
Had the attack on Moncada barracks been successful, Fidel Castro explained at his trial in 1953, five revolutionary laws would have been proclaimed immediately. The "fifth revolutionary law" would have confiscated the holdings and gains of all who had "committed frauds during previous regimes." Half the property thus recovered, Fidel disclosed, "would be used for hospitals, asylums and charitable organizations."

The social service system before and after Castro is the major focal point of Ross Danielson's survey of Cuban medicine. The book goes beyond a study of medicine in Cuba, however, and it is perhaps unfortunate that the author and/or publisher saw fit to settle on Cuban Medicine as the title of the book. In a very real sense, Danielson treats in broad strokes the history of health services in Cuba and the social, economic, and political milieu in which health services were delivered—or were not delivered, as the case may be. Indeed, the author steeps his study in a broader historical context, tracing the development of health services from the period of Spanish colonialism to the socialist revolution: in a word, the history of medicine as social history. The author's treatment of health service during the Revolution—almost half the book for a twenty-year period—will no doubt stand as a major contribution to the expanding studies of Cuban society under socialism. The author's conclusion, of course, will surprise few: "The first profound effect of the socialist period was to improve the distribution of physicians and other personal services among the rural and undoctored areas, and . . . the consolidation of the area polyclinic has greatly improved the availability of services to the entire population."

In this sense, the book's primary value lies in its judicious assessment of one aspect of Cuban life on which there exists little information in English. As to be expected of first-rate scholarship, the book provides abundant hypotheses upon which to base research in the future. As it stands now, however, this study will no doubt emerge as a standard reference work on health service in Cuba.

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