ceremony marking the occasion. On the podium with him were Colonel General Pedro Maria Tonha, Minister of Defence of Angola; and Salim Ahmed Salim, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Tanzania.

The opening address was given by Hocine Zatout, Algeria's ambassador and dean of the African diplomatic corps in Cuba. He paid tribute to those who had pointed the way to African unity, the end of colonialism and the destruction of apartheid, stressing the OAU's role in defending Africa's struggle for political and economic liberation. Now more than ever, he added, African countries realise that support for the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) must be increased, and that they must help the South African people led by the African National



Ingenious toys made by children of five African nations, on display at Havana's Wifredo Lam Centre.

the Peoples and the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association, was closed by Esteban Lazo, member of the PCC Political Bureau. He explained that the spirit of internationalism animates Cuba's homage to the OAU. The struggle of the African nations is inseparable from that against imperialism, and for peace and human survival. "Our revolutionary commitments to the African nations will be met to the end," he said.

Lazo reiterated Cuba's call for unconditional freedom for Nelson Mandela. He also took a moment to speak of the great internationalist who fought for Africa's future, Che Guevara.

Among those attending the ceremony at the Universal Hall of the Revolutionary Armed Forces were Mavis L Muyunda, Zambia's Foreign Minister; Comandante of the Revolution Juan Almeida; PCC Political Bureau Member Jorge Risquet; government ministers, leaders of Cuba's mass organisations, and representatives of liberation movements and the diplomatic corps.

