

Cairo ^{date?} Shocks Medicos

By PIERRE GUILMANT

CAIRO, ILL. — Cairo is a sick city. While the final statistics of the Flying Black Medics task force's one-day clinic have not been announced, some preliminary facts show a severity of medical needs for some of this town's residents.

Dr. Audley F. Connor of the Chicago Board of Health and a member of the Flying Medics reported that of the first 15 adults he examined 12 had "serious medical problems which needed immediate medical treatment." He said also that five of those 12 had congenital heart conditions which has never been diagnosed or treated and that at least two of the five could be expected to die within a few months if they remained untreated.

United Front director, Rev. Charles E. Koen, noted "Those in our city who have said that local medical facilities and personnel are keeping up with the medical needs of our poor will have to do some rethinking and evaluating. What we have said is obviously true. The poor in Cairo and its surrounding communities have been sadly neglected in this important area of their life."

Much of the community's medical problem is wrapped up in racist theory, and political malfeasance. St. Mary's Hospital, for example has — in the past — failed to supply the black community with medical care. That failure, contends Cairo NAACP president Preston Ewing Jr., is evidenced by innumerable incidents, wherein the ill and the injured are turned away by the hospital. Several cases have been reported in which emergency treatment had to be secured at hospitals 30 miles from the city limits.

Other instances of discrimination have been reported in which hospital staff members have consistently referred to black patients as "niggers" and have often neglected them upon admission to a hospital bed.

With the inauguration of the Flying Medics and their ultimate aim to promote a medical center for the community, St. Mary's has offered to provide its facilities. United Front members see this move by the hospital as an effort to undermine moves toward a medical center and contend the area's black doctors — of which there are two — are playing politics with the hospital in an effort to maintain their own control of the black community's medical problems.

As long as this condition prevails, the Flying Black Medics will continue their medical efforts, according to Dr. Leonidas Berry, coordinator of the group. "Medical care in Cairo is as lacking as the statistics indicate and is

much worse than we were led to believe. It is obvious that such clinics as we participated in Sunday will be needed in the future and those

doctors who spent their time and money in this effort will be flying to Cairo in the future to hold similar clinics," he said.