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SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

History, Geography & Area Studies - Latin America & the
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The following review appeared in the April 2008 issue of CHOICE:

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De la Cova, Antonio Rafael. **The Moncada attack: birth of the Cuban Revolution.** South Carolina, 2007. 391p bibl
index afp ISBN 9781570036729, \$59.95

Revolutions often have signature events that symbolize their beginnings. For the French Revolution, it is the taking of the Bastille July 14, 1789; for Castro's revolution in Cuba, it is the attack on the military barracks at Moncada and Bayamo July 26, 1953. Relying on dozens of oral interviews with participants on both sides of the attack, de la Cova (Indiana Univ.) masterfully describes events leading up to and following Castro's attempt to seize these two sites in far eastern Cuba. In the process, the author confronts directly many of the historical myths that the Cuban state has woven around this subject. De la Cova demonstrates that Fidel's leadership in planning and carrying out the attack was embarrassingly amateurish, almost harebrained, yet brilliant during the unexpected aftermath. The greatest philosophical influence on most of the participants was not Marxism but the desperation rampant within the radical wing of the Ortodoxo political party. Many of the original attackers demonstrated great courage in assaulting the bases, but a significant number showed just the opposite, including desertion. There is some question just where Fidel's behavior falls between these two extremes. In the end, however, de la Cova confirms that Moncada elevated Castro from Havana obscurity to national prominence. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All levels/libraries. -- *J. A. Lewis, Western Carolina University*