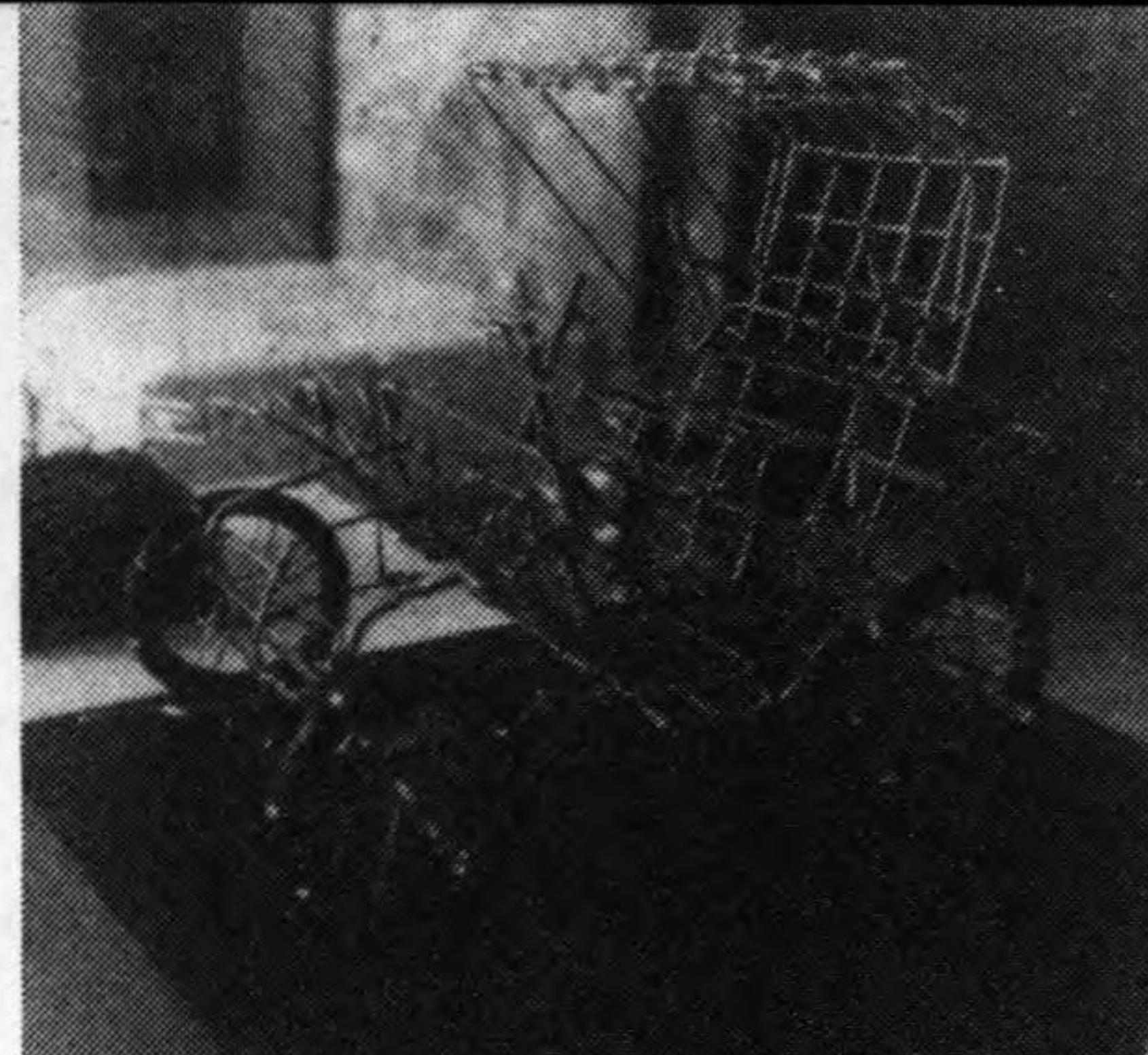
MEETING WITH FIDEL

Cuban President Fidel Castro met with African ambassadors to Cuba on the occasion, and gave them a detailed report of the evolution of the military situation in Angola to date. He reaffirmed Cuba's willingness to contribute to the search for a political solution in South West Africa that would make possible the implementation of Resolution 435 for the independence of Namibia and guarantee Angola's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Earlier, the diplomatic corps and government ministers, among others, were the guests of Cuba's Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca at a special Africa Day reception.

AFRICA HOUSE EVENTS

Africa House saluted the anniversary with a five-day series of films and conferences by internationalist filmmakers; opening with *El octubre de todos* (Everyone's October) by Santiago Alvarez. The documentary deals with President Fidel Castro's tour of African countries in the 1970's.



Among the documentaries shown were *Los hijos de Namibia*, (Children of Namibia) by Rigoberto López, and Belkis Vega's *Corresponsales de guerra* (War Correspondents).

One evening's screenings were dedicated to the People's Republic of Angola.

Those attending the activities were invited to visit the special room housing the collection of gifts given to President Castro by African leaders, which he donated to Africa House.

AFRICAN TOYS

The Wifredo Lam Centre commemorated Africa Day with an exhibition of toys made by African children. Fashioned from discarded bits of wire and rubber, the vehicles, ranging from carriages to helicopters, are astonishing in their realism and fidelity to detail.

On display were toys from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Tanzania and the Congo. The exhibition was made possible by the help of Cuban embassies in those countries and by private collectors.

Leticia Cordero, of the Lam's Promotion Department, explained that the idea came from one of the Centre's specialists who, during a visit to Africa, saw children on the streets making these toys and was struck by the level of artistry involved.

A bigger show is being planned for the 3rd Havana Biennial, and African students on the Isle of Youth have offered to make more wire toys for it.

Public reaction has been very enthusiastic, says Cordero: "One director of a children's toy factory came away very impressed and plans to share ideas suggested by these toys with the workers at his factory."

ESTHER MOSAK. Photos: PIROLE and PL.



Algeria's ambassador to Cuba opened the official ceremony.

Congress (ANC) to liberate themselves. So long as apartheid exists, he explained, the continent cannot be free.

Zatout also referred to the solidarity and friendship between Africa and Cuba, noting that it is guaranteed by the blood shed by Cubans alongside Angolan and Namibian patriots.

The ceremony, organised by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with



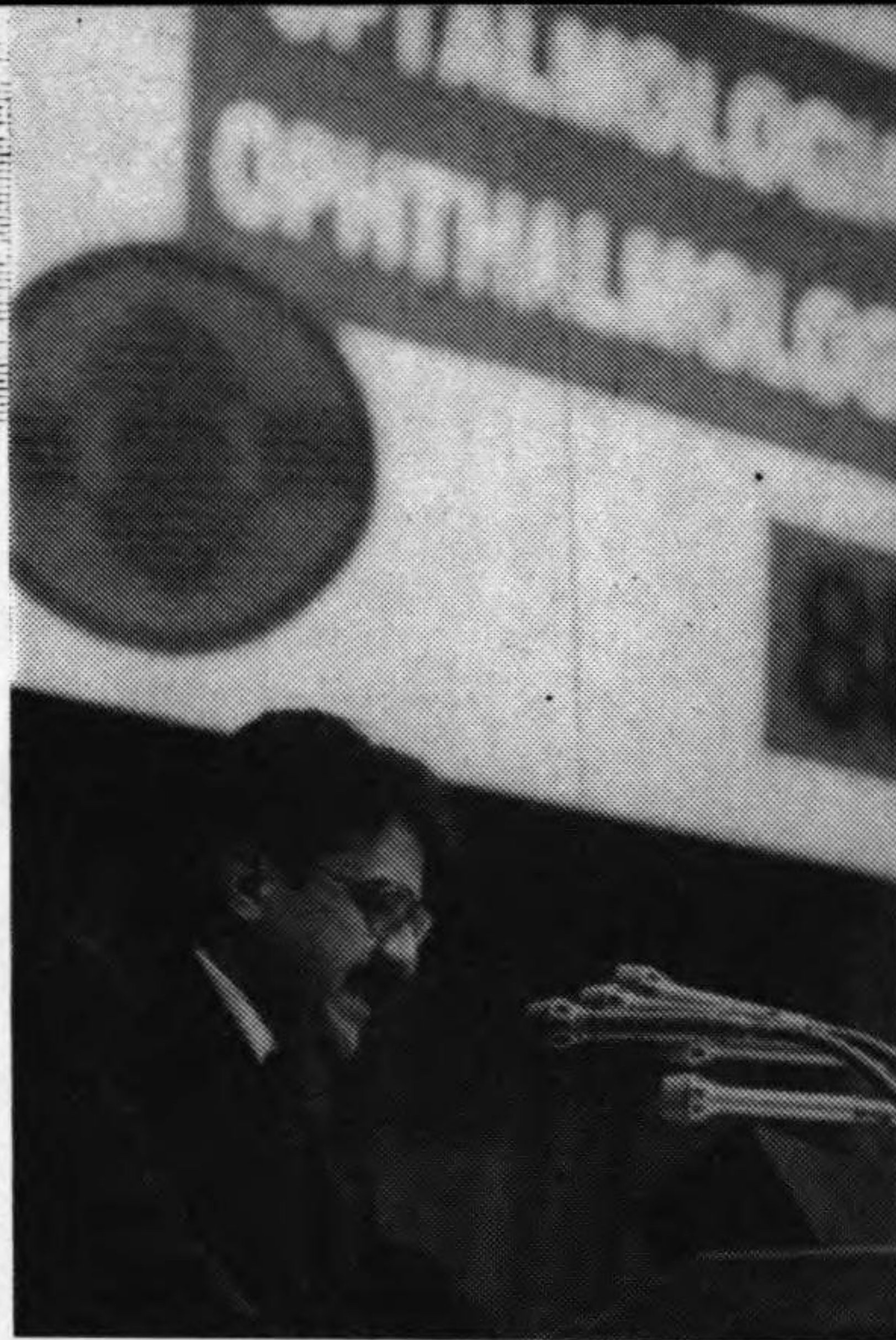
SCIENCE

EYE SURGERY BREAKTHROUGH

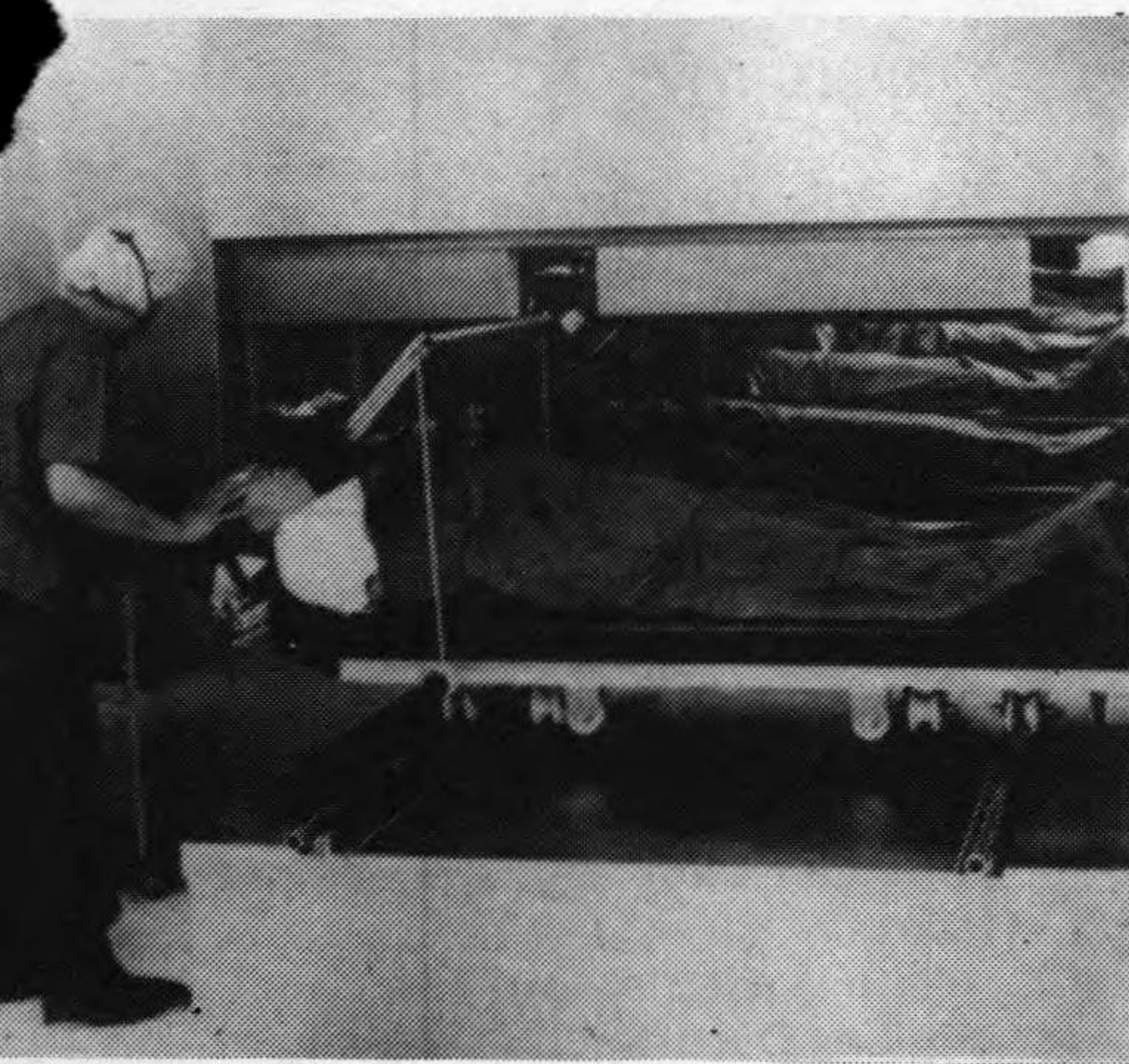
A NEW TECHNIQUE CALLED CONSECUTIVE micro-surgery is giving Cubans suffering from myopia, cataracts or glaucoma excellent chances of recovering or improving their vision.

Developed by Professor Sviatoslav Fiodorov, director of Moscow's Ocular Surgery Institute, it requires no general anaesthesia and the patient need not be kept in hospital.

Cuba is now the second country in the world with the technology necessary for performing this kind of surgery, placing it in the forefront of ophthalmological developments.



Cuba reported on its progress in launching this new kind of surgery at a recent international ophthalmology conference held in Havana.



The innovative technique was first used in the USSR.

Patients go through a range of diagnostic procedures at the new facility built next to the Ramón Pando Ferrer Ophthalmology Hospital in Havana to determine whether the surgery is appropriate in each case.

The patient is operated on by several surgeons in turn, each one specialising in one step of the operation. The patient lie on small beds set on rollers, equipped with the instruments used by the surgeons. The operating room is also equipped for dealing with emergency cases which may arise, requiring one of the patients to be removed from the line.

To guarantee completely sterile conditions, the facility has a special climate control system, reducing the possibility of infection to a minimum.

The surgeons work from seats with controls to operate the special microscopes used in the operation. A system of light signals advises them when their colleagues have finished their part of the operation, usually only a matter of minutes.

The entire group must be finished before new patients can enter. They

The special facility for consecutive eye surgery, next to Havana's Pando Ferrer Hospital.

wait, prepared in their beds, in an adjoining department with sterile conditions.

The surgeons are not isolated as they work. An internal communication system allows them to speak to other members of the team, and to those staffing the control post, which monitors the operations on closed circuit television.

When the operation is over, the out-patients are observed in a recovery room by specialised nurses, and then go home, while those who are required to stay in hospital go back to their beds. The next day, all are seen by their ophthalmologist.

The Cuban surgeons operate on only one kind of eye problem at a time. Depending on the complexity of the cases, they may treat 35 to 40 cases of myopia, 20 of glaucoma, or 15 of cataracts in a day, the equivalent of all the eye operations performed in Havana in the same period of time before this new centre was opened.

/ J.R. SAVALL. Photos: PL.

ECONOMY

OIL FIND

HAS CUBA STRUCK OIL? ACCORDING to a report recently published in the daily *Granma*, experts believe the chances of finding rich fuel deposits in Cárdenas Bay, Matanzas province are excellent. The most promising geological sites have already been chosen for exploratory drilling.

The preliminary studies were carried out in collaboration with Soviet technicians.

The platform to be erected at Cupey is being built in the Crimea, and consists of a stationary metallic structure with a technological area of 2,500 sq m, equipped for drilling six wells.

One of the specialists involved in the studies, Benjamín Ganskins, explained that this platform will be linked to the land by a 39 m long dock, and will house 35 workers.

A causeway of stone blocks will be built at Marbella, 1,650 m long, two m above sea level and 6.5 m wide, leading to a 2,220 sq m artificial island where the drilling equipment will be installed.

In the Hicacos area, another artificial island will be built, but this one will be linked to the land by special barges.

The potential underwater oil fields are in the vicinity of Varadero beach, one of Cuba's most beautiful tourist resorts. All the installations mentioned above will be built as far as possible from Varadero, and the toughest safety measures imposed to prevent oil spills or the slightest contamination of the strand.

/ PEDRO MORALES.

Many experts believe that there are major reserves in Cárdenas Bay.



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guage so
Are they
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back will
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than they have in the Pacific," says Dr Dirk Ballendorf, of the

heart of the US defence policy for Asia. Despite the euphoria of

making any progress on their turf.

UN's biggest African aid job begins

Juba, Sudan, Tuesday

AGE 5-4-89

A convoy of 21 United Nations trucks left Nairobi, Kenya, yesterday to begin the UN's biggest emergency aid operation, taking food to civilians in territory controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

The \$A160 million "Operation Lifeline Sudan" aims to provide food for people starving on both sides of Sudan's civil war.

The target is to move 100,000 tonnes of food into southern Sudan in six weeks, before seasonal rains make roads impassable.

The UN estimates that 250,000 Sudanese, most of them children, died during last year's lean rainy season.

"Neither side in the conflict anticipated the magnitude of the disaster which happened because of their actions," said Mr James Grant, who is coordinating the UN operation. "I think both sides have been shaken and are determined to make a significant effort this year to avoid a repetition."

The UN is already too late to beat the first rains, and few expe-

rienced aid workers believe that they can move such a large quantity of food in such a short time. "We need a miracle," said Mr Grant.

Before the proposed eight "corridors of tranquillity" can be fully opened, experts are needed to remove landmines and repair bridges.

Neither side in the war — the Government or the liberation army — has agreed to a ceasefire, conceding only that they will cooperate with the UN.

— Guardian

UK women still scarred by African ritual

From VANORA BENNETT
in London

WHEN Yah was eight years old her mother and two aunts circumcised her in their South London kitchen. The secret operation, an initiation rite for girls from her society, aimed to draw Yah into Somali womanhood.

"They woke me up and sat me on a kitchen chair," said Yah, now 19 and still living with her family in Britain.

"One of my aunts pinned my arms behind my back, another held my legs and my mother cut me."

She is one of an estimated 2000 or 3000 girls who are circumcised in Britain every year, despite a 1985 law banning the operation, according to FORWARD, a group working to eradicate the practice.

Eighty million women alive today have undergone circumcision, which is practised in more than 20 Middle Eastern and African countries.

British social and health workers have become aware of the practice in recent years as they have been asked for help by women from other cultures who have settled in Britain.

There are two forms of the operation, best known as female circumcision or clitoridectomy. With excision, the clitoris and surrounding tissue are cut away. Infibulation, practised in Yah's native Somalia, involves sewing up the genitals afterwards.

Sitting in the same kitchen where her operation was carried out more than a decade ago, Yah said she had recently gone to a social worker for advice on how to get the cat-gut stitches cut.

This would be a symbolic act of rebellion that could cast her out from her community and leave her unmarriedable.

"The scars left by (circumcision) can be so thick that it is virtually impossible for a baby to emerge," said Dr Malika Ladjali of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

There is some hope for change. The founder of FORWARD, Ms Ephua Graham, said more and more men were repelled by the traditional wedding night, during which they were sometimes obliged to break open hardened scar tissue with a knife.